



Leader: Emma Macdonald

Emma Johnston
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Dear Ms Johnston

I am aware that the Rural Affairs and Islands Committee is holding a follow up Inquiry into Salmon Farming in Scotland. I understand that the Inquiry will consider the economic and social benefit of Salmon Farming and that the Committee also intend to undertake a visit to Oban during September. I am writing to share the economic and social benefits that Salmon Farming provide to our community with the Committee.

The salmon industry is a hugely significant sector for Shetland's modern economy. Having evolved from a niche interest for local crofters in the 1960s to a major exporting concern in the 2020s, salmon production is one of the cornerstones of local primary manufacturing and a key contributor to the reputation of Shetland – and Scotland – as a source of high quality, responsibly managed seafood, with nearly 40,000 tonnes produced in Shetland in 2022, equal to over 23% of production in Scotland.

Shetland's last regional accounts estimated that the local aquaculture sector generated gross value added of £71m, equal to over 12% of Shetland's total GVA, and responsible for over 400 full-time equivalent jobs. At that time aquaculture accounted for around 37% of Shetland's exports, a huge contributor to Shetland's positive trade balance. Aside from direct effects – including high quality local employment - the sector supports an extensive, sophisticated local supply chain which generates further value for the local economy, including haulage, engineering, wholesale, processing and skills development.

The salmon farming companies are part of the fabric of our islands, supporting local initiatives (e.g. sporting events, school trips) through community benefit contributions, and the nature of salmon farming itself – requiring sheltered waters away from other developments – means that it supports jobs, infrastructure development and economic activity in the remoter areas of Shetland, rather than concentrating activity in central areas, ensuring benefits disbursed across our islands.

I hope that these points on the social and economic benefits of Salmon Farming to Shetland are helpful to your Inquiry. I would also wish to extend an invitation to the Committee to visit Shetland to explore this further.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Emma Macdonald
Political Leader