

**MINUTES of MEETING of PLANNING, PROTECTIVE SERVICES AND LICENSING  
COMMITTEE held in the MAIN HALL, VICTORIA HALLS, KINLOCH ROAD, CAMPBELTOWN  
on WEDNESDAY, 17 JANUARY 2018**

**Present:** Councillor David Kinniburgh (Chair)

Councillor Gordon Blair	Councillor Donald MacMillan
Councillor Rory Colville	Councillor Roderick McCuish
Councillor Robin Currie	Councillor Alastair Redman
Councillor Lorna Douglas	Councillor Richard Trail
Councillor Audrey Forrest	

**Attending:** Charles Reppke, Head of Governance and Law  
Sandra Davies, Acting Major Applications Team Leader  
Richard Kerr, Principal Planning Officer  
Chris Read, Marine Harvest – Applicant  
Steven Bracken, Marine Harvest – Applicant  
Paul Featherstone, Marine Harvest – Applicant  
James Ross, Council’s Roads Officer – Consultee  
Marina Curran-Colthart, Council’s Local Biodiversity Officer – Consultee  
Iain Aitken – Neutral representee  
Councillor Donald Kelly, Supporter  
Tom Millar, Supporter  
Allan McDougall, Supporter  
Lyle Gillespie, Supporter  
Bill Roy, Supporter  
David Bassett, Supporter  
Bob Miller, Save the Gauldrons Group – Objector  
Valerie Nimmo, Objector  
Christine Russell, Objector  
Livingston Russell, Objector  
Fiona Walker, Objector

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mary-Jean Devon, George Freeman, Graham Archibald Hardie, Jean Moffat and Sandy Taylor.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MARINE HARVEST SCOTLAND: ERECTION OF BUILDINGS TO FORM FISH HATCHERY INCLUDING FORMATION OF ACCESS, CAR PARKING AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPE BUNDING: MARINE ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH LABORATORY, LOSSIT POINT, MACHRIHANISH, CAMPBELTOWN (REF: 17/00642/PP)**

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were made. He then outlined the procedure that would be followed and the Head of Governance and Law identified those present who wished to speak.

## PLANNING

Sandra Davies presented the application on behalf of the Head of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services. A summary of her presentation is detailed below.

This is a major application for a large scale development comprising a commercial scale fish hatchery and other associated works including access and parking. The development would be located on a site adjacent to an existing Marine Environmental Research Facility (MERL) where developmental work leading to this commercial scale project has been undertaken.

Planning permission is sought for a Wrasse Hatchery for the breeding of Ballan Wrasse with the other associated works. The purpose of the development is to provide a marine fish farm company with a farmed source of cleaner fish which are used as a biological control for parasitic sea lice on marine fish farms.

Wild stocks of wrasse are insufficient to meet demand for this purpose and do not provide a sustainable source. Fish farm companies are increasingly looking at innovative methods of sea lice control, in order to reduce reliance on chemical treatments and to improve environmental conditions at their farms. The applicants have been carrying development into the farmed production of wrasse at the existing research facility at Machrihanish with a view to building a commercial scale a facility with sufficient productive capacity to satisfy the demands of their marine farms within Scotland.

This application is for a large scale development located within the countryside zone which is not supported by the Local Development Plan unless an exceptional case is put forward and accepted by the Council and an Area Capacity Evaluation has been carried out which concludes the landscape has the capacity to accommodate such a development.

In this case it is therefore necessary for Members to consider firstly, if the development benefits from an exceptional case sufficient to warrant development on this scale in the countryside zone, secondly, whether an ACE assessment provides reassurance that the landscape has sufficient capacity to absorb development on this scale in the particular location proposed, and finally, whether there are other policy matters or any other material considerations which ought to influence the outcome of the application.

Before going on to consider the details of the planning application it is first necessary for Members to conclude whether there is a valid exceptional case and if so, to go on to review to the conclusions of the ACE. If this is accepted it is then appropriate to go on to consider the recommendations of the planning report.

