

Roseanna Cunningham
Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change
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2nd February 2018

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

I am writing on behalf of Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Group following the Scottish Parliament's vote in support of the Scottish Budget on Wednesday.

Our members warmly welcome the committed allocation of additional funding to accelerate the progression of the four proposed nature conservation Marine Protected Areas (ncMPAs) identified by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 2014 for the protection of minke whale, Risso's dolphin, basking shark, sandeel and important marine habitats and large-scale features. Given the conservation significance of the proposed ncMPAs, we are delighted to see that the additional resource will allow these sites to be consulted upon a year earlier.

There is strong scientific evidence for the designation of Sea of the Hebrides, Northeast Lewis, Shiant East Bank and Southern Trench ncMPAs with SNH formal advice in July 2014 determining 'that all four of the MPA proposals should be designated'. If designated and with good management in place, these ncMPAs would enhance Scotland's credentials as a leader in marine conservation, and fill vital gaps in Scotland's MPA network.

We look forward to meeting with you, as part of a regular LINK bilateral, to discuss the accelerated progression of these sites and to continued constructive engagement with Marine Scotland officials.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Calum Duncan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "C" and "D".

Calum Duncan
LINK Marine Group Convener
Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society

Cc Derek Mackay
Cabinet Secretary for Finance and the Constitution