

AP1-2-25

**ALAB**

An Bord Achomhaire Um
Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

Notice of Appeal Under Section 40(1) of Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997 (No.23)

APPEAL FORM

Please note that in accordance with Section 40(2) of the 1997 Act this form will only be accepted if delivered by REGISTERED POST or by hand to the ALAB offices at the following address: Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board, Kilminchy Court, Dublin Road, Portlaoise, Co. Laois, R32 DTW5		
Name of Appellant (Block Letters)	Maria O'Mahony / Dock Swimmers	
Address of Appellant		
	<div style="border: 2px solid black; padding: 5px; text-align: center;"> AQUACULTURE LICENCES APPEALS BOARD 13 JUN 2025 RECEIVED </div>	
Eircode		
Phone No.		
Mobile No.		
Please note if there is any change to the details given above, the onus is on the appellant to ensure that ALAB is notified accordingly.		
FEES		
Fees must be received by the closing date for receipt of appeals	Amount	Tick
An appeal by an applicant for a licence against a decision by the Minister in respect of that application	€380	
An appeal by the holder of a licence against the revocation or amendment of that licence by the Minister	€380	
An appeal by any other individual or organisation	€150	✓
Request for an Oral Hearing* (fee payable in addition to appeal fee) *In the event that the Board decides not to hold an Oral Hearing the fee will not be refunded	€75	✓
Fees can be paid by way of Cheque or Electronic Funds Transfer		
Cheques are payable to the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board in accordance with the Aquaculture Licensing Appeals (Fees) Regulations, 2021 (S.I. No. 771 of 2021)		
Electronic Funds Transfer Details	IBAN: IE89AIBK93104704051067	BIC: AIBKIE2D
Please note the following:		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Failure to submit the appropriate fee with your appeal will result in your appeal being deemed invalid. 2. Payment of the correct fees must be received on or before the closing date for receipt of appeals, otherwise the appeal will not be accepted. 3. The appropriate fee (or a request for an oral hearing) must be submitted against each determination being appealed. 		

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An Bord Achomhairc Um
Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

The Legislation governing the appeals is set out at Appendix 1 below.

SUBJECT MATTER OF THE APPEAL	
<p>I am writing to formally appeal the decision to grant an aquaculture licence to Woodstown Bay Shellfish Limited for bottom-culture mussel farming on a 23.1626-hectare site (T05-472A) in Kinsale Harbour, Co Cork. While I acknowledge the Minister's consideration of relevant legislation and submissions received, I contend that the decision overlooks several material concerns that warrant further scrutiny.</p> <p>Note that we have not had access to all the relevant documentation online. This lack of access results in a structural bias within the appeals process, as it undermines transparency and prevents a clear understanding of how decisions were made. Public bodies have a duty to uphold public trust by ensuring transparency in their decision-making. The absence of complete documentation and clarity around the decision-making process significantly impairs our ability to conduct a thorough review and prepare an informed appeal.</p>	
Site Reference Number: - (as allocated by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine)	T05-472A
APPELLANT'S PARTICULAR INTEREST	
Briefly outline your particular interest in the outcome of the appeal:	
<p>This development will greatly impact me and my numerous swimming friends who use the Dock Beach on a daily basis, year round, some of whom are listed here in support of this application. Others have submitted their own appeal, underscoring the importance of maintaining the current status of this cherished location. It is our opinion that the sanction of this license should be retracted.</p> <p>Laura O'Mahony, Sheila Murphy, Seos McKinnon, Janice Crausaz, Frances Dalton, Eithne Nolan, Mairead Roberts, Colm Dalton, Carolanne Crosbie, Natacha Farley</p>	
GROUND'S OF APPEAL	
State in full the grounds of appeal and the reasons, considerations, and arguments on which they are based (if necessary, on additional page(s)):	
<p>We are aware of significant grounds for appeal that are too lengthy to include here, so please see attached appeals document.</p>	

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Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

CONFIRMATION NOTICE ON EIA PORTAL (if required)

In accordance with Section 41(1) f of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997, where an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is required for the project in question, please provide a copy of the confirmation notice, or other evidence (such as the Portal ID Number) that the proposed aquaculture the subject of this appeal is included on the portal established under Section 172A of the Planning and Development Act 2000. (See Explanatory Note at Appendix 2 below for further information).

Please tick the relevant box below:

EIA Portal Confirmation Notice is enclosed with this Notice of Appeal	
Other evidence of Project's inclusion on EIA Portal is enclosed or set out below (such as the Portal ID Number)	
An EIA was not completed in the Application stage/the Project does not appear on the EIA Portal	✓

Details of other evidence	N/A
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Signed by the Appellant		Date	11.6.2025
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Please note that this form will only be accepted by REGISTERED POST or handed in to the ALAB offices

Payment of fees must be received on or before the closing date for receipt of appeals, otherwise the appeal will be deemed invalid.

