

AQUACULTURE LICENCES APPEALS BOARD

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

Appeal Reference Number: **AP7/1/2018**

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 Hook Head Shellfish Ltd (“**the Applicant**”) against the decision of the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine (“**the Minister**”) to refuse to grant an Aquaculture Licence (and accompanying foreshore licence) to the Applicant for the cultivation of oysters at site reference T3/87A in Bannow Bay, Co. Wexford

AND WHEREAS the Board in considering the appeal took account of the appeal, the file provided to it by the Minister, observations received from Fitzpatrick Oysters Ltd. and SBS Limited pursuant to Section 44 (2) of the Act, the report of the Board's technical advisor 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 particular 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 28 August 2018, 9 October 2018, 14 November 2018, 11 December 2018, 22 January 2019, 26 March 2019, 30 April 2019 and 15 May 2019.

In reaching its determination on the appeals the Board noted and had regard to the following the following:

- the recommendation of its technical advisors that the proposed aquaculture site and its operation is unlikely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of *inter alia*, its nature, size or location and that in-combination effects are also unlikely. Therefore an environmental impact assessment in accordance with S.I. 468 of 2012 is not required. The Board noted this recommendation and determined that no environmental impact assessment is required; and
- The Appropriate Assessment Conclusion Statement by the Minister which reflects the reports of November 2017 and March 2018. The Board determined the Conclusion Statement is adequate in terms of its assessment of the impacts of aquaculture activities to sensitive habitats, species and birds within Bannow Bay.

The Board determined the appeal on the basis of the following:

- (a) that the site is **not suitable** for the proposed development for the following reasons:

- The application site is located within Bannow Bay Special Protection Area and Bannow Bay Special Area of Conservation. Bannow Bay SPA is of international importance for non-breeding/wintering birds and is designated for a range of bird species;
- Licensing of further sites for the intertidal culture of oysters is likely to cause significant displacement levels for a range of protected bird species that regularly use Bannow Bay. Where there are no clear mitigation measures available to prevent the risk of the deterioration of the conservation status of specific shorebirds, the site is not considered suitable for licensing of further production units;
- There may be potential for issues to arise relating to the carrying capacity of the site in terms of oyster production volumes were the site to be licensed individually or in conjunction with other sites;

(b) The proposed developments would have a **significant adverse impact** on some beneficial users of Bannow Bay for the following reasons:

- Displacement of shorebirds could impact populations of wintering birds and reduce the ecological value of the area and hence affect tourism and nature conservation interests;

(c) The proposed development would have a **significant adverse impact** on the statutory status of the area for the following reasons:

- The licensing of new aquaculture sites (in addition to existing and trial sites) in Bannow Bay is predicted to have a significant displacement effect on bird species for which Bannow Bay SPA is designated. Significant displacement effects (i.e. loss of habitat leading to a predicted decline in population) are predicted for five species for which Bannow Bay is designated a Special Protection Area for birds (Grey Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot and Dunlin);

- Adverse impacts on bird species and/or populations could affect the designation of the site as a Wildfowl Sanctuary;
- (d) The proposed development would have a **significant beneficial impact** on the economy of the area for the following reasons:
- In granting the additional licences, the projected employment targets would likely be achieved as planned by the applicants with consequential significant benefit for the local economy;
- (e) The proposed development would have a **significant adverse impact** on the ecology of the area for the following reasons:
- It is likely that significant adverse effects on the avi-fauna of the area would arise as a consequence of the proposed licensing of additional aquaculture sites due to significant displacement effects (i.e. disturbance and loss of habitat leading to a decline in population) that are predicted for five species for which Bannow Bay is designated a Special Protection Area for birds (Grey Plover, Black-tailed Godwit, Bar-tailed Godwit, Knot and Dunlin);
 - The licensing of aquaculture for existing, trial and new sites in Bannow Bay would lead to displacement effects of between 13% and 16% for the species listed. The Appropriate Assessment predicted that the level of displacement was less than significant only with the renewal of existing aquaculture licenses. The aquaculture sites which are the subject of this appeal are new sites. Displacement effects are predicted to be greatest with the licensing of existing, trial and new sites. The existing and trial sites relate to existing *in situ* trestles. New application sites relate to the placement of new trestles on intertidal habitat;
- (f) The development would lead to **significant adverse general environmental effects** as a result of the proposed development for the following reasons:

- Erosion of the adjacent shoreline by vehicular traffic accessing the site.
 - Compaction over soft sediments as a result of vehicular traffic accessing the trestles.
- (g) There would be **no impact** on the man-made heritage of value in the area as a result of the proposed additional licensing of sites for the following reasons:
- The absence of any protected structures or recorded monuments in the area of the proposed aquaculture licence applications as indicated by the Record of Monuments and Places.

Having considered all the foregoing, the Board determined at its meeting on 15 May 2019, pursuant to Section 40 (4) (a) of the Act, to **CONFIRM** the decision of the Minister made on 29 June 2018 to refuse to grant an aquaculture licence to the Applicant for the above site.

Dated this 18 day of June 2019

PRESENT when the Common Seal of the
AQUACULTURE LICENCES APPEALS BOARD
was affixed hereto:-


Imelda Reynolds
Chair


Michael Sweeney
Deputy Chair