Appendix C of the report contains the assessment of the ACE. For any ACE to be progressed an exceptional case must first be agreed. The exceptional case must demonstrate that the proposal has a locational and/or operational need tied to a specific location, or there is an overriding economic or community benefit which outweighs the other policies of the LDP.

This type of development requires access to seawater and is therefore confined to a coastal location. Most of the coastline in Argyll and Bute falls within the countryside development management zone, which in turn, confers undeveloped coast status on

the coastal edge. Only in the case of settlements, and other land allocated for development with a coastal frontage, will more favourable circumstances present themselves in settlement strategy terms. The exceptional case has been accepted by Officers on the basis that the Applicant has demonstrated through the consideration of alternatives there are no other allocated or otherwise suitable sites on the less sensitive developed coast which would satisfy the Applicant's requirements. In addition the location proposed will benefit from an association with the existing research facility both in terms of access to an existing marine abstraction and discharge, and the ability to build upon local expertise accrued during the developmental stage.

With officers having accepted that there is an exceptional case, an ACE has been carried out.

The landscape compartment includes Marine Harvest's developmental Wrasse hatchery facility and the associated University of Stirling research establishment which have a coastal location given their dependence on seawater. Other buildings within the landscape compartment include a Seabird and Wildlife Observatory, an old Coastguard Station and a further University of Stirling Building, all of which are developments dependent upon having coastal locations.

The area is defined in the SNH Landscape Assessment of Argyll and The Firth of Clyde as being a "Marginal Farmland Mosaic" landscape character type. Within this landscape type, the key characteristics include "undulating, uneven landform and rocky outcrops on the lower margins of the upland moor".

- indented rocky coastline with small sandy bays;
- archaeological sites.

The application site and its immediate surroundings exhibit all of these characteristics, in terms of the undulating uneven landform with rock outcrops to the south, the indented rocky coastline to the west and, in terms of archaeology, the remains of the former transatlantic radio station.

The areas which contribute to the definition of the character of the ACLC include:-

- the foreshore
- the open coastal strip formed by the areas of raised beach to the rear of the foreshore
- the elevated flat agricultural fields above the escarpment defining the extent of the raised beaches.

These areas are considered to be the Key Environmental Features considered worthy of protection.

The fairly flat coastal terrace does, however, provide an opportunity for development within the wider landscape compartment, subject to development not impinging unreasonably upon the defining attributes of the coast and, in particular, the more compelling views out to sea. It would provide opportunity for further development adjacent to the existing marine research laboratory provided that the proposal would not seriously undermine any of the KEFs identified previously.

In terms of visual and landscape impact, there are a number of elements of the proposal which may give rise to effects.

These include:-

- the five large agricultural style sheds
- the proposed new access
- the re-routing of a public path
- new earthworks and screening
- the re-direction of a watercourse
- the temporary construction access route

The proposed site would benefit from natural screening as it would be located immediately below the escarpment containing the raised beach thus ensuring that it is screened from long distance views from the north, the east and part of the south.

It is considered that the significant effects on visual receptors would be limited to relatively close views to the west and south-west which would be primarily experienced by those accessing the coast on foot along the recreational path to the Gauldrons. Although the development would be experienced by those on foot, it would be situated on the landward side of the core path and would not intrude in key views down the coast or out over the sea.

It should be noted that the site itself is not located within any landscape designation although there are some non-statutory designations within 5km of the site.

In conclusion, the buildings are protected from long range views by the effect of topography and will only be experienced at short range.

They would be screened on the approach by intervening topography and by being set against a backdrop of higher land formed by escarpment behind the raised beach.

Whilst recreational users would walk past the building at close quarters when heading south-west along the core path, this would form only a short section of the walk. In addition, the more compelling views would be down the coast and out to sea and not inland towards the hatchery buildings.

Furthermore, the presence of the existing Marine Environment Research Laboratory and Observatory reduce the sensitivity of this location to change resulting from additional development, given the presence of some marine related development in this area already.

The ACE concludes that the particular characteristics of the application site are such that the wider landscape has the capacity to absorb the scale and type of development proposed without giving rise to any significant adverse effects on the landscape character or visual amenity of the site.

