

Dear RAI Committee

Salmon farming

You declined our invitation to visit Ullapool as part of the current enquiry specifically 'taking evidence from local communities'.

Your reply indicates we can however make a written submission directly to the Enquiry. Thank you.

I have a background in Scientific research although Aquaculture is not my area of expertise but it's obvious to me that a lot more research needs to be done on the negative & damaging impacts of salmon farming on eco-systems.

SEPA & Nature Scot do not currently seem to be up to this task. The impacts of open pen salmon farming are not being monitored or controlled adequately by regulatory bodies, instead there is an over reliance on 'self monitoring' or voluntary standards within the industry.

When problems arise ie mass mortalities at Shuna last year or mass escapes as at Galway bay this year there are few if any consequences on the companies.

I also happen to live 300m from one of Mowi's fish farms located within Loch broom, Ross-shire

I'm not going to bore you with a long list of grievances against the local fish farms but would point out that at a recent public meeting with MOWI, 90% of locals attending were against current fish farm practices & their detrimental effects on the environment & impact on peoples livelihoods within the Loch.

It was a heated meeting & showed the depth of feeling & real anger against current salmon farming practises in our waters - from destroying habitat via the massive use of chemicals & parasites being released directly into the water, to the zero management of waste products. If a terrestrial chicken farm is not allowed to release waste to the environment how is it possible that this is allowed at sea? Especially given that today hydrodynamics of waste settlement & tidal flushing is much better understood.

This anger is not confined to our community but extends across many coastal communities who are impacted by salmon farming.

The Scottish Coastal Communities are feeling that government support for salmon farming & the money it generates are being prioritised over local peoples concerns for

the environment that supports them, our voice is stifled through complex planning applications & objection platforms, compliant planners & salmon companies just not accepting no for an answer in their applications, but putting in appeal after appeal. We feel we are in an aggressive war of attrition by these foreign owned companies with big budgets & slick lawyers. ie: The Flodigarry & Balmaqueen application being brought back again before the entire Highland Council on 19th Sept, under a technicality & from which there is no right of appeal & all in spite of overwhelming opposition from local people. This is an incredibly wearing & depressing process for local communities, who feel their voices are ignored time & again.

One defence of salmon farming has always been that it provides much needed jobs in rural communities, but that doesn't really run anymore with increased automation on the farms themselves & remote feeding of many farms from one centralised location ie: MOWI's new automated feeding centre in Fort William. Fish farms are struggling to fill vacancies like many Scottish businesses since Brexit. Local people don't want 'a career in aquaculture' with the very few unskilled jobs that are on offer. Fish farms are not 'vital' to west coast communities despite what fish farmers would have you believe.

There have been many years of delays in properly protecting the Marine Protected Areas & in assessing priority marine features. Limits on chemical usage being reduced or phased out are having the time limits extended time & again due to lobbying by salmon companies. The Government wishing to double salmon farms by 2030 is a frankly terrifying scenario. The expansion of the industry should not be countenanced until they have dealt with the environmental impacts of their activities. Although sadly even recommendations made by the 2018 enquiry have not been adhered to or have been flouted. ie: reducing chemical treatments.....these have actually increased significantly since 2018.

Coastal communities are needing to see a radical change from Government – at present they are failing to protect the environment or local communities....

We'd like to see

1. a moratorium on new fish farms until existing environmental problems can be properly addressed
2. like Canada, set a time limit to phase out open pen farming in favour of closed systems or land based operations.
3. less reliance on self-monitoring by companies & more independent oversight from the regulatory bodies,

4. giving more power to local communities over what happens in their areas & seas.

5. do the critical environmental research

Our seas & waters are a common good but the feeling is that the Scottish Government is not managing these for the peoples benefit but solely for a handful of foreign companies making vast profits at the expense of our environment & the needs of local communities. Government should be acting on behalf of all to protect the marine environment before its too late.

Kind regards

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