

AQUACULTURE LICENCES APPEALS BOARD

23 JUN 2025

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



ALAB

An Bord Achomhairc Um
Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

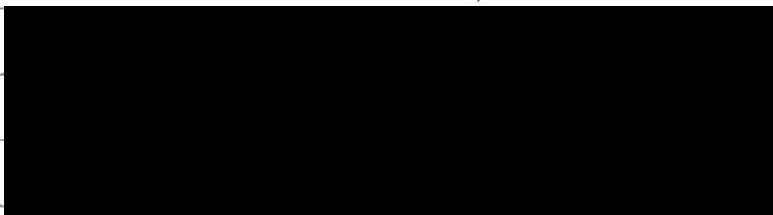
APPEAL FORM

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)

JEREMY & MEAGAN HUTCHINSON

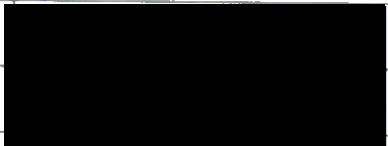
Address of Appellant



Eircode



Phone No.



Email address (enter below)

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

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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:

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.



SUBJECT MATTER OF THE APPEAL

We wish to formally appeal the decision to grant an aquaculture license to Woodstown Bay Shellfish Limited for bottom-culture mussel farming on a 23.1626 hectare site (T05-472A) in Kinsale Harbour, Co. Cork. for commercial mussel farm in the heart of Kinsale Harbour, a renowned natural harbour of international standing with outstanding ecological, maritime, heritage and tourist values.

We acknowledge the Minister's consideration of relevant legislation and submissions received, but believe that the decision made overlooks several material concerns that warrant further scrutiny. This appeal will clearly demonstrate why this decision is erroneous and will result in considerable irreversible damage to the entire town of Kinsale and surrounding areas, including Castlepark and the Dock Beach, in terms of both considerable ecological and economic harm.

Approval by the Minister was granted in 2025 on an assessment of the information available from an out-dated report. All data provided for the application made in 2018 is at this point completely obsolete. An up-to-date assessment of the socio-economic and environmental harm this existing proposal will cause to the community, and indeed commercial interests of our townland of Kinsale, and in particular, The Castlepark area is warranted. Recent discoveries around the proposed site of sea grass, a valuable and protected plant further amplifies the danger to marine life and the maritime ecology of the area.

There is little doubt that the provision of a licence will be detrimental to the quality of life of Castlepark residents, and also members of the greater Kinsale area. The risk to existing amenities enjoyed by residents, the Kinsale community and tourism is extreme. The harm to the future development of Kinsale as a community is unquantifiable both economically and environmentally.

We believe this proposal, to locate a bottom-culture mussel farm near to the Dock Beach, in the centre of Kinsale Harbour is ill-advised, and does not represent the interests of any of the parties involved.

There is no evidence whatsoever that the proposed mussel farm will generate any employment, or any other economic benefit, for residents of Castlepark or Kinsale. However, the adverse impact of this proposed venture could jeopardise existing economic activity and employment due to the location of the mussel farm and concerns about water safety at the beach, damage to vessels berthed at the marinas and damage to the broader marina infrastructure.

We submitted an objection to the original proposal in 2019, and received no response which is not appropriate in terms of the planning process.

Site Reference Number: - **T05-472A**

(as allocated by the Department of Agriculture, Food, and the Marine)

APPELLANT'S PARTICULAR INTEREST

Briefly outline your particular interest in the outcome of the appeal:

Whilst we are seriously concerned by the huge negative impact such a proposal for a commercial mussel farm in the centre of Kinsale Harbour will have for all of Kinsale and surrounding areas, we are particularly concerned by the devastating impact it will have in the specific area of Castlepark Village, a residential area, and the Dock Beach adjacent to the proposed mussel farm.

Our particular interest in the outcome of this appeal is that the granting of any licence for any mussel farm will be rescinded and that the area of Kinsale Harbour surrounding the Dock Beach, in particular, will be preserved in its current natural state, with pristine and varied marine life, a popular and safe beach, enjoyed by both tourists and local residents throughout the year, without the damage likely to result from a large commercial bottom-culture mussel farm located adjacent to it.

Castlepark Village, which adjoins the Dock Beach has 28 homes, along with other neighbouring homes and apartments nearby (approx. 10 more), and is a residential area. The location of the proposed mussel farm is in the immediate waters in front of this residential area and we do not believe this is either appropriate or safe and will destroy our access to this natural amenity. Apart from being crowded with families with young children enjoying the natural amenity and the clean water for swimming during the summers, the Dock Beach is also a popular location for swimming competitions, like triathlons and it has become a very popular location for 'all weather' swimmers since the Covid era. The degradation of water quality from mussel bed dredging and other contamination will have a huge negative impact on this activity and may also pose health risks to swimmers and young children at the beach. Already the area is subject to strong currents which bring flotsam and jetsam from the harbour onto the beach regularly. Any silt, faeces and other detritus from the dredging and farming of mussels so close will end up in the beach area and on the beach with the incoming tide.

Full details of the grounds of appeal, supported by technical data and other references, are included below.

