Dear Graeme,

I am writing to inform you of the next steps with the Loch Carron Marine Protected Area (MPA).

As you will recall Loch Carron was designated as an urgent MPA in May 2017, following damage to flame shell beds caused by a dredging incident. Alongside this an urgent Marine Conservation Order (MCO) was put in place to prohibit the deployment and use of bottom contacting mobile fishing gears in the MPA.

As an urgent MPA can only last for two years action needs to be taken to ensure suitable protection remains in place. Therefore I am pleased to advise the ECCLR committee that a consultation to make Loch Carron a permanent MPA, with an associated MCO, has been launched this morning. Please see consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/loch-carron-mpa for details. The existing MPA will remain in force throughout this process, and should be seamlessly replaced no later than May 2019.

The existing MCO expires in May 2018 unless continued for another year. I am also pleased to advise you that I will be making a Continuation Order to achieve this later today, and expect to lay this in Parliament on Thursday. This should ensure management measures remain in place until the proposed permanent MCO takes effect no later than May 2019.

Thank you for your continued support of the Scottish Government's marine conservation programme.

Yours,

Roseanna Cunningham