

## **Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee**

### **Environmental impacts of salmon farming**

#### **Written submission from Ken Reid on behalf of Facebook Salmon Fishing Club**

I am writing on behalf of our 8,400 members after seeking views from our membership, and following the two meetings broadcast from parliament and digesting the extensive SAMS report you commissioned. There have been extensive submissions and opinions passed and considerable amounts of peer reviewed evidence to back up relevant opinions. One cannot fail to notice that the BBC and mainstream press are publishing alarming news to the public about the impacts of aquaculture. The public are now taking notice about adverse publicity aquaculture is getting. More people are engaging with platforms such as YouTube to see films made globally about the impact of salmonid aquaculture to our environment.

It's crystal clear aquaculture is prospering at the expense of the environment, where local rural economies need investment and jobs, and clearly there are conflicts for politicians wishing to drive commercial expansions and protect our environment. Sadly regulators are seen as apologists and pay lip service to their responsibilities to carry out their roles responsibly and more effectively. In Norway there are punitive fines for irresponsible operators but in Scotland this doesn't appear to be the case.

Recreational anglers love our wild environments, our wild fish and support conservation collectively by adopting catch and release to be seen to be trying to help stocks. Like the canary in the coal mine, if there were no anglers fishing our rivers, they would be poached, polluted and eventually uninhabited by wild fish. We see our wild fish numbers collapsing and measures introduced by government to categorise rivers to support necessary conservation. The love of the iconic salmon and sea trout is a strong passion with anglers and to hear of the welfare of salmon in fish farms is quite harrowing. Horrendous levels of mortalities forecast to reach twenty million per annum, clearly indicates that practises are far too intensive in the environment they currently operate from. Diffuse spread of disease and sea lice have impacted significantly on wild stocks and hugely damaged a viable west coast angling tourism destination. There are concerns on creating another opportunity for deadly disease transmission by utilising lump fish and wrasse en masse to alleviate sea lice infestation in marine pens, where extensive stocking will lead to more disease. Extensive use of chemical treatment on fish is damaging protected maerl beds and benthic populations. Our much lauded Langoustine fishery is seriously under threat. On a cost benefit analysis can aquaculture really claim to be viable in its current form? What evidence is provided that fish from farms is disease free when sold to market. Studies in Canada have shown salmon sold to market carrying disease and escapees are infecting returning salmon with diseases that inhibit their ability to spawn in their natal rivers because they are too weak. The same may be happening here.

All fingers logically point to the necessity for aquaculture to be sited on land. This will be costly and hopefully producers can be incentivised to move to closed containment, to produce premium quality products globally to market, to remove their waste and effluent responsibly which doesn't have a catastrophic impact to the environment and provide employment and business opportunities in our rural

economies. Please stop expansion plans until the industry gets its act together and regulators get more powers to enforce stricter regulations required. There are too many gaps and the industry is getting away with murder.

You must always remember that angling tourism, a £150 million long established industry is a big rural employer where salmon rivers are the lifeblood of these rural valleys, providing substantial income during the shoulder periods of spring and autumn. If there are no viable runs of wild migratory fish, these valleys suffer hardship and many jobs would be lost.

To finish I would like to quote from Salmon Fishing, the definitive guide written by my old mentor, the famed award winning author and naturalist Hugh Falkus in 1984.

“Landscape”, said Ruskin, “is part of a Nations wealth.” And who would not agree that clean water, the lifeblood of the countryside, is an essential part of that landscape. Thanks to the various Associations concerned with Salmo’s welfare, much has been done, especially in the long and constant struggle against pollution. But, the ogres of indifference and greed have still to be overcome. This is the age of the contrived: of safari parks, nature trails, zoos and man made lakes with stew pond fish. And perhaps today there is a place for these. But vital to mans spirit is the challenge of the wilderness, with truly wild animals. Of all species, salmon and sea trout are certainly that. We cannot afford to lose them.