Text from Email received from Finnian O’Driscoll to ALAB - 1st January 2020

To whom it concerns,

I wish to submit the following observations to the above licence which is for Mussel cultivation granted by the Minister for the Marine to West Cork Seafoods in relation to the appeal lodged referenced AP32/2019. I will number these 1-8. May I commend the Board on its transparency on submitting all appeals online for the public and other relevant stakeholders to peruse.

(1) West Cork Seafoods state the area in question is a “designated shellfish growing area” I contend this is a falicious statement as surely any area of the country which has an Aquaculture Licence to grow shellfish is therefore in fact a Designated growing area.

(2) They also state the economic benefits of the proposed licence, I believe this to be Ostensible as currently the Mussel growing process in Bantry Bay is as follows: due to toxins absorbed in the summer months which would render the shellfish unsafe for consumption ,the growers specifically altered their cycle to have mature Mussels ready for the Autumn Winter market from November to May approximately, 60-70 percent of Bantry Bays Mussels go straight to the European continent for the fresh shellfish market. Before 2010 there was two Mussel Factories in the area but with the large Bantry Bay Seafoods plant which would Have processed most of Bantrys Mussel now defunct and turned into a FinFish utility there now is little option but to ship direct to Europe. This is costly as the grower has Freight, pallet and Mussel bag which are not returned to cater for which amounts to €115 per Ton approximately yet the price per Ton of Mussel has not increased in over a decade, therefore surely with the amount of already omnipresent idle Mussel growing areas in Bantry Bay there is every possibility of flooding this seasonal market thus negatively impacting on the present growers who are producing Mussels for export continuously with years of a virtuous track record.

(3) The Marine Institute’s decision to undertake the screening matrix for this licence was vacuous in my opinion, it should have stood aside when as it’s stated in the appeal it has grounds leased from a family member of West Cork Seafoods, better yet to have sought an area such as from the Port of Cork which operate Bantry Marine and Pier, that way it would have avoided this issue and the money used for the grounds could have been put back into the area from Port of Cork .

(4) Abandoned Sites, as stated axiomatically in the appeal there are a number of unused sites for Mussels already licenced in outer Bantry Bay, Most of these are nearer Bantry which would be more prudent to operate as would be less of a journey for Boats.

(5) Fastnet Mussels as you see from documentation provided already applied in 1998 for this licence along with T05/430B, On examining the coordinates from then and the present applications they are for the same area however the latter applications take in more area due North. Why has the Department not clarified why the 1998 application was not dealt with, also why does Fastnet who by the Departments website hold a number of licences for Mussel growing not use these , its quiet extraordinary that if companies/families are not using their licences which apparently is in contravention to protocol that this somehow is advantageous to acquiring more licences.

(6) As stated and well known is that just East of this licence lies the Salmon farm T05 122/N1 which suffered huge storm damage in February 2014, this resulted in a major fish escape and ended up with the Department unsuccessfully attempting to revoke the licence in the High court, perversely this current licence was granted West of here which goes against all scientific advice pertaining to climate and more frequency of storm surges predicted. The fact that the site at Gortnakilla has been unused for a decade would indicate its folly to licence this area, also the fact that the accompanying licence T05/430B was correctly refused means that the original claim by the applicant of six jobs is not accurate and should have been redressed by the Department prior to this appeal because it appears it is not financially viable nor environmentally so to ruin such a salient area of natural beauty for an unneeded licence.

(7) The issue raised with accompanied documentation about the ownership of Gearhies highlights the Departments desultory efforts pertaining to all matters associated with the Statutory public consultation process, it also clearly defines the presumptive arrogance of a person to lay claim to a structure hundreds of years old and which public money has been used to upkeep.

(8) Finally to sum up my view is there is presently a state of imbriglio caused by Gombeen politics and a clear apathy associated with the Department, Bim and the Marine Institute which further foments the public perception, these are public bodies and it’s now time for them to address the fact there’s ample area in Bantry already to grow Mussels, it’s quiet extraordinary that at no point has it been stated this licence is actually needed, as outlined a huge Mussel processing Factory was left mutate from shellfish to finfish production, these unused licenced areas with the exception of T5/408 which was an egregious decision to grant anyway must be dealt with, I cannot see why these sites are not demanded by the Department to start production again, revoking the licences as was the case with the Salmon Farm would lead almost definitely to legal action thus more taxpayer money used, No one has called for a stop to grow Shellfish in Bantry but just to utilise the area there already and liase with current growers who are producing sufficient tonnage and perhaps they can grow more if markets dictate. I understand this is a long submission however it cannot be overstated the current state outer Bantry Bay is at and the North Side of the Sheep’s Head Peninsula where this latest licence has been granted. Ministers come and go and I am sure are only acting on the advice of the relevant divisions so I call on the ALAB board to please overturn this licence T05/430A and preserve this most outstanding area of the Peninsula.

Yours sincerely,

Finnian O Driscoll,

Chapel Rock,

Durrus,

Bantry,

Co.Cork.