

## **Marine Mammal Scientific Support Research Programme MMSS/001/11**

### **MR4 Report**

## **Provision of an advice function to support regulators and appropriate regulatory bodies on matters concerning marine mammals**

### **Summary**

SMRU have had a close working relationship with various departments within Marine Scotland as well as with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee. This has previously been in the form of either informal discussions for short or easily answered questions or structured formal research contracts to answer more demanding or time consuming questions. In developing the MMSS 001/11 research programme Marine Scotland identified a need for a flexible form of advice service that would be intermediate between these two approaches. It was required to still respond rapidly to new and emerging issues but to also be able to call on SMRU staff to respond to any questions related to marine mammals. This task therefore aimed to deliver effective and timely advice (based on the best available information) to Marine Scotland and other public bodies upon request. The advice is based on the best available information to support Scottish Government requirements on issues relating to marine mammals and marine renewable developments.

- The amount of staff time required to support this advice service has varied through the course of the project and SMRU have continued throughout to respond informally to any approach for information from Government and their advisors. As part of this advice service SMRU were able to allocate staff time to three major tasks that resulted from the implementation of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010;
- Ongoing annual requirement to assess licence applications under Part 6 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010.
- An analysis of seal haul-out distributions and numbers to define designated sites for protection from disturbance.
- Annual provision of updated PBR calculations for Scottish seal populations by seal management region.

In addition to these major tasks, provision of informal advice when required and attendance at meetings with Marine Scotland and their statutory advisors SMRU have provide formal advice notes on a wide range of marine mammal issues as detailed below.