

First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP
Scottish Government
St. Andrew's House
Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DG

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

14 October 2020

Dear First Minister,

The Edinburgh declaration – A response from coastal communities

As members of coastal communities across Scotland who rely on healthy marine ecosystems and inshore zones for the future of our communities, we have read with interest the [Edinburgh Declaration on post-2020 global biodiversity framework](#) published on 31st August 2020.

In Scotland, as elsewhere in the world, we are facing catastrophic changes as a result of biodiversity loss and climate change. We are pleased to see that the Declaration recognises the need for urgent action to tackle the biodiversity and climate change crises and identifies the key role of local communities in helping deliver this action.

We support the commitment set out in the Declaration for the post-2020 global biodiversity framework and note that it incorporates many positive intentions. We are, however, deeply concerned that without the necessary transformative change in thinking and action at national, subnational, city and local authority levels - change that needs to happen quickly - we will fail to address the environmental challenges we face. The Declaration recognises the dependence of humanity on the natural world but, if the statements within it are to be more than just fine words, the actions and decisions we take now and into the future have to change, to put the health of our seas and land first. To date, we have failed to do this, as shown in the catalogue of reports that document our failure to meet past targets.

Coastal communities in Scotland are directly facing the effects of biodiversity loss within our seas due to decades of poor management and lack of political will to put the well-being of the marine environment first in decision-making. We can see how a restored and thriving marine environment can provide greater social and economic opportunities and resilience for local communities in Scotland, but our experience is of delay and inaction by the Scottish Government to help achieve this; lack of progress to provide protection for Priority Marine Features and Marine Protected Areas and introduce reforms to fishery management are a few examples. Current governance and decision-making favours short-term solutions that allow destructive and polluting sea-based industries to continue, such as open cage salmon farms and dredging and trawling over widespread areas of the seabed.

Coastal Communities Network, Scotland

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As members of local coastal communities in Scotland we are ready and waiting to play the sort of key roles in decision making and in delivering action that are recognised in the Declaration. We are working at a local level to implement the sorts of actions that are needed to restore and sustain our marine resources into the future, but we can't do this alone. In response to the Edinburgh Declaration we call on the Scottish Government to provide meaningful support to coastal communities so that our voices are properly heard in decisions about the future of our seas and we are properly resourced to deliver action on the ground to help ensure a healthier and productive marine environment.

Yours sincerely,

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