



Scottish Environment LINK
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Richard Lochhead,
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment,
St. Andrew's House,
Regent Road,
Edinburgh. EH1 3DG

11th November 2015

Dear Mr Lochhead,

We have been very grateful for Marine Scotland's effort to keep the LINK Marine Taskforce¹ (hereafter 'LINK') updated about their work to develop fisheries management within the 13 recently-designated offshore nature conservation MPAs in Scotland, and indeed for existing offshore SACs in 2014.

Given the opportunity for further reflection on recent scientific findings of the impact of fishing on deepwater ecosystems² and on the process of scrutiny for proposed inshore MPA and SAC fisheries management measures, we are now writing to request that Marine Scotland considers the value of publically consulting on recommended measures for fisheries management in offshore MPAs and SACs.

During our participation in the Offshore MPA management workshops, we highlighted the importance of independent scientific and wider civic scrutiny of the fisheries management proposals. We were subsequently grateful for being offered the potential opportunity to seek wider academic input prior to, in time, making our own submission, but following further consideration we are of the view that there would be significant merit in opening the process up to broader comment via a short formal public consultation, for the following reasons:

1. Public resource and the 'social license' The biodiversity, including commercial fish species, and geodiversity within the Scottish Fisheries Zone are public resources for which there is a growing need to ensure a 'social license' for activities, including fishing, that seek to sustainably exploit those living and non-living resources. For the former, some deep sea fisheries have unsustainable impacts on vulnerable habitats and species that are often designated protected features where they occur within offshore MPAs and SACs. The level of protection secured for these features is inextricably linked to the ecological health of our seas and therefore has potentially far-reaching consequences for society. It is in the public interest for Scottish civic society to both understand and help inform how best to manage its remote, but rich marine environment. We have an international duty to steward this precious, but still little-understood part of our interconnected seas and, as signatories to the Aarhus Convention, the right to participate in environmental decision-making should be extended to the citizens of Scotland. Public consultation is a crucial method for

¹ <http://www.scotlink.org/workareas/marine/>

² Clarke, Jo, *et al.* "A Scientific Basis for Regulating Deep-Sea Fishing by Depth." *Current Biology* 25.18 (2015): 2425-2429.

building this societal understanding of the connections between our actions and the environment we depend upon. By consulting only a narrow group of 'interested stakeholders' we miss the opportunity to develop a sustainable 'social license' for the management decisions in our offshore area.

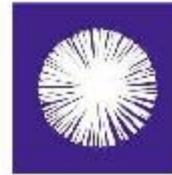
2. Consulting the interests of multiple stakeholders: many stakeholders are potentially affected by the management of fisheries within the Scottish Fisheries Zone, including for the purpose of designated sites achieving their nature conservation objectives. Offshore MPA management decisions could potentially displace fishing activity to areas where there are plans for other commercial marine activities. It would therefore be appropriate - and potentially resource-effective - to secure a broad and early consultative approach to decision-making. By comparison, the National Marine Plan extends to the continental shelf limits and was afforded a full public consultation.
3. Maintaining Marine Scotland's impressive consultative track record. Marine Scotland has led an impressive process of consultation for developing both the designation and management of Marine Protected Areas, the suite of sectoral plans and the National Marine Plan. Indeed, we wrote to you commending the Scottish Government's approach to the Planning Scotland's Seas consultation (see letter below). It is the rigorous approach to consultation that has underpinned progressive management and it is for this reason that we would urge the Scottish Government to maintain it.

We appreciate that our request would have resource implications for Marine Scotland, but we are strongly of the view that it would be in the public interest for the Scottish Government to lead a short public consultation on its recommended approach to fisheries management in Offshore MPAs and SACs following ICES's review of the draft measures. This is an opportunity to apply the 'social license' principles to the management of fragile offshore areas for the greater public good.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Calum Duncan', written in a cursive style.

Calum Duncan
(Scotland Programme Manager, Marine Conservation Society; Convener, LINK Marine Taskforce)



LINK

Richard Lochhead
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment
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10th September 2013

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Dear Mr Lochhead,

The Scottish Government's *Planning Scotland's Seas* consultation is a welcome, commendable and comprehensive package. The publication of supporting documentation for a large number of Marine Protected Area (MPAs) proposals is no mean feat, particularly when considering it has been produced in parallel to the National Marine Plan and marine renewable energy consultations.

Following previous discussion, I wanted to take the opportunity to highlight work that Scottish Environment LINK has been doing to raise awareness of the consultation. To help engage the many communities of place and of interest that have a stake in the future health of our marine environment, LINK has developed an online webmap to help promote the consultation and facilitate further public engagement with the Scottish Government proposals, most specifically with MPAs. Using the geographic data for the proposed MPA network, the LINK webmap draws together the inshore and offshore MPA proposals and highlights where the official consultation information events are taking place. We reference the official supporting documentation and provide links to the relevant pages for each MPA proposal. The webpages can be viewed here:
<http://www.savescottishseas.org/scottish-marine-protected-area-network/>
<http://www.savescottishseas.org/get-involved/events/>
<http://www.savescottishseas.org/scottish-marine-protected-area-network/firth-of-forth-banks-complex-mpa/>

We look forward to continued engagement on this important work.

Yours sincerely,

Calum Duncan

LINK Marine Taskforce Convener

On behalf of:

Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
Marine Conservation Society
National Trust for Scotland
RSPB Scotland

Scottish Ornithologists' Club
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Whale and Dolphin Conservation
WWF Scotland

cc: David Mallon, Marine Scotland

Scottish Environment **LINK** The voice of Scotland's environment movement

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