Section 25 of the planning act requires that all developments be decided in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Policy DM1 of the LDP is supportive of large scale development in the countryside where an exceptional case has been accepted, and this is supported by an ACE which concludes that the site has capacity for development.

All of other policies relevant to this proposal are detailed and considered in the planning report.

The proposed development would comprise a close grouping of buildings in a rectangular form with a gross footprint of approximately 9000 sqm.

The design of this industrial building is considered to be acceptable subject to a condition which is proposed requiring the most prominent seaward elevations to be timber clad, which is a typical response to large structures with a location need in the countryside, such as large farm sheds.

The site is located on a popular recreational Core Path which provides access to the Gauldrons which is located to the south of the site. Should planning permission be approved for this development, a small localised diversion of the Core Path will be required and this will prompt a separate statutory process at the applicant's expense, with opportunity for public representation. Access to the Gauldrons would be maintained during construction and it is considered that whilst those using the Core Path will have to pass close to the new buildings once operational, the impact on amenity will not be significant given that the main focus for the walk will be in terms of views out to sea and further along the coast.

Concerns have also been raised in relation to the remains of an historic radio station which was established in 1905 and used for pioneering communication between Scotland and the USA. Within 12 months of this mast being used it had collapsed in a storm and all that remains are the concrete foundations of the structure and some hut bases and cable stays.

Historic Environment Scotland (HES) have taken the view that the site does have some cultural significance but have declined to afford the remains any protection by means of scheduling or listing. The West of Scotland Archaeology Service (WoSAS) has however expressed concerns about the impact on the remains of the radio station and has recommended that the application be refused in its current form.

The development would not result in the removal of the mast base itself but the remaining concrete foundations for the guy wires used to support the mast and the hut bases would be lost. In view of the cultural interest in the previous use of this site, the Applicant has agreed to include interpretation panels on the outer part of their visitor reception building and toilet block. This would afford opportunity to both explain the former use as a transmitting station and to explain the aquaculture process.

Clearly the site does have some cultural significance, however, all of the above ground structures have been removed and in its current condition the remains are not readily capable of interpretation. Given their unprotected status, regardless of the circumstances of the current proposal, it would be open for them to be removed, and despite a recent request for protection HES has declined to extend any form of protection to them.

In these circumstances, whilst Officers have taken account of the comments of HES and WoSAS, they are not convinced that the remains of the radio station are of such value to warrant their preservation in situ or for the application to be refused.

The Area Roads Officer has been consulted in connection with this planning application. There are no objections to the proposal subject to a number of road improvements which have been discussed with the applicant. A section 75 legal agreement would not be required as the land identified for the improvements is either within the road boundary or is under the control of the applicant. Further information on the proposed road improvements are detailed in Supplementary Report No.1.

The application has attracted a large number of representations both for and against the proposal. There just over 100 expressions of support with just over 60 objections. The points of support and objection are summarised in the report. No objections have been received from consultees with the exception of WoSAS.

In conclusion, it is the Officers' view that the Applicant has demonstrated an exceptional case, the findings of the ACE have shown that there is capacity within the landscape for this development and finally the proposal accords with all other LDP policies.

This is an important and innovative economic development which will contribute to the sustainability of Marine Harvest's marine fish farms in locations across Scotland, many of which are located within Argyll and Bute. The proposal will therefore contribute not only to the economy of South Kintyre, but will bring indirect benefits to aquaculture production both in Argyll and Bute and elsewhere.

Taking account of the above it is recommended that planning permission be approved subject to the conditions set out in the report.

## **APPLICANT**

Chris Reid, Environmental Manager gave a presentation on behalf of Marine Harvest Scotland. He was accompanied by Steve Bracken, Business Support Manager and Paul Featherstone, Hatchery Manager. He gave a quick overview of the proposal to build a recirculation hatchery to enable a sustainable source of clearer fish to use to supply salmon farms. He confirmed that this was an opportunity to build on work which has been ongoing for the last few years and that the proposed facility will produce up to 1 million juvenile Ballan Wrasse a year and allow a move to a more sustainable use of cleaner fish. He confirmed that the new proposal would work alongside the existing facility and work closely with other cleaner fish facilities owned by Marine Harvest.

