

Site Reference Number:- T12/396
(as allocated by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine)

Appellant's particular interest in the outcome of the appeal:

THE APPELLANT'S INTEREST IN THE OUTCOME OF THE APPEAL IS TO TRY AND DEMONSTRATE THE VALIDITY OF THIS APPLICATION IN HELPING TO SUSTAIN CURRENT JOBS AND LIVLIHOODS.

Outline the grounds of appeal (and, if necessary, on additional page(s) give full grounds of the appeal and the reasons, considerations and arguments on which they are based):

PLEASE SEE ATTACHED DOCUMENT.

Signed by appellant:

Simon Reid

Date:

5th September 2019

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or handed in to the ALAB offices**

Fees must be received by the closing date for receipt of appeals

Reasons for Appeal by Donegal Oceandeeep Oysters and Donegal Oysters Ltd against decision to refuse licence T12/396 in Donegal Bay.

Promoters & Oyster Farming

1. Both applicant companies have thirty years' experience growing shellfish in Donegal Bay. There are very few companies with such industry experience which exist beside a site with a unique natural suitability for growing top quality oysters such as the applicant site. In 2018 both companies invested €1.5m building two new shellfish grading facilities directly beside the shore capable of handling an additional 300-400 tonnes of oysters over the coming years. The oyster farming industry in Donegal Bay has grown from zero to 1,000 tonnes per annum over the past thirty years. It now employs 45 full-time and 60 part-time jobs, exports circa €6m euro annually which makes it's way directly back into the local economy. It has been one of the biggest success stories around Donegal Town and is still nowhere near reaching it's full potential. This application represents an attempt to help further realise that potential.

Progress

2. The line which was proposed over twenty five years ago restricting shellfish farming to the West was put in place until more experience was gained about the assimilation of the industry into the local marine environment. It is now clear that the development of oyster farming in Donegal Bay has been overwhelmingly positive and there was no impact on any other users with all activities (recreational and commercial) increasing in activity since it began. The Department must recognise this fact and have already granted a licence West of this line at Doorin Point to Donegal Channel Oysters some years ago. The area (T12/396) subject of this appeal is a bolt on application as it is directly adjacent to existing farm. There is no recreational activity in this area. There has never been any recreational activity in this area. It is too far from the shore road and is not accessible due to a deep channel on its western boundary. It is time to recognise the facts which have clearly emerged over the past thirty years about oyster farming and seriously question the logic of maintaining such a position with regard to an activity making a lasting and positive contribution to the dynamic of a modern marine environment.

Economic

3. There is a clear economic benefit which is a core consideration under the Licencing Act. Oyster farming is not mechanised and is one of the most labour intensive methods of producing seafood. It requires one full time and two part-time employees for every twenty tons produced making it an ideal industry for rural Donegal communities which have had a long and challenging tradition making a living from the sea. This area has the potential to create an additional ten jobs in a county with the highest unemployment rate in Ireland and which is most exposed to the impact of impending Brexit. Economically it is low hanging fruit on a site with exceptional natural characteristics and a ready to go operator.

Environment

4. Oyster farming provides an entirely sustainable source of seafood. It is based on a naturally re-occurring resource in our bays every Summer – plankton production. There are no artificial feed inputs. There is no veterinary input. All materials used in farming are fully recyclable. It has an extremely low impact and if it had to be removed from a site for some reason the foreshore would be left exactly as it was found. It is the first time that any human based activity has provided food from our estuaries sustainably and will help remove pressure from traditional fisheries which are collapsing all over the world despite the best efforts of CFP and quota based management systems. Oyster shell growth directly sequesters and permanently stores carbon from our oceans. It is being now being developed in other coastal countries as an environmental tool to try and combat the continuing nitrification of our estuaries by agriculture and waste-water discharge. We are only to aware that Ireland has a significant problem in this regard. In summary it is imperative from an environmental perspective that we take all opportunities to increase our shellfish populations all around our coastline. If we provide jobs in the process it is simply a welcome bonus.

Wildlife and SAC

5. There is little or no impact of oyster farming within our SAC network. Most of the species protected by the SAC network in Donegal are stable or increasing. This application is well below the threshold area required under the Natura Directive in our SAC site 0133. The AA recognises that sanderling mainly feed on exposed shores. In our SAC (0133) these are identified and located primarily on the Murvagh sand flats which is located in the southern area of the SAC. Sanderling and many other species are continually observed around our existing site while moving throughout the SAC and are not overly disturbed by the habitual nature of our activities.

Conclusion

The application site can easily be subsumed into the existing operations without any impact on other users. Considering the benign nature of oyster farming, the sheer size of our local SAC and the entire network of SAC/SPA now in Donegal under the Natura 2000 Directive it is not credible that this tiny application and its associated habitual use would constitute a sudden negative impact on any species. It is extremely difficult to identify suitable sites for oyster production and this would represent one of the last few suitable sites anywhere around our coast. The environmental benefits now emerging of producing more shellfish in our estuaries far outweigh any considerations to the contrary. Oyster farming has replaced the entire traditional inshore sector combined (lobster, crab, whelk, periwinkles, etc) in annual value terms of exported shellfish. The former is a declining overfished resource under enormous pressure with the latter a fully sustainable activity available for future generations to come. I would ask that your Board seriously consider these indisputable facts in making a determination which reflects the seafood security challenges ahead and the environmental and economic realities we now live in.