

Written submission from COSLA

12 January 2015

Rob Gibson MSP

Chair of Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee

Scotland's National Marine Plan

Dear Rob

Thank you for your letter dated 8 January 2015. The COSLA Development, Economy and Sustainability Committee haven't discussed the issue of marine planning further since our response on 25 October 2013. However, it is on the agenda for our next meeting on 20 February 2015. In the context of previous discussions, members highlighted that marine developments have had an impact on the resources of local planning and other departments within the council in the past, for which local authorities were not currently resourced as a separate funding stream. Also, views were expressed that further marine planning requirements could have a similar impact on resources.

Regional Marine Plans if not fully resourced could possibly take further resources away from land-use planning at a time when Scottish Ministers have outlined the desire for further continuous improvements in the speed of processing applications and renewing statutory plans. Given that the Scottish Parliament have recently passed the Regulatory Reform (Scotland) Act 2014 introducing the ability for Scottish Ministers to reduce planning fees on the basis of unacceptable performance, it could be the case when we meet next month that COSLA members have concerns about prioritising planning resources to marine planning when under scrutiny and potential penalty for any poor performance in processing terrestrial planning applications. This is an especially important consideration at a time when current planning fees only just provide 75% cost recovery for development management functions of terrestrial planning when it should be a full cost recovery service.

On the specific question of the level of experience and expertise in marine planning in local authorities, the availability of marine planning specialist skills have not been the subject of any survey amongst councils to my knowledge. Therefore I am not in a position to provide an answer to your question within the very limited statutory timescale you and your committee are under, however I can ask officers to liaise with Heads of Planning Scotland about the availability of specialist skills data.

Kind Regards



Cllr Stephen Hagan

COSLA Spokesperson for Development, Economy and Sustainability