He advised that the existing facility has been going since 2010 and is a joint venture between Marine Harvest and Scottish Sea Farms supported by research expertise of the University of Stirling. The initial 2 year trial has grown from there and has been successful in producing a steady source of cleaner fish to commercial farms. He advised that the trial facility does not have the scale or capacity to continue to meet the commercial demands.

He explained why they were using cleaner fish. He said that sea lice were the biggest challenge for fish farms across the world and that cleaner fish have given the opportunity to deal with the naturally occurring parasite. A key component of animal

welfare is the removal of these parasites from the fish. Previously this was dealt with through the use of chemicals. He said that the use of cleaner fish was more passive and environmentally friendly and not stressful to the fish. He explained that the bulk of cleaner fish currently use in salmon farms in Scotland were caught wild. He said that the long term implementation of this approach was not as sustainable as farming the cleaner fish. He said that farming the cleaner fish would remove the sustainability risk and would mean more consistency in the fish being distributed to the farms. He pointed out that there were two types of cleaner fish – Ballan Wrasse and Lump Sucker. He explained the difference between the two and advised that they would use Ballan Wrasse as it was easier to farm. He said that moving to farm cleaner fish was critical not just for Marine Harvest but for the aquaculture industry as a whole. He confirmed that the facility at Lossit Point would work in tandem with other facilities that they had. He commented that Wrasse farming was a complicated process and had a large number of life cycle stages which required a well-trained team who were very knowledgeable to make it work. He added that the facility required to be in close proximity to the shore and that the existing facility would be of benefit to them.

He referred to the elevations of the proposed buildings and pointed out that they would be as low lying as possible. He referred to the concerns raised about the facility being built on the Gauldrons and he confirmed that the site would be 800m north of where the Gauldrons were. He advised that an access path to the Gauldrons would run next to the facility and he confirmed that Marine Harvest would accommodate the re-routing of the core path.

On a slide he showed a montage view of the site from the Gauldrons. He pointed out the proposed buildings, the existing building and the coast guard building. He explained that there were a number of factors that were considered in choosing the location for this development. He advised that there needed to be a good separation from other active fish farms as it was important to reduce the risk of disease transfer to the fish on site as it would impact on other areas if the cleaner fish were diseased. He said that they also required to have suitable land and that the challenge was to find a location close to the sea. He pointed out that the land also had to be low lying, flat and available. He advised that within the Kintyre peninsula the proposed site and the MACC base were the only areas that they could consider to be feasible. Another factor was an available workforce. He pointed out that they already had a workforce here and that an additional 10 jobs would be created in addition to those already in the trial. He said that they needed a community nearby for the workers to live and that the area around Machrihanish was perfect in that perspective. He confirmed that the existing operation at Machrihanish had skilled and knowledgeable staff which was an added bonus.

He confirmed that they had extensive talks with the MACC base during 2014/15 to see if the facility could work at that location. He advised that they were stuck on two key issues – the availability of water and biosecurity. In terms of biosecurity, he explained that the possibility of other aquaculture facilities working near them could carry the risk of bringing disease on to the site and that they would rather avoid that if possible. He also referred to the risk of shared water intakes and discharges and roads. He advised that at the lava stage the Wrasse were sensitive to noise and that this was a risk they could not afford to take. He referred to the need for a pipeline to access water and that the issue was the make-up of the seabed. He advised that at the proposed site there was a rocky seabed which would be stable. He pointed out that at the MACC area there was a sandy seabed which would throw up two issues.

He explained that wild weather and wave action throws up sand and sediment would could lead to blockages in the pipes. He also explained that a sandy seabed was not a stable sandbank and that it could shift and swamp intake points which would lead to them losing the ability to intake fresh water. He advised that there were also environmental challenges as to access the water from the MACC area would require digging up the Machrihanish dunes to lay the pipeline. He pointed out that the dunes were a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). He advised that there would also be disturbance to the golf course and beach.

