

FISHERIES (AMENDMENT) ACT 1997 (AS AMENDED AND SUBSTITUTED)

Appeal Reference Number: **AP13/1-3/2020**

## **DETERMINATION**

**WHEREAS** an appeal having been made to the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board ("**the Board**") pursuant to Section 40 of the Fisheries (Amendment) Act, 1997 (as amended) ("**the Act**") by Save Ballyness Bay S.A.C. Action Group, Falcarragh Tourists & Traders Association and Coiste Glan & Glas an Fhál Carraigh agus Cósta Glan agus Glas an Fhál Carraigh ("**the Appellants**") against the decision of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine ("**the Minister**") to **GRANT** a Licence to Tullyshellfish Ltd for the cultivation of Pacific Oysters using bags and trestles at Site T12/510A ("**the Site**") on the inter-tidal foreshore in Ballyness Bay, Co. Donegal.

**AND WHEREAS** the Board in considering the appeals took account of the appeals, the file provided to it by the Minister, the "Report supporting Appropriate Assessment of Aquaculture in Ballyness Bay SAC" of the Marine Institute dated February 2019, the "Final Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement by Licencing Authority in support of the Appropriate Assessment of Aquaculture in Ballyness Bay SAC" dated November 2019, the "Screening for Appropriate Assessment & Natura Impact Assessment" produced by Aquafact dated September 2023, the "Appropriate Assessment Supplementary Report" of the Board's Technical Advisor dated 22 March 2024, the "Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement" of the Board dated 05 April 2024, the "Technical Advisor's Report – Shellfish Appeals" of the Board's Technical Advisor dated 10 April 2024 and the matters set out at Section 61 of the Act (as amended and substituted), including the following:-

- (a) the suitability of the place or waters at or in which the aquaculture is or is proposed to be carried on for the activity in question,
- (b) other beneficial uses, existing or potential, of the place or waters concerned,
- (c) the statutory status, if any, (including the provisions of any development plan, within the meaning of the Local Government (Planning and Development) Act, 1963 as amended) of the place or waters,

- (d) the likely effects of the proposed aquaculture, revocation or amendment on the economy of the area in which the aquaculture is or is proposed to be carried on,
- (e) the likely ecological effects of the aquaculture or proposed aquaculture on wild fisheries, natural habitats and flora and fauna, and
- (f) the effect or likely effect on the environment generally in the vicinity of the place or water on or in which that aquaculture is or is proposed to be carried on-
  - (i) on the foreshore, or
  - (ii) at any other place, if there is or would be no discharge of trade or sewage effluent within the meaning of, and requiring a licence under section 4 of the Local Government (Water Pollution) Act, 1977, and
- (g) the effect or likely effect on the man-made environment of heritage value in the vicinity of the place or waters.

The Board considered the appeals at its meetings on the **31 January 2020, 26 February 2020, 19 March 2020, 22 April 2020, 15 May 2020, 28 May 2021, 21 September 2021, 21 October 2021, 25 November 2021, 13 January 2022, 10 February 2022, 14 April 2022, 16 March 2022, 12 May 2022, 14 July 2022, 25 August 2022, 6 October 2022, 23 November 2022, 15 December 2022, 26 January 2023, 2 March 2023, 6 April 2023, 25 May 2023, 23 June 2023, 28 July 2023, 31 August 2023, 28 September 2023, 23 November 2023, 14 December 2023, 26 January 2024, 1 March 2024, 28 March 2024 and 11 April 2024.**

## **GROUNDINGS OF APPEALS**

The grounds of the appeals are summarised as follows:

1. Ineffective Public Consultation: the appellant claims the Minister was in breach of the Aarhus Convention regarding proper public consultation and that they have made a submission to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee regarding this issue. They claim the Minister did not advertise the proposed development in an appropriate, effective manner and did not take the appellant's views into consideration once they became aware of the proposed development. They also claim that the notices were only published in English and not Irish.
2. Inadequate Appropriate Assessment (AA) and AA Conclusion Statement: the appellants claim the Minister made unsubstantiated assumptions in determining that the proposed development would have no significant impact on Natura 2000 sites. The appellants then go on to detail a number of issues they feel were not dealt with sufficiently in the AA Report or the AA Conclusion Statement and do not fulfil the requirements for an AA. These include:

- a. Screening out habitats without sufficient explanation.
  - b. Unresolved issues, that is, highlighted issues within the AA report were not resolved in the AA Conclusion Statement.
  - c. Inadequate consideration of ex-situ effects.
  - d. Inadequate consideration of increased traffic and access to the site and uncertainty over access to some sites.
  - e. Lack of assessment for alternative proposed access route.
  - f. Potential impacts on local otter population.
  - g. Potential impacts on local seal populations (species not specified),
  - h. Not fully considering physical and biological impacts including biological effects, seston filtration, shading, fouling, introduction of non-native species, nutrient exchange and surface disturbance.
  - i. The potential for triploid Pacific oysters to reproduce.
  - j. The risk posed by introducing Manila clam to the bay.
  - k. Incorrect information regarding a lack of fishing activity in the bay.
  - l. Inadequate consideration on in-combination effects.
  - m. Inadequate consideration of the physical impacts of aquaculture.
  - n. The assessment of all 18 applications in one AA report rather than individually.
  - o. Lack of a bathymetric survey.
  - p. Inadequate consideration of identified residual impacts.
  - q. Inaccurate conclusions regarding the impacts on recreational users and tourists
  - r. Relying on conclusions from data assigned a “low confidence.”
  - s. Lack of consideration of facilities for packing and storage of harvested shellfish.
  - t. Lack of inclusion of conditions under Section 7 (3) of the Fisheries Act (1997).
  - u. Inadequate consideration of the effect the proposed development will have on public access to the area.
3. Lack of an EIA: The appellant claims an EIA should have been carried out by the Minister for this development and that it contravenes the requirements under the Habitats Directive (rather than the EIA Directive).
  4. Incorrect conclusion of the Minister regarding potential impacts on the local economy.
  5. Not a designated shellfish area: the appellants claim this indicates the area should not be licenced for shellfish aquaculture.
  6. Lack of public consultation by the Minister when granting the licence.
  7. Potential negative impact on local tourism interests which rely on the unspoilt nature of the area.
  8. Potential negative impact on a local marked walk “The Ballyness Way” which begins at the pier adjacent to the proposed development and which continues along the shore. A main focus of this walk is the local wildlife.

