

**Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Energy**  
Rùnaire a' Chaibineit airson Gnìomhachd na Gnàth-shìde agus Cumhachd  
**Gillian Martin MSP**  
Gillian Mhàrtainn BPA



**Scottish Government**  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
gov.scot

T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Jessica Jones  
esther@scotlink.org

Our Reference: 202600507524  
Your Reference: MPA 100-day commitment

4 March 2026

Dear Jessica,

Thank you for your letter dated 17 February 2026 in relation to the consultation on fisheries management measures for inshore Marine Protected Areas and Priority Marine Feature management areas.

I recognise your concern regarding the postponement of the consultation until after the election. While it is not possible to set out an indicative timetable as I cannot pre-empt the outcome of the election, the intention is to launch the consultation without any unnecessary delays. Final fisheries management measures will be implemented as soon as possible once the consultation responses have been analysed and a final decision on the measures taken.

As I previously explained, the volume and complexity of proposed measures require a full 16 week consultation. It was not possible to do this before the election. It is important that we give all stakeholders sufficient time to share their perspectives fully and ensure that we provide all of the necessary information for them to respond to.

Work is ongoing to ensure that the statutory assessments are robust, so that everyone has confidence in them. We have sought extra resource within the policy team as well as from NatureScot to assist with the completion of the Fisheries Assessments. No further delays are anticipated in completion of these assessments.

As mentioned in my previous response, we are aware of knowledge gaps that may be limiting the potential of inshore fisheries to deliver long-term benefits for communities. These knowledge gaps Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1  
3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Silver



relate to impacts on communities as I recognise that these new measures may bring additional challenges to coastal communities, and we are actively exploring ways to further support fishers, fishing-related industries, and their communities.

We are producing a Mitigation Plan, which will be fully developed after the consultation has concluded and management options have been determined. The mitigation plan relates to the impacts that may arise from introduction of the measures. The measures are based on achieving the conservation objectives of each site first and foremost. Closing these knowledge gaps will not impact the developed fisheries management measures.

Regarding the evidence base for management measures, these proposals are based on NatureScot and JNCC conservation management advice on feature sensitivity to fishing activity. The conservation management advice used to inform the measures takes a risk-based approach and is influenced by the level of evidence and knowledge available. All proposals to manage the MPA network and the proposed PMF management areas are evidence-led, based on Sustainability Appraisals, and underpinned by stakeholder engagement at all stages.

Developing measures that best further achievement of conservation objectives and policy protections in the National Marine Plan is the core aim of the proposals. Ecological requirements are being treated as fixed constraints by:

- prioritising the conservation objectives and national status of the 11 Priority Marine Features (PMFs) in this process
- Ensuring the fulfilment of legal obligations (Habitats Regulations, Marine Acts) requiring ecological protection
- Designing measures around feature sensitivity and distribution
- Applying precaution where evidence was uncertain
- Implementing spatial/gear restrictions which are aimed at achieving the conservation objective of the sites. For example, full site closures where only one option was identified as enabling the achievement of the desired level of protection for the feature(s) in question.

The Scottish Government is deeply committed to protecting our marine environment through the three-pillar approach of species, spatial and wider seas measures.

My officials would be happy to meet with you and discuss this further.

Yours sincerely



**GILLIAN MARTIN**

Scottish Ministers, special advisers and the Permanent Secretary are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

Tha Ministearanna h-Alba, an luchd-comhairleachaidh sònraichte agus Rùnaire Maireannach fo chumhachan Achd Coiteachaidh (Alba) 2016. Faicibh [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot)

St Andrew's House, Regent Road, Edinburgh EH1  
3DG  
[www.gov.scot](http://www.gov.scot)



**INVESTORS IN PEOPLE™**  
We invest in people Silver

