

PE1431/J

Petition PE1431 to Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee: Marine Protected Area for Fair Isle waters - September 2013 Update

I am writing to update the Petitions Committee on developments as they stand at 26th September 2013 in relation to the Fair Isle petition PE1431. They are as follows:

Meetings with Fishermen's organisations: Contrary to the report in the May 2013 update to the SPPPC, meetings planned between the Fair Isle community and the Shetland Fishermen's Association have not taken place. This was due to various circumstances, including full planes into the isle and holidays preventing the SFA representatives from attending. The SFA has confirmed, both to the Fair Isle community and the Shetland Marine Spatial Plan Advisory Group, that it still intends to honour the community invitation to visit and discuss ways forward together.

The Scottish Fishermen's Federation, representing 7 fishing organisations whom we are informed are stakeholders in Fair Isle waters, has deflected a second invitation from the community to visit. The first invitation, which came from the Fair Isle Community Association Chairman on behalf of the community, was countered with a request that the meeting be hosted by themselves. However, it is the community that wishes to engage with the stakeholders and the resource under discussion comprises Fair Isle waters. We cannot ship an entire community to mainland Scotland for discussions. This was explained in a second invitation issued by the community. The SFF secretary responded that Demonstration & Research MPAs will not be considered by Marine Scotland before 2014 so there was plenty of time, thus date and venue could be determined later. In other words, the SFF has still not committed to engage with us on the isle.

Fair Isle is hoping that influential third parties may be able to persuade the SFF to honour the invitation and work with the community to achieve an outcome which we consider of long-term value and benefit to all stakeholders. One such body is the Shetland Marine Spatial Plan Advisory Group. The Chair of the Fair Isle Community Association is in receipt of a letter from the Chair of the Shetland Marine Spatial Plan Advisory Group stating "*As the SMSP and Fair Isle MPA proposal share the same aim of promoting sustainable use of marine resources around Shetland, the Advisory Group has asked me to offer its broad support for the Fair Isle community aspirations as set out in the proposals for designation of the Isle as a Research and Development MPA.*"

Marine Scotland timetable for D&R MPAs: Sebastian Howell of Marine Scotland has kept Fair Isle informed of the timetable. We understand that the Nature Conservation MPA consultation process is occupying the time and focus of Marine Scotland, hence the delay in D&R progress. We are very keen to speak with the fishermen's groups; and other stakeholders such as tourism, transport etc. which we see as playing a key role in the socio-economic development we associate with the designation. We want to see progress but we want the outcomes to be as good as they can be. The timetable does allow us to pursue this.

Nick Riddiford, 26th September 2013