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2nd June, 2026

Gillian Martin, Cabinet Secretary for Climate Action and Rural Affairs
Scottish Government

CC Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture, Marine and the Islands

Dear Cabinet Secretary,

Congratulations on your appointment at the start of the new Parliamentary Session. We look forward to working with you on marine environmental matters over the coming period. At this early opportunity, we would like to express our aspirations for productive and constructive co-management of fisheries policy, to which we are fully committed. We hope this letter will open a constructive dialogue with you and the Marine Directorate as the new session begins.

The Fisheries Management and Conservation groups (FMAC) have historically provided a forum in which commercial fishing industry representatives, scientists, coastal communities and environmental non-government organisations could engage jointly with Marine Directorate officials on shared fisheries management issues. We believe this integrated approach was a valuable foundation for the kind of inclusive co-management that is central to Scotland's stated policy ambitions.

We were therefore concerned by the decision taken during the previous parliamentary session to split the FMAC stakeholder forums, creating separate committees for commercial fishing organisations and ENGOs that now meet independently to discuss substantially the same agenda with government officials. In our view, this structural change was counterproductive and inconsistent with Scotland's commitments under the Joint Fisheries Statement (JFS), which sits under the UK Fisheries Act 2020.

The JFS sets out a clear commitment that fisheries policy authorities are committed to furthering, developing and strengthening arrangements for moving towards co-management of fisheries and promoting inclusivity and involvement in the management approach across all parts of society. The deliberate separation of fishing industry and environmental stakeholders into parallel but siloed forums is, in our opinion, directly at odds with this obligation. Co-management requires that parties with an interest in fisheries outcomes engage with one another and with government in a shared



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space. Separate forums do not promote inclusivity, they undermine it, and they risk entrenching division rather than building the shared understanding that sustainable fisheries management demands.

We are also concerned about a broader fragmentation of fisheries governance. The separation of fisheries from wider marine environmental policy workstreams, such as the exclusion of fisheries from Regional Marine Plans, and then the further division within the fisheries stakeholder forum itself, represents a cumulative retreat from integrated management. The trend runs contrary to the ecosystem-based approach that underpins both the JFS and Scotland's wider marine planning framework.

We therefore ask you to re-establish the integrated FMAC forums into more inclusive working groups to ensure fisheries and environmental interest can hear each other's perspectives directly, reduce misunderstanding and build trust, and provide a more robust foundation for collaborative decision-making in this complex policy area. We recognise that sectoral and environmental interests do not always agree on every issue and we do not suggest otherwise. However, genuine co-management requires that disagreements be worked through in a shared forum, not managed separately in ways that prevent dialogue from occurring at all.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss these concerns with you and your officials at the earliest convenience, and we look forward to working with you and other stakeholders through the FMAC forums.

Your sincerely,



Esther Brooker
Senior Marine Advocacy Officer, Scottish Environment LINK

On behalf of Scottish Environment LINK and Our Seas Coalition Members:

Atlantic Salmon Trust
Community of Arran Seabed Trust
Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust
National Trust for Scotland
Scottish Wildlife Trust
The Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust

And the Coastal Communities Network.



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