

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM STEWART RENDALL

WESTRAY – ‘AN ISLAND PERSPECTIVE’

Westray is a small thriving island community, population circa 550, of which approximately 10% of the working population are involved, either directly or indirectly, in salmon farming operations on the island. With the salmon farming workforce set to increase further in the very near future this, in addition to providing employees with well-paid and relatively secure employment, has also the additional benefits to other businesses and organisations on the island. Some of these businesses would undoubtedly be no longer viable or certainly struggling to survive without salmon farming operations here. This again would have a dramatic and negative impact on other employment opportunities on the island. As well as the positive effect of solid employment growth here there have been additional benefits throughout the community as a whole, such as sponsorship for the local Golf Club, Sailing Club, Rugby Club, Football Club and Westray Heritage Trust and donations towards the local Nursery, School and Playgroup and numerous other groups during the past years.

Salmon farming in Scotland has historically received bad publicity which largely stems from the early years of fish farming which were poorly managed and poorly regulated. Vast improvements have been made since these early years and these improvements and industry developments should be ‘shouted about’ both nationally and internationally as we feel we have some of the highest welfare standards and environmental regulation throughout the world of fish farming. Environmental impacts are felt in any farming operations – not just fish farming – but if managed properly and improved upon there is no reason for salmon farming not to be environmentally sustainable. The salmon farming sites around Westray are visited by dolphins, whales and occasionally basking sharks with an abundance of wild fish stocks in situ. We are certainly not seeing any detrimental environmental effects around our island through salmon farming operations. Neither have we ever needed to medicate or treat our fish for sea lice here in the 30 years we have been growing salmon.

Stewart Rendall
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