

Salmon farming in Scotland

Letter from WildFish, 10 December 2024

Dear RAI Committee,

WildFish believes that Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon misled the Committee in her evidence regarding salmon farming on 13 November.

According to the Official report, the Cabinet Secretary was asked: *"Historically, Scottish ministers have not conducted the kind of cost benefit analysis required by His Majesty's Treasury's green book before making policy interventions around the salmon aquaculture sector. I am interested to understand why that has not been done and what steps will be taken in the future to implement a cost benefit analysis."*

The Cabinet Secretary responded: *"Cost benefit analysis is, ultimately, done on an application basis and undertaken by the planning authorities, because they have to consider all of the different issues in the round: the economic, social and environmental impacts all have to be considered and adequately balanced."*

WildFish has subsequently been in correspondence with one of the main local planning authorities which deals with salmon farming applications (Argyll and Bute) to ascertain what it understands to be its responsibility in this area. The council has confirmed:

*"We are required to assess the planning applications against the policies of the development plan. **These policies do not state that a CBA is required.**"*

Clearly, the assertion by the Cabinet Secretary that *"Cost benefit analysis is, ultimately, done on an application basis and undertaken by the planning authorities"* is therefore incorrect.

As you may be aware, more than 50 businesses, charities and other stakeholders across Scotland recently signed an [open letter calling on the Scottish Government to urgently commission a CBA](#). The above clearly demonstrates that this is **not** something that has been, or is currently being, done at either a local or national level.

We are aware that the Committee is considering its draft report for this inquiry tomorrow, and so hope this information is of use.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Mulrenan
Director, Scotland