He referred to mitigating any potential impacts and confirmed that they were happy to accommodate the work required by the Roads Officer. He referred to road traffic during and after construction and commented that during the construction process there would be a temporary significant increase in traffic and that once the site was in operation there would only be a small scale increase in cars usage and only one additional van per week. In terms of noise he advised that it would take 12 months to complete the construction and that they would work with the contractors to ensure they were considerate during this process. He advised that the buildings were designed to absorb as much noise as possible. He said that traffic movements would also be done in a considerate way. In terms of visual impacts he confirmed that they intended keeping the buildings as low lying as possible and that earth mounds on the shore side would be built to not only act as protection from the weather but also to mask the building from the coastal path. He confirmed that in respect of marine discharge, all discharges fell under SEPA licensing and that the proposed facility would have the same technological issues as the existing one which has consistently met the SEPA criteria. He confirmed that they would be happy to work with SEPA to ensure that this continued to be the case.

He highlighted the benefits from this proposed development which would require 10 full time jobs in addition to those already in place at the existing facility. He advised that overall the development would bring a direct economic impact of £300,000 per year with an additional £80,000 indirect benefit to the community. He pointed out that the site would receive regular visits from Marine Harvest staff who would require overnight hotel accommodation. He confirmed that they would erect information boards which would cover items of local interest such as the former transmitting station as well as what the development was for. He advised that to have a commercial facility like this would be a first for Scotland and would allow the area to become a centre of excellence for aquaculture in Scotland.

## **CONSULTEES**

### Council's Roads Officer

James Ross advised that one of the things he looks at is the suitability of an existing road for a development to see whether or not it can sustain current traffic and an increase in traffic. He referred to the number of nearby private dwellings along with existing buildings. He confirmed that he has been in discussion with the Applicant about ways to carry out commensurate improvements to the existing road which would include resurfacing and passing places. He confirmed that he felt there was a need for an additional passing place and that it was proposed to site this on the Machrihanish side of the site access. He confirmed that the works would be carried out in two phases with the first phase completed before construction works started at the site. He advised of the surfacing works that would be carried out and confirmed that after construction of the development was complete a check of the road would



be made to identify any soft spots that have developed which would require strengthening works. He confirmed that the road would also be resurfaced again in the final phase. He advised that he has also asked for passing place signs to be erected at each passing place. He said that this would hopefully discourage parking at these locations. He confirmed that he was comfortable with the proposal and that the Applicant has agreed to cover all the costs for this work. He commented that the additional passing place would make things better and the surfacing works would also extend the life of the road.

#### Council's Biodiversity Officer

A summary of the presentation given by Marina Curran-Colthart is detailed below.

As Argyll and Bute Council's Local Biodiversity Officer, my role in terms of Development Management is to provide impartial advice on biodiversity issues and where appropriate to request further information in the form of surveys on habitats and species related to individual sites so as to inform the decision making process.

Under my remit as the biodiversity officer and In terms of this application, I would like to focus on four areas:

1. Habitats - Open land – raised beech, rocky outcrops, small burn and relation to the coastline,
  2. The ornithological interest,
  3. Otters as a European Protected Species both in relation to habitat and activity and include mitigation,
  4. Plant species survey was commissioned by Marine Harvest Scotland,
  5. The proposed '*Naturalistic landscaping*' element of the proposed development which is to be designed and implemented as befitting the areas naturalistic character.
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1. Habitats - open grazing land, rocky outcrops, a ditch and located adjacent to the coastline: The beach is made up of rocky outcrops, sand and shingle. The site is rough grazing with remains of foundations of the former transmitting station present.
  2. The ornithological interest for this site: 7 difference species of birds were recorded
    - Twite
    - A Northern wheatear
    - A Song Thrush
    - Four Grey Herons roosting by Yellow Iris bed.
    - Meadow Pipits
    - Pied Wagtail
    - Golden Plovers

Noted these species are not just confined to this site as adjacent land is similar in habitat

2a. Butterflies: 4 species recorded

Butterflies included Painted Lady (1) Large White (2) and Small Tortoiseshell (1) A Small Copper butterfly.

3. Otters as a European Protected Species both in relation to habitat and activity and include mitigation:

During 18 surveys of Marine Harvest's proposed development site at Uisaed Point, Machrihanish during 18<sup>th</sup> July – 24<sup>th</sup> August there was negative results of Otters on, or near, the proposed development site.

