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24 March 2026

Dear Edward,

Thank you for your letter dated 17 March 2026, noting comments from the Scottish Fishermen's Federation (SFF) on the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Offshore Wind) (Miscellaneous Amendments) (Scotland) Regulations 2026 ("the SSI").

I would like to clarify the statement that I made in my evidence to the Committee on 17 February where I stated that "Regarding our general engagement with the fishing sector, it will have, and already has had, opportunities through that engagement to help to shape the compensation measures that have been structured."

The fishing sector, including the SFF, have been actively engaged on the Strategic Compensation Policy for Offshore Wind development and this SSI. This engagement has included participation in the public consultation in Summer 2026 on the policy proposals underpinning the SSI and in stakeholder engagement opportunities both during and after the consultation.

In addition, my officials continue to work closely with marine stakeholders, including the SFF, on development of the compensation hierarchy and the statutory guidance associated with the regulations. The SFF was invited to review an early draft of the guidance and hierarchy and provide written feedback, which will help shape its further development and ensure it is fit for purpose. In addition to written input, a series of targeted stakeholder engagement sessions were held this month, one of which was attended by the SFF, and which offered opportunities for discussion, questions, and for stakeholders to raise any concerns.

However, the SFF have not been engaged to date in the research that Scottish Government has commissioned which is exploring the benefits and feasibility of potential Scottish compensatory measures for offshore wind. This work is being taken forward through a suite of five projects collectively known as the Portfolio of Compensatory Measures. This research is the first step in the exploration of potential compensatory measures for Scotland and does not represent a commitment by the Scottish Government to progress any of these compensatory measures.

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The Portfolio of Compensatory Measures initial five research projects have focussed on quantifying the ecological benefits of compensatory measures, particularly for seabirds (given the likely need for compensation for seabirds in Scotland). Project Steering Groups (PSGs) established for these projects focussed on technical experts in ornithology as well as representatives from Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies (SNCBs) and Scottish Government officials across policy areas, including fishing policy.

Given the scope of the projects and given this is initial research and not an identification of measures for taking forward, the PSG representation was targeted. SFF were not represented at this stage because the remit of the PSGs was confined to technical ecological analysis, and wider stakeholder involvement with fisheries stakeholders, including SFF will be sought at later stages when potential measures begin to be identified and assessed for delivery feasibility.

The Scottish Government will, of course, be engaging with all relevant stakeholders involved in, or affected by, compensatory measures for offshore wind development, including the fishing sector, as work in this area progresses. Such engagement is a vital component of transparent, robust decision-making for Government-led compensatory measures.

In addition, any compensatory measures proposed by Government would be subject to full consideration of potential impacts, including the completion of appropriate impact assessments.

We are committed to working with our vital fishing sector and other stakeholders in the implementation of this legislation and policy and as we look to develop Scotland's Portfolio of Compensatory Measures.



GILLIAN MARTIN

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