This Notice of Appeal should be completed under each heading, including all the documents, particulars, or information as specified in the notice and duly signed by the appellant, and may include such additional documents, particulars, or information relating to the appeal as the appellant considers necessary or appropriate."

DATA PROTECTION – the data collected for this purpose will be held by ALAB only as long as there is a business need to do so and may include publication on the ALAB website.



12 June 2025

ALAB
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board
Kilminchy Court
Dublin Road
Portlaoise
Co Laois
R32 DTW5

Dear Appeals Officer

**RE: Appeal of Aquaculture Licence Decision (T05-472A), Kinsale Harbour, Co. Cork
– Woodstown Bay Shellfish Ltd**

I am writing to formally appeal the decision to grant an aquaculture licence to Woodstown Bay Shellfish Limited for bottom-culture mussel farming on a 23.1626-hectare site (T05-472A) in Kinsale Harbour, Co. Cork. While I acknowledge the Minister's consideration of relevant legislation and submissions received, I contend that the decision overlooks several material concerns that warrant further scrutiny.

As a daily swimmer, a former Board Member of Kinsale Chamber of Tourism and long-time resident of Kinsale, I am deeply concerned about the potential negative impacts this development will have on the local environment, public health, and the recreational use of the Dock Beach and Castlepark area—a cherished and heavily used amenity by swimmers, kayakers, families, and tourists alike.

Grounds for Appeal

1. Inadequate Environmental Assessment

Although the determination claims "no significant impacts on the marine environment", no independent environmental study is cited to support this assertion. The potential for biodiversity disruption, water quality deterioration, and seabed sediment alteration requires rigorous scientific investigation. Furthermore, cumulative impacts from existing and future aquaculture operations in the harbour have not been sufficiently assessed, undermining the sustainability of the marine environment.

2. Public Access and Recreational Use

Large-scale aquaculture developments can restrict navigation, impact traditional fishing routes, and interfere with recreational activities. It remains unclear how public access will be preserved, or whether local stakeholders such as water sports users and tourism operators were adequately consulted in the licensing process.

3. Economic Risk to Existing Local Industries

While the application anticipates economic benefit, there is no record of a Social Impact Assessment being undertaken. On what grounds does the applicant assume of economic benefit. In its application it cites the employment of a further 6 people at its plant in Waterford. The determination does not consider the potential negative impact on established sectors such as tourism and traditional fisheries. A full Social Impact Assessment should be undertaken to assess both the potential loss of revenue to local businesses reliant on the harbour's current use and environmental integrity.

4. Risks to Adjacent Natura 2000 Sites

Although the site does not spatially overlap with designated Natura 2000 areas it is adjacent to two such sites (Old Head of Kinsale SPA (4021) and Sovereign Islands SPA (4124). Indirect impacts such as water pollution, eutrophication, and habitat degradation are a risk. Notably, the proposal involves bottom-culture mussel farming with dredging—a method that is highly disruptive to benthic ecosystems. Dredging displaces sediment, destroys benthic fauna, and threatens biodiversity. The site is known locally to support a particularly rich crab population. Amongst other species, the Otter is listed as an Annex IV protected species present in Irish waters and in the Kinsale, a baseline study of Otter population, location and the potential effect of dredging on otter holts should be undertaken. The failure to conduct a baseline ecological survey is a serious omission that contravenes the precautionary principle set out in EU environmental legislation.

5. Navigational and Operational Safety Overlooked

Under the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997, the Minister must consider the implications of aquaculture operations on navigation and the rights of other marine users. No anchor zones and exclusion zones will prohibit existing fishing and recreational activities

6. Fouling of Raw Water Intakes – A Known Hazard

Mussel larvae (veligers) can infiltrate and colonise raw water intake systems in leisure and commercial vessels, particularly those moored long-term or infrequently used. Resulting blockages may lead to engine overheating and failure. This risk has not been acknowledged in the licence determination. The consequences may extend to increased RNLI call-outs, raising public safety and resourcing concerns. No evidence is provided that the Harbour Master, RNLI, boat owners or marina operators were consulted, nor are any mitigation measures (e.g. buffer zones or monitoring protocols)

described. This constitutes a serious procedural deficiency. A **Marine Navigation Impact Assessment** is required to address this omission. This concern was explicitly raised in the submission by the Kinsale Chamber of Tourism and Business.

7. Unreasonable Delay in Determination

The original application was submitted in December 2018. A decision was not issued until May 2025—more than six years later. Such an extended delay is at odds with the intent of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997, which mandates that decisions be made as soon as reasonably practicable. This delay risks relying on outdated environmental data and fails to reflect current stakeholder conditions. It raises legitimate concerns regarding the procedural fairness and validity of the decision.

