

Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform

Roseanna Cunningham MSP

Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh EH1 3DG



24th May 2017

cc. Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity Fergus Ewing MSP

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Following recent events in Loch Carron, where scallop dredging damaged a flame-shell reef, we are writing to express our support for your rapid and decisive response in designating Loch Carron as an MPA, protected by an emergency Marine Conservation Order. We welcome the swift evidence gathering and data sharing by SNH and Marine Scotland Science, corroborating local community witnesses and the citizen science data gathered following the incident.

We welcome your commitment to begin work to ensure that fisheries do not significantly impact the national status of flame-shell reefs and some other Priority Marine Features (PMFs) outside the MPA network, consistent with the Marine Nature Conservation Strategy and the requirement of General Policy 9(b) of Scotland's National Marine Plan. Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Group has consistently called for all PMFs to be appropriately protected across their range and further specific measures both in fisheries and other sectors will be needed to help achieve this.

The urgent need for reform was recognised in Scotland's Inshore Fisheries Strategy: '21st century fisheries management needs 21st century tools'. The current programme for Government includes a welcome commitment to develop an Inshore Fisheries Bill. An effective and progressive management approach that integrates inshore fishery management into the National and developing Regional Marine Plans is urgently needed, not only to protect vulnerable PMFs and critical fish and shellfish habitats, but also to help address other issues such as spatial and gear conflict.

In view of the high level of public interest in this matter, and our wish to make our support for your decisive response public we intend to publish this letter on our website. We look forward to working with you and all stakeholders on this important work.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Calum Duncan'.

Calum Duncan

Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society
Convenor, Scottish Environment LINK's Marine Group
www.scotlink.org/workareas/marine/

On behalf of:

Marine Conservation Society
RSPB Scotland
Whale and Dolphin Conservation

National Trust for Scotland
Scottish Wildlife Trust
WWF Scotland



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