

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 Scottish 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:

Angling Trust



Ayr Angling Club



Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board



Centre for Human Ecology



Coastal Connection



Community Association of Lochs and Sounds (CAOLAS)



Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST)



Community of Arran Seabed Trust (COAST)



Ethical Shellfish Company



Fairlie Coastal Trust



Fauna & Flora International



Fish Legal



Friends of the Sound of Jura



Galgael Trust



Inverness Sub Aqua Club



Knoydart Foundation Ranger Service



Loch Visions



Lochnell Oysters



Mull Charters



National Trust for Scotland



Skye Communities for Natural Heritage



Nourish Scotland



Oban Sea School



Open Seas



Orkney Skate Trust



Project Seagrass



Salmon Aquaculture Reform Network Scotland



Save Sell Sound



Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation



Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers



Scottish Scallop Divers' Association



Scottish Sea Angling Conservation Network



Scottish Sub-Aqua Club



Sea Change



Sea Freedom Kayaks



Sealife Adventruess



Skye and Lochalsh Environment Forum



South Skye Seas Initiative



Sustainable Inshore Fisheries Trust



Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board



Scottish Salmon Think Tank

