Alab, Info

From: Mary Harkin [redacted]
Sent: Monday 12 October 2026 07:18
To: Alab, Info
Subject: Ballyness Bay Aquaculture Appeals AP2–AP11/2025 – Environmental and Community Concerns

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Dear Secretary,

I wish to formally express my concerns regarding the proposed aquaculture developments in Ballyness Bay, County Donegal, and to submit my observations in relation to the ongoing Appropriate Assessments.

I live in Magheraroarty, Gortahork, with my husband and children. Ballyness Bay is an important part of our family life, and I am deeply concerned about the potential consequences of these developments for its natural environment, wildlife and local community.

1. Protecting Ballyness Bay for future generations

Ballyness Bay is one of the most beautiful and ecologically important coastal environments in northwest Donegal. It is a place where local families can enjoy nature in a relatively unspoilt setting.

Our family regularly uses both the inner bay and the Magheraroarty side for swimming, kayaking, fishing, surfing and walking.

I believe we have a responsibility to protect this exceptional environment so that our children and future generations can continue to enjoy it.

I am concerned that introducing extensive commercial aquaculture infrastructure could permanently change the character of the bay and diminish its value as a natural and recreational resource.

2. Environmental protection and biodiversity

Ballyness Bay is a designated Special Area of Conservation, recognised for its sensitive estuarine, intertidal and dune habitats.

I am particularly concerned about the potential impacts of oyster trestles and associated aquaculture activities on these protected habitats.

The Appropriate Assessments must thoroughly examine the possibility of habitat disturbance, changes in sedimentation, organic enrichment and the effects of repeated commercial activity within sensitive coastal areas.

I also ask that particular attention be paid to bird populations and other wildlife that depend on the bay and surrounding protected areas.

It is essential that these assessments consider not only individual aquaculture sites but also the cumulative environmental effects of all proposed developments.

The absence of proven damage should not be confused with scientific evidence that damage will not occur.

3. Increased commercial traffic past our family home

One of my particular concerns relates to the additional commercial traffic that could be generated by these developments.

Our family home is situated beside a road that may be used by vehicles travelling to and from the proposed aquaculture operations.

I am worried about the potential increase in commercial vehicles, including those transporting equipment, materials and harvested shellfish.

As a mother, I am particularly concerned about road safety for children, pedestrians and other local road users.

There are also potential implications for noise, disturbance and the peaceful residential environment in which we live.

I would like the Board to establish exactly which access routes would be used, the expected frequency and size of commercial vehicles, and whether their combined impact has been properly considered.

Where access routes or vehicle movements could disturb protected habitats or wildlife, these impacts should be included in the environmental assessments.

4. Impact on family recreation and public enjoyment

Ballyness Bay provides wonderful opportunities for outdoor recreation, particularly for children and young people.

Our family uses the bay throughout the year, and I am concerned that aquaculture structures and associated activities could interfere with swimming, kayaking, fishing and other established recreational uses.

I ask that the locations of the proposed developments be carefully examined in relation to existing public access and recreational areas.

I am particularly concerned about the cumulative effect of multiple aquaculture sites on the natural appearance, accessibility and enjoyment of the bay.

Ballyness Bay should remain a place where local families and visitors can experience the natural coastal environment without unnecessary commercial obstruction.

5. The need for rigorous scientific assessment

I understand that previous assessments and legal proceedings have raised important questions about the environmental evaluation of proposed aquaculture developments in Ballyness Bay.

It is essential that the current Appropriate Assessments fully address any outstanding scientific uncertainties, including potential effects on protected habitats, bird populations and the cumulative impact of multiple developments.

The precautionary requirements of the Habitats Directive must be applied rigorously.

Where reasonable scientific doubt remains about adverse effects on the integrity of protected European sites, the relevant licences should not be granted.

6. Conclusion

I recognise the importance of supporting employment and sustainable economic activity in rural Donegal. However, development must be compatible with the protection of our natural heritage.

Ballyness Bay is a precious environmental and community resource. Once its habitats or natural character are significantly altered, restoring them may be extremely difficult.

I do not want my children to grow up witnessing the gradual degradation of a place that has been such an important part of their childhood.

I therefore respectfully request that the Board refuse the proposed aquaculture licences unless it can be established, beyond reasonable scientific doubt, that the developments will not adversely affect the integrity of the protected European sites.

I also ask that the implications for local residents, family recreation, public access and commercial traffic be properly considered wherever they fall within the Board's statutory responsibilities.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours faithfully,

Mary Harkin

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