

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM BEN WILSON, MANAGING DIRECTOR INVERLUSSA MARINE SERVICES

Inverlussa Marine Services, based on the Isle of Mull, provide specialised service vessels to the Scottish Aquaculture industry. We are one of many within the supply chain which relies on the fish farming sector in Scotland. Inverlussa employ over 70 full time staff and crew almost all living in the Highlands and Islands. Our family business was started in 2006 with one workboat, today we operate 11 vessels, 10 of which are working for Scottish fish farm companies. Last year we invested just under £8,000,000 in two new fish farm workboats, this increased our workforce by 8 new skilled crew.

I am a passionate supporter of fish farming for a number of reasons, the most important being, there is no other industry that supports rural fragile communities in the Highlands & Islands as fish farming does. The majority of our staff support families and therefore support these rural communities' schools, hospitals and shops. We invest heavily in our crew and have taken on a number of school leavers whom we have supported through apprenticeships, and have retained as highly skilled well paid individuals. This allows young people within these rural communities relatively unique opportunities for highly skilled labour in an otherwise relatively limited employment market, restricted to predominantly fishing and hospitality. At Inverlussa we are just one example of numerous aquaculture support businesses that are contributing significantly to not only the Scottish economy, but more importantly directly to remote communities.

The Scottish Aquaculture industry has invested hugely in the management of sea lice and other disease challenges over the last few years. At Inverlussa we partner closely with farming companies to provide marine vessels for a range of duties, one of these being mechanical delousing treatments. The innovation seen in marine vessels and delousing equipment in the last few years has been unprecedented and we at Inverlussa are very happy to be supporting and facilitating this innovation.

As with any human activity, fish farming will have an environmental impact, however what is important is how this impact is calculated and managed. Further we must always consider what the socio-economic benefits are of such an activity to ensure a pragmatic approach is taken when weighing up the costs and benefits of any industry. I believe it would be hard to find any other industry within Scotland that provides the same scale of socio-economic benefits as fish farming does.

Inverlussa Marine Services
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