



Scottish Natural Heritage Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland
Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

Our Ref: PF021/12-13

Stuart Todd
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee
petitions@scottish.parliament.uk

10 August 2012

Dear Mr Todd,

Response to Public Petitions Committee consideration of PE1431 questions arising from Committee meetings

Thank you for inviting views from SNH on issues that the Public Petitions Committee has raised during consideration of PE1431 on a Fair Isle Marine Protected Area.

Background

SNH has worked with the community of Fair Isle over a number of years. This has included work on existing protected areas around the Isle. There are several protected areas already on Fair Isle, set up for a range of features, including some terrestrial habitats but largely focusing on the sea birds for which the island is so well known. The existing protected areas include a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Area of Conservation and a Special Protection Area. The whole of the seas around Fair Isle are already protected for some seabirds under the Special Protection Area.

SNH's view on the petition

The petition seeks for the waters around Fair Isle to be designated as a Marine Protected Area (MPA). The Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 provides for three kinds of MPA: (a) a nature conservation MPA; (b) a demonstration and research MPA; and (c) a historic MPA.

We welcome the community of Fair Isle's engagement with the MPA selection process to date. As the petition notes, Scottish Government policy is to select nature conservation MPAs through a science-based process, depending on the presence of a relatively restricted suite of priority nature conservation marine features. SNH is making recommendations to Marine Scotland about the locations which best meet the science-based criteria in inshore waters, based on the best available data, and Fair Isle has not come forward as one of those.

The Fair Isle community has submitted a proposal for a Demonstration & Research MPA. Our understanding is that the purpose of these MPAs will be to enable novel

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techniques and new approaches to management of the marine environment to be tested. We can see ways in which the proposed demonstration and research MPA around Fair Isle could contribute to this purpose. We would support that proposal especially if it would strengthen Fair Isle's case for continuation of the European Diploma. Marine Scotland has the lead role in assessing proposals for demonstration and research MPAs and is in the process of assessing Fair Isle's proposal alongside other similar proposals. SNH will continue to support Marine Scotland through the provision of information and advice throughout this process.

Please contact Katie Gillham (Katie.Gillham@snh.gov.uk) if you have any queries relating to this response.

Yours sincerely,

SUSAN DAVIES
Director, Policy and Advice