



Convener,
Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee,
Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh,
EH99 1SP

March 18th 2013

Scottish Environment LINK
2 Grosvenor House
Shore Road
Perth
PH2 8BD

Tel 01738 630804
Fax 01738 643290

enquiries@scotlink.org
www.scotlink.org

Dear Convener,

We welcome the inclusion of a session on Marine Planning in the RACCE workplan, and also that specific note is made of Marine Protected Areas in your recently published statement on biodiversity strategy. We are keen to see this evidence taken at a time that is appropriate and useful to the decisions being made by Government.

It is our understanding that the current intention is for the session to be convened in early June to fall a month before the scheduled start of the public consultation on Marine Protected Areas and the National Marine Plan. However, we would like to draw attention to decisions fundamental to the efficacy of this work that currently lie with the Cabinet Secretary and that will be taken before that time. In particular, whether or not all Scottish MPA proposals are to be consulted on this summer; in England, all were not consulted on and almost 2,000 people marched on the UK Parliament on Feb 25th in protest. We are concerned that June evidence will therefore miss the opportunity to scrutinise these decisions and instead only allow for a retrospective discussion.

We therefore ask that RACCE take evidence on marine issues, particularly those relating to the Scottish Government's intention to consult on the full set of Scottish MPA proposals and its intention to address gaps in the features protected, earlier in the year in April or May. This will allow the evidence to be taken at a time that can usefully inform discussions between Government and Ministers and help in their consideration of the decisions they are currently tasked with.

The Government's work on Marine Protected Areas represents a historic change in the way we manage our seas, and is a fundamental part of implementing legislation passed by the Scottish Parliament. To miss a key opportunity to look at how Scotland's Government is fulfilling its legal duties, instead to do so at a time when that work could not be influenced by Parliament, would be regrettable.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries.

Yours sincerely,

Calum Duncan
Chair
Scottish Environment LINK Marine Task Force

Scottish Environment  The voice of Scotland's environment movement

Registered Office: 2 Grosvenor House, Shore Road, Perth PH2 8BD. A Scottish Charity under Scottish Charity No SC0002
Scottish Environment LINK is a Scottish Company Limited by guarantee and without a share capital under Company No 1

