01 October 2018

Dear Gillian,

In 2016 the Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform informed you about the consultation on the scientific case to classify 15 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), to fulfil requirements under the EU Wild Birds Directives and to ensure the long term health of these species in our waters. I am delighted to now inform you of a new consultation on the Strategic Environmental Assessment of the proposals and an accompanying SPA Network Assessment, that began on the 14th September and completes on the 9th November.

Following completion of the consultation that ended in January 2017, a Network Assessment of the proposals was commissioned to confirm that the most suitable territories have been selected. The results of the assessment have informed the options considered by the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that has now been produced, as a requirement of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) 2005 Act.

As part of the process to determine whether the 15 proposed SPAs should be classified, we now invite views on both the findings of the SEA and the Network Assessment via our consultation platform: https://consult.gov.scot/marine-scotland/sea-for-15-proposed-special-protection-areas/

My aim following this final step is for the final proposals to be classified by the end of 2018.

I trust you find this update of interest to ensure we fulfil our responsibilities for our iconic seabird species.

MAIRI GOUGEON