

PE1431/L

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

Update of progress to 5th November 2014

I am pleased to inform the committee that considerable progress has been made during 2014. We are now engaged in conversation with the fishing industry (as represented by the Shetland Fishermen's Association and Scottish Fishermen's Federation) towards working together on the MPA development; and the community appreciated the visit by representatives of the SFF and SFA for preliminary discussions in the spring.

The proposal is receiving more and more support, both in terms of guidance and advice and in recognition of the potential benefits. For instance, the Shetland Tourism Association has come out with full written support, as has the Shetland Marine Spatial Plan Advisory Group. Fauna & flora international has appointed a marine community officer who is working closely with the Fair Isle community to help with the engagement of stakeholders and to identify potential partners in the development of the Demonstration and Research elements of the MPA.

A number of research organisations are on board already and, on behalf of the community, I am talking to other potential participants, both for the environmental studies and socio-economic research including a cost-benefit analysis for all stakeholders. The Scottish Association for Marine Studies' head of education has declared an interest in getting involved in this process.

One of the latest developments has been a visit by the independent consultants and a representative of Marine Scotland to assess the proposal and seek the views of the Fair Isle community. A meeting held for the community on 29th October 2014 was well attended and the input from the assessor in particular proved to be constructive in clarifying outstanding issues and providing a pathway for further development and planning. A separate report of the meeting has been provided directly to the Petitions Committee by Sebastian Howell of Marine Scotland. I have read this report and concur that it is a true account of the meeting.

The Council of Europe Group of Specialists has been kept informed of developments and is following the process closely.

Nick Riddiford

Coordinator, *Fair Isle Marine Environment & Tourism Initiative* (on behalf of the Fair Isle Community)

5th November 2014