Alab, Info

From: Pól Penrose [redacted]
Sent: Monday 2 November 2026 15:52
To: Alab, Info
Subject: RE: Objection to the Proposed Aquaculture Licences for Ballyness Bay, County Donegal

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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A chara,

Please find below my formal objection to the proposed granting of aquaculture licences for commercial shellfish farming in Ballyness Bay, County Donegal.

I ask that my submission be formally recorded and considered as part of the relevant licensing or appeals process.

As a local resident, artist and director of Bród na Gaeltachta, I have a deep personal connection to our coastline and the landscape we are fortunate to call home. I am seriously concerned about the potential impact of these proposals on our natural environment, our community, our local economy and the future of the bay as a shared public amenity.

Our community has been campaigning against these proposals since the summer of 2019. I am concerned that the strength of local opposition and the well-founded concerns raised by residents have not received the consideration they deserve throughout the licensing process. The people who live here understand the importance of Ballyness Bay, and their voices must be taken seriously.

Environmental concerns and native wildlife

Ballyness Bay is a valuable natural environment, and we have a responsibility to protect its habitats, wildlife and biodiversity. I am particularly concerned about the potential introduction and spread of non-native species, including Pacific oysters and clams, and the possibility that these could reproduce and establish themselves beyond the intended cultivation areas.

The potential consequences for native species and the wider marine ecosystem must be properly assessed. I believe the precautionary principle should apply where there is a risk of lasting environmental damage. Any decision must take full account of the relevant European environmental protections and be based on thorough assessments of both the immediate and long-term impacts.

We should not put the ecological integrity of the bay at risk without a clear understanding of the potential consequences.

The direct impact on Bród na Gaeltachta

For the past five years, I have been director of Bród na Gaeltachta, a festival celebrating queer identity, the Irish language, arts and culture in the Donegal Gaeltacht. The festival has grown year on year and continues to develop an increasingly ambitious programme of artistic, cultural, community and environmental activities.

Bród na Gaeltachta receives support from the Arts Council, Ealaín na Gaeltachta, Donegal County Council, Foras na Gaeilge and Donegal Local Development Company (DLDC). This support helps us deliver a programme that contributes to the cultural and community life of the Gaeltacht. Our environmental strand is a particularly important part of the festival, connecting people with the landscape and encouraging a greater appreciation of our natural heritage.

Each year, we organise events, workshops and creative activities on our local beaches and around our bays. These give local people and visitors opportunities to explore our coastline, learn about our native flora and fauna and develop a deeper connection with the place we call home.

These activities are central to our festival programme, and they are growing every year. Our beaches and bays are not simply backdrops for our events; they are an essential part of the experience. They provide spaces for environmental education, creativity and community engagement, allowing people to learn about the natural world while experiencing the Gaeltacht through its landscape, culture and language.

The proposed oyster farms would directly affect the work we do through Bród na Gaeltachta. Extensive arrays of oyster trestles and the associated commercial activity could fundamentally change the character of the bay, undermine the natural setting in which our events take place and compromise future opportunities for workshops, environmental learning and creative engagement with the coastline.

We have spent years building a festival that encourages people to appreciate our environment and engage with the place they live in or have travelled to visit. It would be deeply disappointing to see this work undermined by a development that could damage the very landscape on which so much of our programme depends.

Bród na Gaeltachta is one example of the cultural, educational and community activities that our coastline makes possible. We should be encouraging these opportunities to grow, not putting them at risk.

Our shared amenity, tourism and local economy

Ballyness Bay is much more than a potential site for commercial aquaculture. It is a cherished local amenity where people walk, swim, sail, fish, windsurf, make art and spend time with family and friends. It provides opportunities for recreation, learning and connection with nature that are important to the wellbeing of our community.

The bay is also an increasingly popular beauty spot along the Wild Atlantic Way. Its natural beauty contributes to local tourism, supporting businesses and providing an important source of income for the surrounding area.

Extensive oyster trestles would significantly alter the appearance and character of the bay. I am concerned that this would diminish its appeal to residents and visitors alike, undermining the qualities that make the area so special.

There are also concerns about the potential for increased litter, pollution, noise, vehicle movements and disturbance associated with commercial operations. These impacts must be considered in the context of the bay's existing uses and the people who live and work in the surrounding area.

We should be protecting Ballyness Bay as a shared resource, rather than allowing its natural character and community value to be compromised.

The need for a thorough and transparent assessment

Experiences of commercial shellfish farming elsewhere raise important questions about potential environmental, visual and community impacts. Ballyness Bay should not be exposed to avoidable risks without a comprehensive assessment of the evidence.

I ask that the relevant authorities give proper consideration to the cumulative impacts of the proposed developments, the risks associated with non-native species, the applicable environmental legislation and the long-term consequences for the local community.

I am particularly concerned that commercial interests could take precedence over the environmental and community values that make Ballyness Bay so important.

Conclusion

As someone who works in the arts and community sector, I see every year how our landscape brings people together, creates opportunities for learning and supports cultural activity in the Gaeltacht. Through Bród na Gaeltachta, I want to see these opportunities continue to grow, allowing more people to experience our coastline and appreciate its extraordinary natural heritage.

Ballyness Bay is an irreplaceable part of our local environment and community. Its value extends far beyond its commercial potential. It is a place for wildlife, recreation, education, creativity and community life, and we have a responsibility to protect it for future generations.

For these reasons, I strongly object to the proposed granting of aquaculture licences for commercial shellfish farming in Ballyness Bay. I urge the relevant authorities to take the concerns of the local community seriously, fully assess the potential environmental and social consequences, and refuse the proposed licences.

Mise le meas,

Pól Penrose
[redacted]

Pól Penrose
[redacted]



