9. The appellant claims the proposed development will cause environmental disturbance to a number of species including geese, gulls, seals, otters, corncrake, curlew and choughs and the site is also apparently close to an eelgrass bed.
10. The appellant claims the proposed development will be a health and safety risk to recreational users of the area.
11. Negative visual impact on the area due to the proposed development.
12. Claims applicant provided false information regarding a nearby sewage outfall and by claiming the area is a designated shellfish area when it is not.
13. The proposed development will restrict seaweed harvesting in the area.
14. Negative visual impact on the area due to the proposed development and resultant negative impact on local tourism.
15. Insufficient detail in AA Report and AA Conclusion Statement, and insufficient consideration of the impacts on local people in both these documents.
16. Potential for the proposed development to have a negative impact on the economy of the area.
17. Lack of public consultation by the Minister when granting the licence.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

The Board considered the project proposed in the Application for an Aquaculture Licence under the requirements of the Aquaculture Appeals (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2012 and the EIA Directive (2011/92/EU). and concluded that, under the requirements of the legislation as they are extensive aquaculture, they are exempt developments. Therefore, they were not likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of their size, nature or location and so do not require a screening report or an environmental impact assessment report.

Therefore, the Board is satisfied that the project was not likely to have significant direct or indirect effects at the Site on the following factors:

- (a) population and human health;
- (b) biodiversity, with particular attention to species and habitats protected under the Habitats and Birds Directives;
- (c) land, soil, water, air and climate;
- (d) material assets, cultural heritage and the landscape; and
- (e) the interaction between the factors referred to in points (a) to (d)

will not have significant effects on the environment, including the factors listed in (a) to (d) by virtue of, inter alia, its nature, size or location.

The Board has concluded that the proposed project falls outside the requirements for conducting an environmental impact assessment as this type of aquaculture is not deemed “intensive” so does not require an environmental impact assessment report under the Aquaculture Appeals (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2012.

## **APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT**

The Board considered the project proposed in the Application for an Aquaculture Licence under the requirements of the European Communities (Birds and Natural Habitats) Regulations 2011 and the Habitats and Birds Directives (2009/147/EC and 92/43/EEC) (“the Birds and Habitats Directives”), “Report supporting Appropriate Assessment of Aquaculture in Ballyness Bay SAC” of the Marine Institute dated February 2019, the “Final Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement by Licencing Authority in support of the Appropriate Assessment of Aquaculture in Ballyness Bay SAC” dated November 2019, the “Screening for Appropriate Assessment & Natura Impact Assessment” produced by Aquafact dated September 2023, the “Appropriate Assessment Supplementary Report” of the Board’s Technical Advisor dated 22 March 2024, the “Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement” of the Board dated 05 April 2024.

Following an assessment of the available reports and the additional information assessed in their own technical advisor’s supplemental AA Report, the Board found that, following the recommendations of the AA Conclusion Statement of 5 April 2024 indicates that the proposed development would have a significant negative impact on the conservation objectives of the SAC assessed for this particular site.

## **DETERMINATION**

The Board has determined the appeals on the grounds that:

The site is **unsuitable** for the proposed development for the following reasons:

- Visual impact of the Site from nearby roads will be greater at this Site than at others as it is closer to a road. There will also be visual impacts for recreational users at low tide due to the flat, open nature of the bay.
- The site is within 200m of a known seal haul out site and is therefore considered likely to cause a disturbance to a qualifying interest species of an SAC.

It is the technical advisor's recommendation to refuse a licence for appeal site AP13/1-3/2020. The site is not suitable for the proposed development as it is not a suitable distance from seal haul out sites in the bay and therefore have the risk of causing a significant negative impact under site suitability, statutory status and ecological impact.

Having considered all the foregoing, and the information contained in the technical advisor's report of the 10 April 2024, the Board determined at its meeting on 11 April 2024 pursuant to Section 40 (4) (b) of the Act, to **ANNUL** the decision of the Minister and **hereby REFUSE** an Aquaculture Licence to the Applicant at Site T12/510A.



**ALAB**

An Bord Achomhairc Um  
Cheadúnais Dobharshaothraithe  
Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board

Dated this 22 day of May, 2024

The affixing of the Seal of the  
**AQUACULTURE LICENCES APPEALS BOARD**  
was authenticated by: -

Deputy Chairperson

Authorised Signatory