

Independent Review of Aquaculture Licencing
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Independent Review Group
Dept. Of Agriculture, Food and the Marine
National Seafood Centre
Clonakilty,
Co. Cork

Patrick Sweeney

Co. Donegal.

February 3rd, 2017

Re. Aquaculture Licencing Consultation

Dear Chairperson,

I was born and raised in my beloved Fanad. I was one of the lucky ones of my generation who got a full time job with Donegal Co. Council unlike most who had to emigrate to London or Glasgow and only returned for a brief holiday. Over time I became involved with most activities in my local community, from youth clubs, to football, athletics, etc. I became a member of the St Vincent de Paul, through which I became aware of the poverty in the parish. I am still a member after 45 years and I now see a different community.

Over many years we had several people coming to Fanad and talking about the potential of Mulroy Bay – from a marina to pleasure boating to fishing but none of them put their money where their mouth was. In 1979, Tony Fox and Dr Brian West, two professional people, came to Fanad with the idea of getting up a fish farm in Mulroy bay. Being poorly educated and ill informed, rural people were sceptical of their proposal. My view was that these were two genuine people and I believed what they were saying and when asked, I quickly joined their proposed fish farm.

It was a completely different story when we sought other investors. When the news got around a protest group quickly emerged, led mainly by people from outside the parish who didn't know what fish farming was about. Never the less we had enough support to push ahead and soon it became clear that there as the potential of employment and the parish would benefit from the project. Then minds changed. Suffice to say, the rest is history.

Now the company employs over 250 people in a remote rural area were once people depended on making a living putting out seaweed and selling it for a pittance. During the recent recession very few had to emigrate form the parish. Those who went just wanted to see the rest of the world. Most returned to work in Marine Harvest. Many of the employees are family members of vehement objectors. But we did not let that come in the way. I now dread to think what would happen in our parish of Fanad Fisheries closed down. This is an indigenous industry which cannot move to Mexico or other poor countries. The nearest employment opportunities are in Letterkenny 40 Km away and being the largest town in the country where most young people go there seeking employment.

There are many opportunities in Marine Harvest for employment from people with limited education to people with university degrees. So I ask the review group to give great consideration for the potential of further employment in very remote areas in Ireland. These are the only areas where fish farming can take place.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Sweeney