8. Failure to Assess Impact on National Monument and Submerged Archaeological Heritage

The proposed mussel farm site lies directly off James Fort, a protected National Monument (NIAH Ref: 20911215), and adjacent to the remains of the blockhouse guarding the estuary. This area is of significant historical and military importance, with likely submerged archaeological material including maritime infrastructure and possibly shipwrecks. The application fails to include any underwater archaeological assessment or consultation with the National Monuments Service or Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU) of the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage. This represents a serious procedural omission. Dredging associated with bottom-culture mussel farming carries a high risk of disturbing or destroying archaeological material in situ. The failure to survey or evaluate these risks contradicts national heritage legislation and violates the precautionary approach enshrined in European environmental directives. We respectfully request that the licence be suspended until a full archaeological impact assessment is carried out, including seabed survey and review by qualified maritime archaeologists in consultation with the UAU.

9. Absence of Site-Specific Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and Discovery of Protected Seagrass Habitat

No Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) appears to have been carried out for the proposed aquaculture site, despite its sensitive ecological characteristics and proximity to protected areas. Under national and EU law, the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) is obliged to screen aquaculture applications for significant environmental effects. Where such risks exist—particularly in or near Natura 2000 sites or protected habitats—a full EIA may be legally required.

Since the initial licence application in 2018, new environmental data has come to light. Research led by Dr Robert Wilkes (University College Cork) national seagrass mapping work—which includes all major Irish coastal zones—strongly suggests that Kinsale Harbour may host these priority habitats, highlighting the need for a site-specific

ecological survey. Seagrass is a priority habitat protected under the EU Habitats Directive due to its high biodiversity value, role in carbon sequestration, and function as a critical nursery habitat for fish and invertebrates. The mere presence of seagrass requires formal ecological assessment under EU law before any disruptive marine activity—particularly dredging—can be licensed.

The current licence determination fails to acknowledge this discovery or to conduct any updated ecological survey. It instead relies on environmental data now over six years old. This is procedurally and scientifically unacceptable. An up-to-date, site-specific environmental impact assessment is necessary to ensure compliance with legal requirements and to safeguard a now-confirmed protected habitat.

10. Legal Protection of Marine Life in Undesignated Sites under the Habitats Directive

The presence of sensitive and protected marine life—such as *Zostera marina*, Otters and cetacean species—in or near the proposed licence site invokes strict legal protections under EU law, even if the site itself is not formally designated as a Natura 2000 area. *Zostera marina* is listed as a protected habitat under Annex I of the Habitats Directive, and all cetaceans (including dolphins and porpoises) and Otters are protected under Annex IV.

Article 12 of the Habitats Directive prohibits any deliberate disturbance or habitat degradation of these species across their entire natural range. The bottom-culture mussel farming method proposed—including dredging and vessel activity—presents a clear risk of disturbing these habitats and species. EU law requires that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a protected species or habitat must undergo prior ecological assessment. No such assessment appears to have been undertaken in this case.

This failure breaches the precautionary principle and undermines Ireland's obligations under the Habitats Directive and related environmental directives. A full reassessment of the licence decision is required to avoid legal non-compliance and ecological harm.

11. Public Health Concerns

The proximity of the mussel farm to wastewater treatment plants both at The Bulman, Summercove, Kinsale, and at Castle Park, Kinsale raises serious concerns under EU water quality directives. The risk of contamination and its implications for shellfish safety and public health have not been sufficiently evaluated.

Request for Review

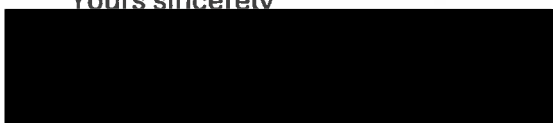
Considering these substantive concerns, I respectfully request that the Aquaculture Licence Appeals Board:

- Commissions an independent, detailed Environmental Impact Assessment to address (but is not restricted to) Benthic ecology, Biodiversity, Water resources, Landscape and visual, Cultural heritage, Socio-economics, Commercial fisheries;
- Provides a full Social Impact Assessment that includes the potential impact on existing industries;
- Undertakes a reassessment of public access impacts, with adequate local consultation;
- Orders a full Marine Navigation Impact Study, in consultation with the RNLI, all marina authorities, and the Harbour Master;
- Reviews the potential for indirect impacts on nearby protected sites under Natura 2000;
- Carries out an Archaeological Impact Assessment, including seabed survey and review by qualified maritime archaeologists in consultation with the UAU;

We urge the Department to reconsider this determination in the interests of environmental stewardship, public access, health and wellbeing of all water users and the sustainable economic development of the region.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely



Maria O'Mahony

On behalf of Dock Swimmers