GROUND'S OF APPEAL

State in full the grounds of appeal and the reasons, considerations, and arguments on which they are based)

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, the determination does not consider the potential negative impact on established sectors such as tourism and traditional fisheries. A revised, independent cost-benefit analysis should be undertaken, accounting for 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, indirect impacts such as water pollution, organic enrichment, or habitat degradation remain plausible. 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. 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. The determination lacks any assessment of how mussel seed dispersal may interfere with nearby vessels, particularly through fouling of raw water intake systems—a serious operational hazard. This is a particular hazard in this tidal area.

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* 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) are strictly 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.

An Bord Achomhairc Um Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe | Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

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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

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		
Signed by the Appellant		Date <u>20/6/2025</u>
<p>Please note that this form will only be accepted by REGISTERED POST or handed in to the ALAB offices</p> <p>Payment of fees must be received on or before the closing date for receipt of appeals, otherwise the appeal will be deemed invalid.</p>		

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.

Appendix 1.

Extract from the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997 (No.23)

40. (1) A person aggrieved by a decision of the Minister on an application for an aquaculture licence or by the revocation or amendment of an aquaculture licence may, before the expiration of a period of one month beginning on the date of publication in accordance with this Act of that decision, or the notification to the person of the revocation or amendment, appeal to the Board against the decision, revocation or amendment, by serving on the Board a notice of appeal.

(2) A notice of appeal shall be served—

- (a) by sending it by **registered post** to the Board,
- (b) by **leaving it at the office of the Board**, during normal office hours, with a person who is apparently an employee of the Board, or
- (c) by such other means as may be prescribed.

(3) The Board shall not consider an appeal notice of which is received by it later than the expiration of the period referred to in subsection (1)

41. (1) For an appeal under section 40 to be valid, the notice of appeal shall—

- (a) be in writing,
- (b) state the name and address of the appellant,
- (c) state the subject matter of the appeal,
- (d) state the appellant's particular interest in the outcome of the appeal,
- (e) state in full the grounds of the appeal and the reasons, considerations and arguments on which they are based, and
- (f) where an environmental impact assessment is required under Regulation 3 of the Aquaculture Appeals (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2012 (SI No 468 of 2012), include evidence of compliance with paragraph (3A) of the said Regulation 3, and
- (g) **be accompanied by such fee**, if any, as may be payable in respect of such an appeal in accordance with regulations under *section 63*, and

shall be accompanied by such documents, particulars or other information relating to the appeal as the appellant considers necessary or appropriate.

****Please contact the ALAB offices in advance to confirm office opening hours.**

Appendix 2.

Explanatory Note: EIA Portal Confirmation Notice/Portal ID number

The EIA Portal is provided by the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage as an electronic notification to the public of requests for development consent that are accompanied by an Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Applications). The purpose of the portal is to provide information necessary for facilitating early and effective opportunities to participate in environmental decision-making procedures.

The portal contains information on EIA applications made since 16 May 2017, including the competent authority(ies) to which they are submitted, the name of the applicant, a description of the project, as well as the location on a GIS map, as well as the Portal ID number. The portal is searchable by these metrics and can be accessed at:

<https://housinggov.ie/maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=d7d5a3d48f104ecbb206e7e5f84b71f1>

Section 41(1)(f) of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act 1997 requires that “*where an environmental impact assessment is required*” the notice of appeal shall show compliance with Regulation 3A of the Aquaculture Appeals (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2012 (S.I. 468/2012), as amended by the Aquaculture Appeals (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Amendment) Regulations 2019 (S.I. 279/2019) (The EIA Regulations)

Regulation 3A of the EIA Regulations requires that, in cases where an EIA is required because (i) the proposed aquaculture is of a class specified in Regulation 5(1)(a)(b)(c) or (d) of the Aquaculture (Licence Application) Regulations 1998 as amended – listed below, or (ii) the Minister has determined that an EIA was required as part of their consideration of an application for intensive fish farming, an appellant (that is, the party submitting the appeal to ALAB, including a third party appellant as the case may be) must provide evidence that the proposed aquaculture project that is the subject of the appeal is included on the EIA portal.

If you are a third-party appellant (that is, not the original applicant) and you are unsure if an EIA was carried out, or if you cannot find the relevant Portal ID number on the EIA portal at the link provided, please contact the Department of Housing, Local Government and Heritage for assistance before submitting your appeal form.

The Classes of aquaculture that are required to undergo an EIA specified in Regulation 5(1)(a)(b)(c) and (d) of the Aquaculture (Licence Application) Regulations 1998 S.I. 236 of 1998 as amended are:

- a) Marine based intensive fish farm (other than for trial or research purposes where the output would not exceed 50 tonnes);
- b) All fish breeding installations consisting of cage rearing in lakes;
- c) All fish breeding installations upstream of drinking water intakes;
- d) Other fresh-water fish breeding installations which would exceed 1 million smolts and with less than 1 cubic metre per second per 1 million smolts low flow diluting waters.

In addition, under Regulation 5(1) (e) of the 1998 Regulations, the Minister may, as part of his or her consideration of an application for intensive fish farming, make a determination under Regulation 4A that an EIA is required.