



BLUE MARINE  
FOUNDATION

# INTO THE

WORKING TO PROTECT OUR OCEANS

ISSUE 04 | MAR/APR 2024

**BLUE MARINE  
TAKES UK GOVT  
TO COURT**

**MEET THE 2024  
OCEAN AWARDS  
NOMINEES**

**CONVEX SEASCAPE  
PROJECT NOMINATED  
FOR WEBBY AWARD**

# BLUE

**Cover Photo:**  
Patagonia Expedition  
Eduardo Sorensen



# WELCOME

Welcome to this month’s edition of Into the Blue with a guest introduction from chief legal affairs adviser, Dr Tom Appleby

This month Blue Marine took legal action to protect UK fish stocks following decades of overfishing authorised by the UK Government and the European Union, The Sunday Times aptly gave our legal action the heading: “Fish may get day in Court as Defra sued over irresponsible quotas”. Since Brexit, the rules governing quota allocation have changed and we have a new Fisheries Act, which Blue Marine influenced.

Blue Marine tried to make fishing beyond scientific advice illegal, as it is in many jurisdictions, but did not quite succeed. We did however see key demands of ours make it into law: firstly, the fishery was recognised as a public asset (owned by the Crown on behalf of all of us) and secondly, even though scientific advice can be overruled, that can only happen if there are compelling socio-economic or food security reasons for doing so.

We (and the fish) will hopefully have our day in court in the second half of the year, (possibly as early as July, but most likely September). The case will decide on the management of all UK fishing vessels operating in UK and Crown Dependency waters (and overseas waters under international agreements) so this will cover at least 770,000km2 – an area three times the size of the UK, but will also influence how decisions are made overseas.

Our lawyers are Matthew McFeeley of Richard Buxton solicitors and barristers Brendon Moorhouse and David Wolfe KC. I extend a huge thanks to all who are involved internally and to our partners from ClientEarth in Brussels and London, Open Seas in Scotland, and last but not least, the New Under Ten Fishermen’s Association, whose members are as concerned about this as we are.



**Dr. Tom Appleby**  
Chief legal affairs adviser



Gliding through glassy waters  
**Photo:** Syd Sujuaan



# Blue Marine Foundation takes UK government to court for allowing overfishing

Blue Marine has issued legal proceedings over the government’s decision to set fishing opportunities, for more than half UK stocks, at levels exceeding scientific advice. The legal challenge argues that the government’s unsustainable management of fish stocks is an irresponsible use of national assets and against the interests of the majority of fishermen.

Dr. Thomas Appleby, chief legal affairs adviser to Blue Marine, comments: “The setting of quota and distribution to fishing vessels in the UK and Europe has long been controversial. For decades fish stocks have been set beyond scientific advice and as a result stocks of fish have dwindled, and so have the number of people employed in the fishing industry. Our case is principally about transparency in the decision-making process and finding out the reasons why such an obviously irrational approach has been allowed.”

The filing of legal proceedings follows the pre-action protocol letter that was sent on the 24th of January to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs asking the government to admit liability for breaching its legal duty to conserve stocks and for the excessive levels of secrecy around the decision to set fishing opportunities.

*Some of the most familiar fish on supermarket shelves and in restaurants are being herded towards annihilation.*

CHARLES CLOVER, CO-FOUNDER OF BLUE MARINE

For the last three decades, the UK government has allowed over half of catch limits to be set above scientific advice, leading to the decline of key species such as mackerel, Celtic Sea cod, monkfish and Irish Sea whiting. Depleted fish populations puts a squeeze on the fishing industry, while

a small number of companies have seen a massive jump in profits. Years of overfishing have significantly impacted small inshore fleets, with a Seafish survey revealing a drop of over 25% in jobs and a 12% decline in vessels since 2022. This has to change in order to sustain local interests and livelihoods.

Post-Brexit fishing law requires that management of UK fisheries is based on the best available scientific advice and any decisions are made on a transparent basis. So laws are in place to secure the environment and the future of coastal communities, they just need to be adhered to.

