Alab, Info

From: Mark Flynn [redacted]
Sent: Friday 30 October 2026 17:45
To: Alab, Info
Subject: Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board. Ballyness Bay, Co Donegal

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Dear, Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB)

I am writing to formally object to the proposed aquaculture licensing in Ballyness Bay

I am a local resident and strongly object to the proposed commercial shellfish farming in Ballyness Bay. I am deeply disappointed by the apparent disregard shown by the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) and the Aquaculture Licences Appeals Board (ALAB) towards the views of the overwhelming majority of the local community, who remain firmly opposed to these developments.

Ballyness Bay is an important part of our local community and our everyday lives. I have personally enjoyed using the bay for walking and swimming, appreciating its natural beauty, tranquillity and unspoilt environment. It is a place that should be protected and preserved for local residents, visitors and future generations, not transformed into an area of commercial exploitation.

Throughout the licensing and appeals process, there has been a concerning perception that greater consideration has been given to the commercial interests of the oyster farming applicants than to the legitimate concerns and wishes of local residents. The people who live in and around Ballyness Bay, and who have a genuine and longstanding connection with it, deserve to have their views properly heard, respected and given meaningful consideration. It is difficult to understand how such significant local opposition can appear to have been given so little weight.

Ballyness Bay is not simply an area of outstanding natural beauty; it is also a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC), recognised for its ecological importance and sensitive natural habitats. This designation brings specific legal obligations under the EU Habitats Directive, requiring the protection of the site's conservation interests. The authorities must demonstrate, through rigorous and scientifically robust assessment, that proposed aquaculture activities will not adversely affect the integrity of this protected site, either individually or in combination with other developments. Where reasonable scientific doubt remains, the protection of the bay's ecological integrity must take precedence over commercial interests.

I believe there is a fundamental contradiction in designating an area as a Special Area of Conservation while simultaneously permitting its use for intensive commercial aquaculture. In my

view, commercial fishing and shellfish farming have no appropriate place in an area that has been recognised and protected for its environmental importance. Conservation status should mean precisely that: the conservation and protection of the natural environment, not the introduction of commercial activities that risk undermining the very reasons for which the area was designated.

I am particularly disappointed by ALAB's apparent failure to give sufficient weight to the serious environmental concerns raised regarding the bay, including the potential impact on its sensitive habitats, biodiversity and protected wildlife. The obligations arising under relevant EU environmental legislation must be fully respected. All identified gaps in environmental assessments must be satisfactorily addressed before any licensing decisions are finalised.

Of particular concern is the proposed introduction and cultivation of non-native species, including Pacific oysters and certain clam species. The potential for these species to reproduce naturally, spread and colonise surrounding areas presents an environmental risk that should not be underestimated or dismissed. Any resulting ecological changes could prove extremely difficult to reverse.

Ballyness Bay is characterised by its outstanding natural beauty, unspoilt coastal landscape, expansive views, rich wildlife and remarkable tranquillity. Its natural setting is increasingly rare and represents an irreplaceable environmental and landscape asset. The introduction of extensive commercial aquaculture infrastructure would fundamentally alter the visual character of the bay, undermining the very qualities that make it so special. Once this landscape is industrialised, its original character may never be fully restored.

The bay is also a highly valued natural amenity, enjoyed by residents and visitors alike for walking, swimming, boating, angling, windsurfing and other recreational activities. As someone who has personally used the bay for walking and swimming, I strongly object to the prospect of these activities being compromised by commercial operations. Commercial shellfish farming risks introducing additional litter, noise, pollution and operational disturbance, including activity during evenings and at night, fundamentally changing the peaceful character of the area.

Local residents should not have to surrender the enjoyment of their natural surroundings to accommodate private commercial interests. Ballyness Bay is a shared public and natural resource, and its recreational value should be protected. People should be able to continue enjoying the bay in its natural state without the intrusion of commercial aquaculture infrastructure and associated operations.

Ballyness Bay is also an increasingly popular destination along the Wild Atlantic Way, contributing valuable tourism income to the local economy. Extensive arrays of oyster trestles would create a significant visual intrusion into this exceptional landscape, potentially discouraging visitors and diminishing the enjoyment of the area for both residents and tourists. The economic value of preserving the bay's natural beauty and tourism appeal should not be overlooked in favour of private commercial interests.

Experiences reported from other coastal locations where commercial shellfish farming has been introduced raise legitimate concerns about potential environmental deterioration. Ballyness Bay should not be exposed to similar risks without a thorough and transparent assessment of the long-term consequences.

I am also concerned that insufficient consideration may have been given to the cumulative impact of the proposed aquaculture developments. Individual applications should not simply be assessed in isolation, but considered collectively in terms of their effects on the bay's ecology, wildlife, water quality, landscape and existing recreational activities. Once commercial aquaculture becomes established, the consequences for the natural environment may be difficult, if not impossible, to reverse.

There is also a fundamental question of public interest. Ballyness Bay belongs to the natural heritage of the local community and is a shared resource whose environmental, recreational and economic value extends far beyond the interests of individual commercial operators. The anticipated economic and employment benefits of the proposed licences should be clearly demonstrated and properly weighed against the potential long-term consequences for the wider community. Consideration should also be given to whether less environmentally sensitive locations could accommodate such activities.

Furthermore, I believe DAFM and ALAB should clearly demonstrate how the substantial objections raised by the local community have been considered, how the environmental risks have been assessed and on what grounds the granting of licences can be justified in light of these concerns. The decision-making process must be transparent, balanced and supported by robust environmental evidence. There must also be clear accountability for environmental monitoring, enforcement and restoration should damage occur.

This is not simply a disagreement about commercial development. It is about the future of Ballyness Bay, the protection of a designated conservation area, the rights and interests of local residents and the preservation of a natural environment that has been enjoyed by generations. The local community should not be expected to accept the permanent alteration of an area they value so that private commercial enterprises can benefit.

I am particularly concerned that the process to date has given the impression that the interests of oyster farming businesses have been prioritised over those of the people who live here and have the greatest day-to-day connection with the bay. That is not an acceptable approach when dealing with such an environmentally sensitive and publicly valued location.

For all these reasons, I strongly object to the granting of aquaculture licences in Ballyness Bay. I urge DAFM and ALAB to listen to the local community, give proper and meaningful weight to the objections raised, fully discharge their environmental obligations and reject commercial aquaculture proposals that threaten the character, ecology and recreational value of this unique area.

Ballyness Bay should be protected for its natural beauty, wildlife and the enjoyment of the local community and future generations, not sacrificed for private commercial gain.

Kind Regards
Mark Flynn

Sent from my iPhone