

KILNINVER AND KILMELFORD COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Eas a' mhuilinn, Kilmelford, By Oban, Argyll. PA34 4XA
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11th February 2004

Director of Planning and Development Control
Oban, Lorn and the Isles Area
Argyll and Bute Council
Lorn House
Albany Street
Oban
Argyll
PA34 4AR

Dear Sir

Proposed Shellfish Farming Sites by Celtic Seafoods at Loch Melfort

The Kilninver and Kilmelford Community Council held a general meeting on Tuesday 10th February 2004 to discuss the above application. The meeting was attended by six members of the community council, two Argyll and Bute Councillors and thirty-one members of this community.

There was unanimous agreement at the meeting, and also in letters of representation from other members unable to attend, that this Community Council should object in the strongest possible terms to this application. The main points discussed at the meeting, which we would like to bring to your attention, are as follows:

1. The currently acceptable balance between industry and tourism would be destroyed. The businesses operating within Loch Melfort are all long established and operate in harmony with each other and with the environment.
2. The visual impact of this proposal is grossly understated within the application, and both proposed farms will be highly visible from the roadside, surrounding hills and within the loch. This area is world renowned for the unspoilt beauty and tranquillity, which would be destroyed by this proposal and would inevitably reduce the attractiveness of Loch Melfort as a tourist destination (especially since the world famous National Trust Garden at Arduaine overlooks both proposed sites). Since tourism is the largest employer and revenue generator within the area, it is unacceptable to consider any type of enterprise that could easily lead to job reductions in the tourist industry.
3. The proposals represent a real hazard to navigation of pleasure and commercial craft that widely use all reaches of Loch Melfort all year round. Both proposed sites are on the approach to two busy yachting establishments, and the risk to pleasure and commercial craft, and most importantly their crew, will be very high. The application clearly states that the sites will be barely visible once in full production; while we do not agree with this assumption, it merely highlights the potential risk to shipping of all sizes.

4. Biologically Loch Melfort is unsuited to shellfish production, as demonstrated by numerous failed attempts in the past. The tidal flows in Loch Melfort do not sustain a significant wild mussel population; so will not provide adequate feed resources for a commercial operation.
5. The proposals will obstruct all users of Loch Melfort:
 - a) Recreational fishing and general leisure use of these popular areas, traditionally enjoyed by locals and visitors
 - b) Commercial fishing activities, both small scale (i.e. local) creel fishermen and mobile gear operators
 - c) Local wild salmon netmen, since the proposed locations will block wild salmon runs and netting areas used by locals for over forty years

The free access to all reaches of Loch Melfort is currently available to a great number of people, both local residents and visitors to the area. It is unthinkable that this would be denied to all for the commercial interest of just one company.

6. The introduction of new fish farms will present a threat to the existing fish farms within Loch Melfort, which have operated for over thirty years, by the potential introduction of disease pathogens, and the increase in biomass of production within the ecosystem
7. Concern was raised about the potential impact on wildlife following the development of this type of aquaculture, especially since the areas selected in the application provide sanctuary for a large variety of wildlife, enjoyed by locals and visitors to the area.
8. The spurious claims of safeguarding current, and generation of further, local employment have been used in the original application for the access and shorebase to the current site at Arduaine, yet there has been no local employment generation, and no indication of any future plans. No discernable benefit has accrued to the community from the current Celtic Seafoods Ltd operations, so further development can only be seen as a negative.

The impact of this proposal, were it approved, would be severe in terms of local employment and revenue generation of a diverse range of businesses currently operating in the area, and would detract greatly from the natural beauty of Loch Melfort and the environment. The depth of feeling displayed by all present at the community council meeting must be taken into account by Argyll and Bute Council when considering this application.

I trust that the above points will be noted, and used to persuade all parties that this application is refused forthwith.

Yours faithfully

Neil Manchester
Secretary

Kilniver and Kilmelford Community Council