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Date: 28<sup>th</sup> March 2011

Dear Mr Rodriguez

**RE: Pilot project – developing fisheries management measures for offshore European Marine Sites through the CFP.**

As you will be aware, under the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives, Member States are obliged to designate Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and classify Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and ensure the sites are protected from damaging activities. Certain fishing practices can have an adverse impact on site features and these activities may need to change or cease altogether to ensure the site condition does not deteriorate. For sites within 6-12 with historic fishing rights and sites beyond 12nm controls may only be introduced through the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP). In 2008, the European Commission published guidance on how to take these measures forward.

[http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/docs/fish\\_measures.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/natura2000/marine/docs/fish_measures.pdf).

As part of this process Defra and Marine Scotland are undertaking a pilot project to develop proposals for fisheries management measures for two SACs in offshore waters: Haig Fras in South West waters and Stanton Banks in Scottish offshore waters. The project will help us understand and deliver the process required to protect European Marine Sites under CFP. It will demonstrate the advantages and disadvantages of the current system for adopting fishery measures for protecting sites, and provide an evidence base for any changes required to ensure sites are adequately protected.

We would like to ensure that any proposals prepared for the European Commission are workable and based on the best available evidence. We seek close engagement with fisheries stakeholders, both nationally and internationally, to make this project a success. As the key Regional Advisory Council covering the waters where these sites are located we would like to invite a representative of the NWWRAC to join the project board, either attending regularly, or by correspondence. The Terms of Reference of the project board is attached to this letter.

We are planning to present fishing information gathered on the sites and the framework for management proposals through the MAIA project (<http://www.aires-marines.fr/maia-project.html> ) workshop that JNCC is organising during the summer. We will then take two different approaches to developing proposals. For Stanton Banks, Marine Scotland will develop options and refine them using feedback from stakeholders. For Haig Fras, Defra would like stakeholders to develop the proposals and present them at a workshop later in the autumn. We would hope that there would be opportunities to overlap our planned workshops with the RAC meetings.

We very much look forward to the NWWRAC being part of the project board and working with us to prepare suitable management proposals to send to the European Commission.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

John Clorley