What is the hoped-for outcome? If successful, this will be the precursor to reform fisheries management at a government level, which supports the national interest, livelihoods of coastal communities and the recovery of marine biodiversity within UK domestic waters. The case will also promote better governance across Europe. Fish do not respect national borders, so solutions to management failures in the UK will be equally useful in the European Union, Norway and beyond....

Read our report ‘Poor quota management decimating coastal livelihoods’ [here](#).

READ FULL ARTICLE

Read the article on our court case

READ FULL ARTICLE

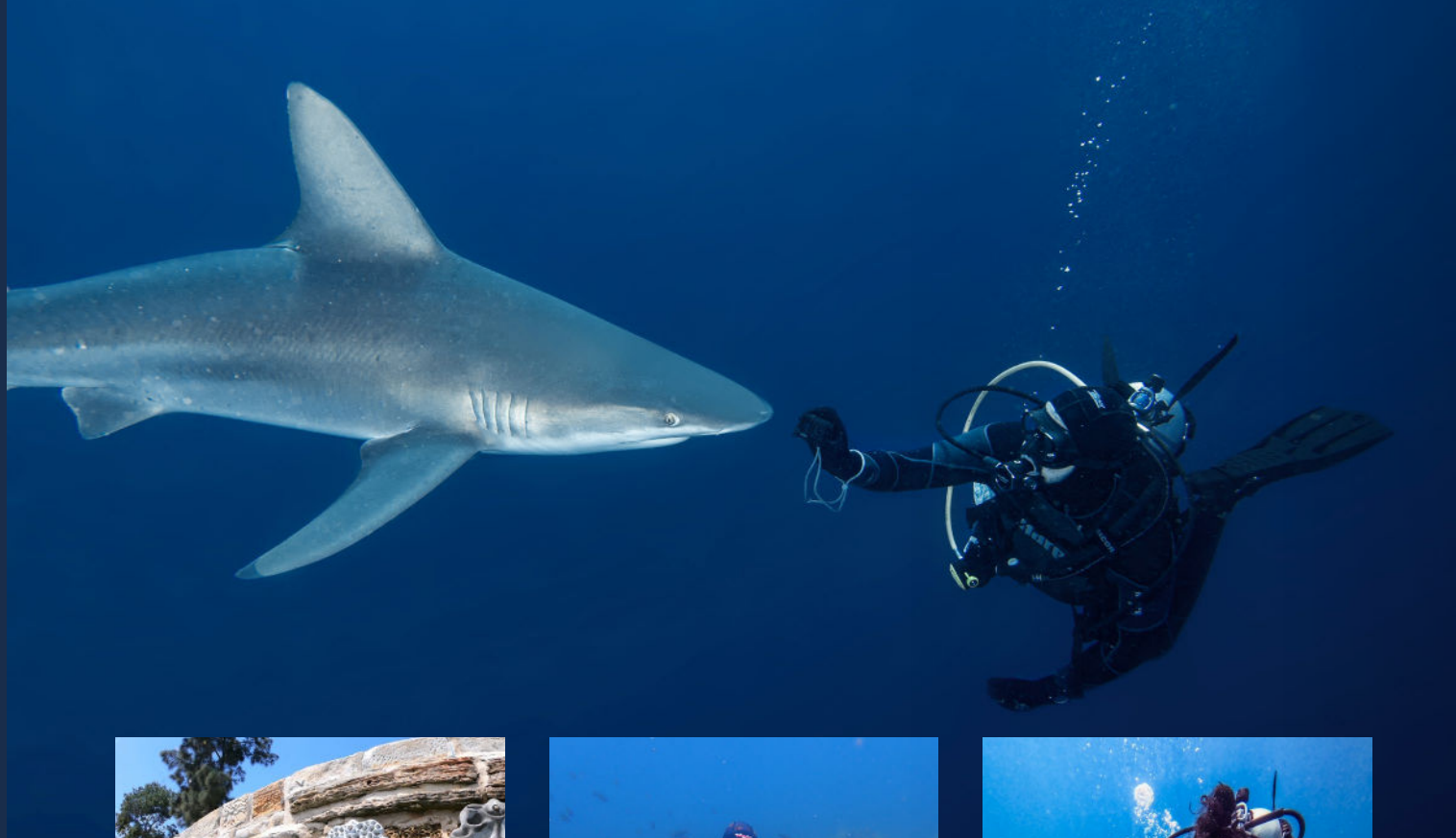
Read the article on the Cefas assessment

