Alasdair Firth Chair, CAOLAS Cobblers Cottage Driminin Morvern By Oban Argyll PA80 5XZ

First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP

cc: Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Fergus Ewing MSP, Mairi Gougeon MSP

First Minister of Scotland Scottish Government, St Andrew's House, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

25th February 2019

The urgent need to recover our coastal waters

Dear First Minister.

On the 17th December we wrote to you imploring you to urgently tackle the problem of illegal fishing in Scotland's Marine Protected Areas and address the legacy of environmental damage caused by inadequate spatial regulation of bottom-towed fishing methods in our coastal waters.

We were disappointed to receive the reply from one of your officials in Marine Scotland which simply re-stated what many already know – details of the current enforcement capacity of Marine Scotland, the prospective investment in inshore vessel monitoring and the Scotlish Government's plans to conduct a National Discussion on the future of fisheries management.

Your official describes Marine Scotland's existing enforcement capacity as "all aiming to ensure high levels of compliance with fisheries and environmental regulations." Regrettably, as people who live and work around Scotland's coasts, this is not our experience of fisheries enforcement. Many of our signatory bodies have first-hand experience of reporting illegal activity: in some cases there has been no response, no follow-up and the suspected vessel has continued operating suspiciously into the future, thereby highlighting the limitations of Marine Scotland to investigate suspicious fishing activity.

As if to prove our point, and in direct contradiction to the comments made by your official, yet another report of suspected illegal dredging in the Sound of Mull has been recorded, just a week after receiving your response.

We have discussed your response as a group and are saddened that it does not appear to understand or address the urgency of the problem. It suggests that the Scottish Government has misjudged the depth of feeling and concern expressed by a large body of interest represented by the signatory organisations.

We patiently request a meeting with yourself or one of your Ministers to discuss this issue, and we would gladly do this with the enforcement teams and alongside representatives of the Regional Inshore Fisheries Group to ensure proper participation. In the meantime, we entreat you to take all reasonable measures in your gift to stopping illegal and damaging scallop dredging in our coastal waters.

Yours sincerely,

Alasdair Firth

Chair, Community Association of Lochs and Sounds (CAOLAS)

on behalf of the following signatories:





CAOLAS*





Board











































Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation









Scottish Sub-Agua Club





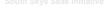


Sealife Adventrues



Skye and Lochalsh Environment Forum







Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust





Scottish Salmon Think Tank

