Dear Rob

I am writing to inform you of further new conservation measures proposed for the Scottish marine environment in relation to existing Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

I last wrote to you regarding MPA management measures on 18 December 2015. In that letter I informed you that further consultation would be taking place for three specific sites - Small Isles, Wester Ross, and Loch Sunart to the Sound of Jura. That consultation process was completed on 18 January 2016.

I can confirm that 2 marine conservation orders were laid in Parliament on 04 February 2016. These are for the Wester Ross MPA and the Loch Sunart to Sound of Jura MPA. I am satisfied that these measures are appropriate to be implemented now. They will make a real difference to protecting vulnerable habitats and species; helping to improve the health of our seas.

I have decided not to take forward measures for the Small Isles MPA at this time. There are still some issues to be resolved and there simply isn’t enough time for that to be achieved. Marine Scotland will be working with stakeholders to address remaining concerns. I anticipate a new draft Order being ready for further consultation in June 2016 and being laid in Parliament at the end of summer recess.

By the time Parliament dissolves there should be robust management measures in place for 16 out of the 17 high priority environmentally sensitive locations in our coastal waters. I am grateful to you and the rest of the committee for your support and scrutiny of our progress towards improved environmental management.

05 February 2016
The two areas that are the subject of the latest Marine Conservation Orders will also be covered by the 3 point mitigation plan that I announced in December 2015:

**Mitigation:** Resources for diversification are an early priority for the new European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) which launched in January 2016.

**Environmental Monitoring:** A new environmental monitoring strategy which will be launched later in 2016. It will include opportunities for fishing vessels to participate with funding of up to £500,000 available over 3 years.

**Economic Monitoring:** Monitor the effects closely including reporting annually on the socio-economic outcomes of MPAs and the status of affected communities involving stakeholders in the production.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Lochhead

RICHARD LOCHHEAD