Fishing vessel

Photo: Nicolas Job, Ocean Image Bank







## Meet the Ocean Awards shortlist

Each year the Ocean Awards, held in partnership with Boat International, celebrate the achievements of individuals, groups and organisations from around the world that are dedicated to restoring the health of our oceans. This month, the Ocean Award judges created a shortlist of the nominees.

From living seawalls in Australia to protecting krill in Antarctica, the ocean award shortlist spans the globe, highlighting the varied and remarkable work by inspiring individuals and groups as we collectively fight for a better future for our oceans. In New

Zealand Kura Paul-Burke, a pioneering Māori marine biologist has worked with local tribal Elders in Ōhiwa Harbour in Aotearoa to successfully restore a once-decimated shellfish population. Over in Indonesia, Rose Huizenga, from the ambitious organisation, Coral Catch, empowers local women to protect the coral reefs. She hopes to train 100 women by 2030 and empower them to champion marine conservation, balancing motherhood with entrepreneurship elevating women's voices in the marine conservation space.

Meet this year's incredible shortlist [here](#).

### SEE THE SHORTLIST

Combatting illegal shark trade

**Photo:** Diego Cardeñosa

Building with Nature

**Photo:** Living Seawalls

Māori marine biologist

**Photo:** Kura Paul-Burke

Restoring coral reefs in Indonesia

**Photo:** Coral Catch

## Surveying Caribbean conch



Some of the Blue Marine international projects team have just returned from St. Vincent & The Grenadines where they have been surveying the abundance of conch to see how the wild nurseries are recovering after a season of being closed to fishing. Conch is a common name for large-sized sea snails or marine molluscs, and they are commonly consumed in the Caribbean.

Over the last five-to-ten years exploitation of the species has skyrocketed, putting wider marine habitats at risk. In 2022 Blue Marine conducted over 90 dive surveys to assess the population of conch around the island. The surveys found that 80- 90% of the conches were juvenile which led the government of St Vincent and the Grenadines to designate an official closed season from 1st September to 30th November

93

In February 2022, 93 base surveys were conducted by Blue Marine to measure conch abundance.

to protect the spawning aggregations and allow the exploited species to recover.

Building upon this success, the team recently returned to the island to conduct multiple stakeholder consultations with fishers and government policy makers. A further 23 dive surveys were conducted to explore potential juvenile conch habitats. The surveyed sites will now inform the first wild nurseries to protect juvenile conch habitats and protect future conch generations and the livelihoods of coastal communities.

Conch on the seafloor

**Photo:** Canva

Measuring conch lip to determine maturity

**Photo:** Canva



# Unlocking the carbon-storing secrets of the Orkney kelp forests

Orkney in Scotland is home to abundant kelp forests which are thought to help support carbon storage. Plymouth Marine Laboratory, in collaboration with Heriot-Watt University and Blue Marine is investigating how kelp moves carbon from the ocean to the seafloor.

Join our team of scientists in the field as we work to increase our understanding of kelp's involvement in the ocean carbon cycle and the value of protecting our kelp forests. Thank you to Parley TV for their continued support with this project.

Watch the film [here](#).

WATCH THE FILM

Kelp forests

Photo: Matt Jarvis

# Blue Marine presents at World Fisheries Congress, Seattle

On Wednesday 6 March, Blue Marine presented at the 9th World Fisheries Congress in Seattle, as part of a joint panel session with Fauna and Flora International.

