

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK MARINE GROUP

Introduction to Scottish Environment LINK

Scottish Environment LINK is the forum for Scotland's voluntary environment community, with over 35 member bodies representing a broad spectrum of environmental interests with the common goal of contributing to a more environmentally sustainable society.

Its member bodies represent a wide community of environmental interest, sharing the common goal of contributing to a more sustainable society. LINK provides a forum for these organizations, enabling informed debate, assisting co-operation within the voluntary sector, and acting as a strong voice for the environment.

This submission is on behalf of the LINK Marine Group that welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee call for evidence on salmon farming. Since LINK Marine Group members represent a range of environmental interests, detailed individual written evidence focusing on the areas of expertise for some of those members will also be submitted. This response sums up some high level areas of shared concern in response to questions 1 and 2.

Summary of LINK concerns in response to the following questions: 1. Do you have any general views on the current state of the farmed salmon industry in Scotland? and; 2. There have been several recent reports which suggest how the farmed salmon industry might be developed. Do you have any views on action that might be taken to help the sector grow in the future?

- LINK believes that there must be no new marine fish farms using current 'open cage' practices or any expansion of existing fish farm sites, including any increases in farmed fish biomass at existing sites until the current failings in the regulation of the salmon farming industry and the environmental problems the industry causes, as both identified by ECCLR Committee, are understood and resolved.
- To approve any expansion of the industry now will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage to the environment. LINK would like to see the immediate introduction of incentives for salmon farm operators to adopt and innovate new designs, practices and technologies that aim to reduce their environmental impacts to acceptable levels. It is essential that both Government and industry growth targets are subject to independent environmental assessment and are in line with the environmental carrying capacity of Scotland's marine environment.

- LINK acknowledges the important role the salmon-farming industry plays in the Scottish economy, as an employer in rural coastal communities and in the supply of high quality protein, but this must not be at the expense of severe damage to Scotland's natural environment.

Some LINK Marine Group members will be responding individually in more detail in response to all of **Questions 1 to 6**.

This submission was compiled on behalf of LINK Marine Group and is supported by: Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust, Marine Conservation Society, National Trust for Scotland, RSPB Scotland, Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, Whale and Dolphin Conservation and WWF Scotland.

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