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Finlay Carson MSP
Convenor
Rural Affairs, Islands and Natural Environment
Committee c/o Clerk to the Committee

The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

12 December 2022

Dear Convenor,

I am writing to inform you of the next steps with the Red Rocks & Longay Marine Protected Area (MPA).

As you will recall Red Rocks & Longay was designated as an urgent MPA in March 2021 to protect flapper skate eggs, extended in December 2021 and a public consultation launched earlier this year. An urgent Marine Conservation Order (MCO) was put in place to ensure the conservation objectives could be achieved which was continued in February 2022, lasting until March 2023.

The public consultation has now concluded and final management measures developed for the MPA. The only changes to the permanent MCO from the Urgent MCO is the removal of the prohibition on diving to allow observational recreational diving and hand diving for scallops to take place, provided these activities comply with the other measures of the MCO such as the prohibition of the killing, taking, destruction, molestation, touching or disturbance of flapper skate or their eggs.

In order to ensure that the area receives permanent protection, I am pleased to advise the RAINE committee that the permanent designation Order is being made on 13 December 2022 and permanent MCO laid on 15 December 2022, with the aim of permanent designation and protection coming into force on 09 February 2023.

I have announced my intent to designate Red Rocks and Longay as an MPA alongside my announcement of the HPMA consultation launch today, Monday 12 December.

Having only announced my intention to designate, no direct reference to the laying date of the 15 December 2022 has yet been made and I was clear that legislation would be introduced to parliament very soon.

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

Yours sincerely,



MAIRI MCALLAN MSP

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