

Hope springs eternal – just off the coast

by Colin Cameron
editor@argyllshireadvertiser.co.uk

Argyll marine conservation groups have joined forces to have a chunk of our coastal waters declared a 'Hope Spot' – in a first for the British Isles.

The breathtaking variety of life and stunning scenery on land which we are familiar with in Argyll is, if anything, surpassed under our coastal waters.

It is one of the most biologically diverse marine regions in Scotland and the UK so a number of conservation groups – CAOLAS, covering the area around Loch Sunart; CROMACH, interested in the Loch Craignish area; Friends

of the Sound of Jura; and Save Seil Sound – decided to pursue a Hope Spot for the region.

Under the auspices of international marine conservation organisation Mission Blue, Hope Spots are areas of sea around the globe where hope remains – places where life is still winning.

And so the Argyll and the Islands Hope Spot was born – or soon will be, since the formal launch will not happen until June 8.

Speaking at a celebration and unofficial unveiling at Craignish Village Hall on May 14 was renowned wildlife photographer and film-maker John Aitchison, from Keills,

near Tayvallich. He joined a call to action, echoed by other speakers during the evening, to work to create a sustainable future for all species, humans included.

'The situation is very stark, very clear,' he said. 'We cannot delay in improving biodiversity in the seas and on land.'

He cited the example of the flapper skate, a species found in the Sound of Jura but internationally in such a precarious state that it is now



Celebrating the launch of the Argyll and Islands Hope Spot in Craignish Hall were, from left: Will Goudy, CROMACH; David and Jean Ainsley, Save Seil Sound; John Aitchison and Susan Osborn, Friends of the Sound of Jura; Ewan Kennedy, Save Seil Sound, and Philip Price, CROMACH. 06_a20HopeSpotLaunch03

more endangered than the giant panda. Another speaker, tour guide and photographer Philip Price, continued the theme, saying: 'Hope Spots represent international recognition of what we have – and what could be here. But this cannot be a flash in the pan, so the more people who are involved, the better.'

The upbeat mood in the packed hall was capped with a congratulatory message from Mission Blue founder and president Sylvia Earle. In a special video, she said: 'Thank you for being the first – but hopefully not the last – Hope Spot in Scotland and the UK.'

'There is a chance, thanks to people like you who care.'