

Shellfish Aquaculture Licence Applications in Ballyness Bay, County Donegal.

As designated consultees, Donegal County Council was notified of Shellfish Aquaculture Licence Applications in Ballyness Bay, County Donegal. Eighteen licence applications were lodged for approval; four were refused, eight fully granted and five with variation. Figure 1 below shows the locations of the proposed farms.

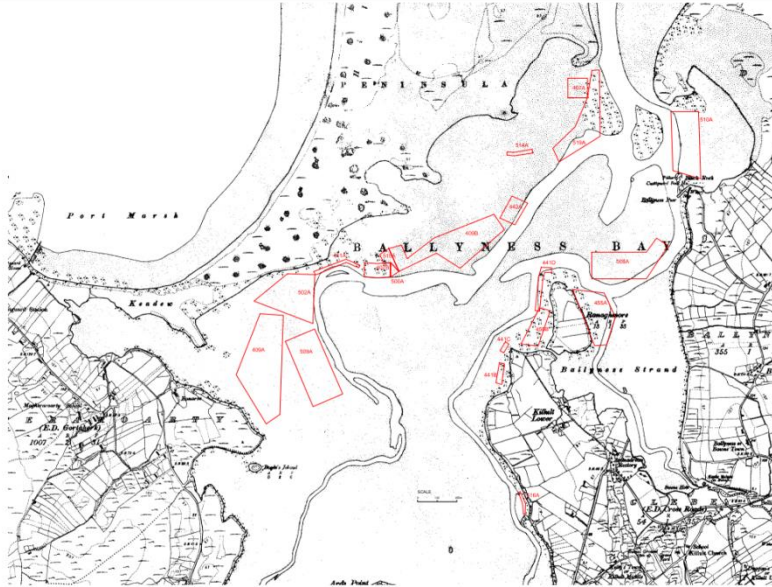


Figure 1. Locations of proposed Ballyness aquaculture licence applications

A number of the parcels of foreshore seeking licence had proposed access routes which cross the EU Designated Doey Peninsula. This access is necessary to transport staff, machinery and associated infrastructure involved in the industry to the shellfish farms.

Following erosion concerns of the Doey Peninsula which backs the Magheroarty Green Coast beach (see Picture 1), Donegal County Councils (DCC) Water and Environment Section successfully sought OPW funding for a coastal erosion and flooding risk management study of this coastline, including Ballyness Bay.



Picture 1. Magheroarty pier, beach and Doey Peninsula.

In 1997, Kirk Mc Clure Morton were commissioned by DCCs Roads Directorate to conduct a Magheroarty Coastal Study in connection with proposed harbour improvements. The report's conclusions referred to concern that 'Damage is being caused at the low dune system at the southern end of Magheroarty beach due to recreational activity'. Subsequently, in 2001, DCCs Roads Directorate commissioned an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) of the recommended 50m pier extension. The EIS reported 'Human recreational activity is damaging the dunes particularly the low dunes at the Magheroarty end of the system'.

The Ministers decisions on the recent Ballyness aquaculture licence applications is summarised in Table 1 below. Where a licence has been granted, I have also included comments relating to the applicants proposed site access route.

Site Ref no.	Ministers Decision	Access Route Comments
T12/407B	Grant Licence	Initial route crosses beginning of spit at narrowest, most vulnerable, point.
T12/409A	Grant Variation Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/409B	Grant Variation Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/441A	Grant Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/441B	Grant Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/441C	Grant Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/441D	Refuse to Grant Licence	N/A
T12/455A	Grant Variation Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/455B	Grant Variation Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/500A	Grant Licence	Initial route crosses beginning of spit at narrowest, most vulnerable, point.
T12/502A	Grant Variation Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/508A	Refuse to Grant Licence	N/A
T12/509A	Refuse to Grant Licence	N/A
T12/510A	Grant Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/514A	Grant Licence	Initial route crosses beginning of spit at narrowest, most vulnerable, point.
T12/515A	Grant Licence	Initial route crosses beginning of spit at narrowest , most vulnerable, point.
T12/516A	Grant Licence	Does not traverse spit.
T12/519A	Refuse to Grant Licence	N/A

Table 1. Summary of aquaculture licence decisions and comments on proposed site access routes.

Sites T12/407B, T12/500A, T12/514A and T12/515A have proposed site access routes which cross the southern/low end of the Dooley Peninsula at its narrowest, most vulnerable, point. From the studies referred above, it is known that existing recreational access has already contributed to degradation of the dune structure. The introduction of heavy plant and machinery associated with the proposed aquaculture developments can only cause further degradation of this already fragile location.

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