Blue Marine highlighted the need to transition away from higher impact fishing practices and present a novel framework to assess the costs and benefits of transition options and demonstrate the applicability of a just transition framework through analysis of local UK case studies. Fauna and Flora presented a study developed to define and measure "destructive" fishing practices.

The just transition framework, presented by Blue Marine is a tool for assessing transition scenarios and realistic options for transitioning away from high impact fishing practices, including alternative fishing methods, and/or towards other sectors of the blue economy and forms part of Blue Marine's work to support a transition towards equitable and sustainable fisheries. Learn more [here](#).



Fishing boat surrounded by seagulls

Photo: iStock

# Sharing learnings between fishermen: A Mexican and Scottish perspective



Blue Marine's conservation engagement coordinator, Emily Bulled, has just returned from Baja California, where she facilitated a knowledge exchange between fishermen from Scotland and Mexico. The key purpose was to learn about how just transitions to low-impact activities and reductions in marine megafauna entanglement have been successful and challenging in two very different (but also similar) scenarios.

The Scottish fishermen and two PhD researchers were taken to Blue Marine's project site in a small fishing village called Agua Amarga, to meet the team at Blue's partner organisation, ORGCAS,

who are working tirelessly with artisanal shark fishermen in the Sea of Cortez to support them in a transition to tourism activities. This bottom-up, collaborative approach to management has not only provided the fishers with a stable alternative income, but is allowing the ecosystem to rest, contributing to recovery in one of the most biodiverse marine areas on the planet.

The team has returned with hours of video footage, quotes and recommendations that show the benefits of this collaborative way of working and inform successful fisheries management both in Scotland and internationally.

In the field in Baja

Photo: Emily Bulled



# The Big Give

Save the date! Blue Marine is delighted to be taking part of the 2024 Big Give from April 18th until April 25th. The Big Give is committed to match every donation made, meaning your support can have twice the impact!

This year Blue Marine's Big Give campaign is focused on supporting the Aeolians project, for three education programmes with children, fishers and the local community.

The Aeolian islands have been overfished by large fishing boats with quota for pelagic fish like swordfish and bluefin tuna. Blue Marine's mission in the Aeolians, working closely with the Sicily Environment Fund, is to reverse this through the establishment of an effective marine protected area and a low-impact, sustainable local fishery.

Mark your calendars and follow us [here](#) for more updates.

Aeolian islands  
Photo: Danny Copeland

# Webby nominee

VOTE HERE

Not just pioneering science, but pioneering storytelling, the Convex Seascape Survey website has been nominated for the 28th Annual Webby Awards. Convex Seascape Survey has been shortlisted for the Sustainability & Environment category.

The Webby Awards is the Internet's most respected symbol of success. The 28th Annual Webby Awards received nearly 13,000 entries from all 50 states and over 70 countries worldwide.

Vote for the Webby award [here](#).



# Inspiration From the Blue

Emily Bulled works in research, engagement and policy work across Blue Marine's UK sites such as Sussex, Berwickshire, and Jersey. Alongside her role at Blue Marine, Emily draws and paints the marine life that inspires her. She recently illustrated a beautiful whale shark for Blue Marine as part of our Be Gentle to Giants campaign.



DISCOVER MORE

# Lyme Bay project nominated for Award

Lyme Bay Fishermen's Community Interest Company was nominated for the "Initiative of the Year" in Fishing News Awards 2024. Lyme Bay Community Interest Company is the culmination of a 12-year Blue Marine-funded project.

The Lyme Bay Fisherman's CIC (LBFCIC) is a pioneering organisation set up by a group of 50 inshore fishermen who wanted to give their local

industry a voice, whilst engaging more effectively with the community and government regulators. LBFCIC is the first fishermen-led CIC and draws its membership from the small-scale fleets of the four ports of Axmouth, Beer, Lyme Regis and West Bay. The organisation has created a schools outreach programme, a seafood trail, and fishy scavenger hunts involving local businesses across the four ports.







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# THANK YOU *for your support!*

To learn more about marine  
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Eduardo Sorensen

**Photo:** *Biodiversity  
in patagonia*

