



MARINE design

INTERNATIONAL

Public Consultation Independent Review of Aquaculture Licencing Process

Independent Review of Aquaculture Licensing
C/O Deirdre Morgan – Secretary to the Independent Review Group
Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
National Seafood Centre
Clonakilty, Co. Cork
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Marine Design International is a vessel consultancy and design business based in Scotland and having worked in Ireland for 12 years in the passenger, fishing and aquaculture industries. We are strongly invested in the Irish Aquaculture industry providing new vessel design and build in Ireland as well as extensive consultancy work for vessel conversion for work on fish farms.

I appreciate this opportunity to offer my opinion on the industry and hope that my observations may be of help.

I have previously discussed the situation with operators as to why we are often trying to refit old outdated vessels to work on the farms which were not designed for the tasks while in Scotland there is a constant stream of new build farm support vessels and some very sophisticated customised small ships owned locally to support the industry. I am told this is all to do with the economies of scale and the turnover of the Irish industry cannot cover the capital cost of these new specialised vessels.

In Scotland the aquaculture industry is given enormous support and encouragement with target growth figures among the largest in the country. In Norway the situation is even more extreme with their investment and growth probably 10 years ahead of Scotland. Personally as a leisure sailor I was not keen on fish farms when they appeared around the Clyde lochs as I grew up but perception has changed and the work and income generated by the farms now make them generally welcomed by communities although you will never make everyone happy.

The commercial risks involved in fish farming are huge and to some extent cannot be mitigated due to the natural occurrences which cannot be controlled. This means the farms/farm operators require to be of sufficient scale to see out a few bad harvests where losses can easily be millions of euros. The parties involved have invested heavily in developing more robust cages, more effective treatments and lately more environmentally friendly yet effective treatments. It can be seen that the industry does not shy away from investing in new developments where they are applicable internationally yet many of the Irish vessels are over 20 years old, much of the equipment is handed on from Norway or Scotland where it has been superseded.

If planning and approval of farms was made easier or more transparent so that the level could be increased I am sure many companies would invest in new more efficient safer boats and other support equipment moving the industry towards a flagship model that it is in Norway and is becoming in Scotland.

Simon Cormack.
Director

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