

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

SALMON FARMING IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM UNST COMMUNITY COUNCIL, SHETLAND

Salmon Farming in the North Isles of Shetland

Unst Community Council is fully behind the Aquaculture sector in this area, with regard to farmed salmon, mussel farming and inshore creel fishing.

Salmon Farming – all the sites around Unst are now owned by Cooke Aquaculture. Since taking over here, they have shown themselves to be a good employer, a responsible company environmentally and a supporter of community groups.

Cooke employ over 100 people in Unst and Yell, providing good well – paid jobs in the area. Their safety record is excellent and they have shown that their operation here is modern and well financed.

There are three distinct employment areas here:-

- the onshore salmon hatchery operation based at Loch of Cliff;
- the sea-sites around Unst, Yell and Fetlar;
- and the salmon processing plant in Mid Yell.

The onshore hatchery has been working successfully for many years, bringing on young salmon before transportation by helicopter to the sea-site cages.

On the sea-sites, fish are carefully monitored and cages are well constructed and well-maintained on a regular basis.

Cooke also run a salmon processing factory in Mid Yell, producing a regular quantity of good quality fish that is commanding a good price on the world market. The salmon factory has expanded and modernised recently and is now capable of processing *15,000 fish per day*.

This industry keeps the local Inter-island and external ferry businesses busy with produce going out of Shetland all year round. *15,000 tonnes of fish* are exported from the North Isles each year. Fish-farming contributes greatly to the Shetland economy.

Cooke have a great local support track record, having supported many community projects in the island, including business initiatives, football and netball teams, and other voluntary groups.

We have had no complaints about their activities here. Indeed, Cooke's arrival has boosted jobs in this area and made salmon farming a more organised and profitable business.

We are fully supportive of the salmon industry here, the key employer in this area and a great success story.

Any reduction in fish farming activity here would only damage what is already a fragile local economy, since the closure of Unst airport in 1995 and the closure of the RAF Saxa Vord station here in 2005, when the population of our island reduced from 1200 to the steady 600 plus that it is today. Fish farming is one of the activities that we hope would actually help to grow the local economy in the future.

It is essential that it receives Government support.

G. Thomson, Chairman
Unst Community Council
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