No signs of Otters (scarts) were found on any walk through survey (18) of Marine Harvest's proposed development site.

If the Committee are minded to grant planning permission, I have recommend that a protocol for daily pre- start site checks for Otter, that all pipe ends are sealed and that any open foundations have a temporary ramp inserted to allow for escape.

4. Plant species survey was commissioned by Marine Harvest – did not identify any localised interest of significance, the conclusion being that many of the plant species are found to be present on many parts of the surrounding area.
5. The proposed 'Naturalistic landscaping' which is defined as 'imitating or producing the effect or appearance of nature,' is to be designed and implemented as befitting the areas naturalistic character thus supporting existing functioning ecosystems capable of providing habitat and food for animals and insects, whilst at the same time helping to perpetuate many native plants whose habitats are being reduced through development. I ask that I have sight of this design (to include naturalistic rock formation installations) and plant selection proposal in draft for comment, I have already advised this in my response dated 17 Oct 2017.

If the committee are minded to grant planning permission, I ask that the Applicant apply the mitigation and advice as set out in the surveys they commissioned.

### **NEUTRAL REPRESENTATIVE**

Iain Aitken of the Machrihanish Holiday Park advised that having looked at the application he had concerns about potential road safety issues for pedestrians in the village of Machrihanish. He pointed out that the roads improvements were not for the village itself. He advised that currently the pavement was only 90cm wide forcing pedestrians onto the road. He confirmed that he had concerns about the increase in HGV traffic and other traffic particularly during construction. He advised that he also had concerns about when the site would be put in place and what the hours of operation would be. He asked that all his concerns be taken into consideration.

## **SUPPORTERS**

### Councillor Donald Kelly

Councillor Kelly advised that he thought it will have been very useful that the Committee managed to do a site visit as, he said, there has been a lot of misleading information going forward from the start of this campaign. He stressed that the proposal was for Lossit Point and had nothing to do with the Gauldrons. He commented that he knew the area well and pointed out that The Gauldrons started from the kissing gate which was well beyond the site. He said that the proposal would basically be as close to the existing site as possible which was a plus. He added that the proposal would be on a low lying area of low value agricultural land which was boggy at the moment. He advised that going back 30 years ago there used to be an agricultural shed so previously there was some sort of activity at that location. He referred to the concerns raised about the site of the Fessenden Radio station. He advised of a project set in motion a few years ago by the late Nancy Smith and Duncan McArthur along with the Campbeltown Community Council and The Laggan Community Council to recognise the Fessenden Radio station and at that time they proposed putting an information board at the entrance to the site. He advised that unfortunately after Nancy and Duncan passed away the project was never moved on any further. He commented that he was pleased to see Marine Harvest recognising the importance of this area and that they would be providing information panels at their proposed new facility.

Councillor Kelly confirmed his main point of supporting this application. He advised that in the 17 years as a local Councillor he has never received as many representations of support by email, phone and letter from the local community. He said that the reason for this support was that the University of Stirling have been at Machrihanish for 25 years and have created a facility that has created long term jobs. They have taken people into the local area and they in turn have put children into the local school and some are living in the local area which is reversing the trend of depopulation in the outlying areas.

He welcomed Marine Harvest's commitment to employ an additional 10 people and commented that it was good to see that these jobs were good quality high paid jobs. He referred to the majority of employees at Marine Harvest being young and said that it was important to support the youth in the community. He said that if this proposal gets supported this would lead to 10 new jobs and he advised that the added bonus was that the spins offs from Marine Harvest would be immense. He pointed out that the construction phase would be a spin off as there would be the potential for local contractors to get involved in the development.

He advised that the key thing was that this facility would put Argyll and Bute on the map supporting a cleaner greener way to addressing sea lice. He said that he would hate for this facility to be moved somewhere else and that there was a need to capitalise on this. He confirmed that he was 110% behind this project as local Councillor and he asked the Committee to consider supporting it.

### Tom Millar

Tom Millar advised that he was Director of MacFadyens Contractors. The firm has 75 employees living in the Kintyre area and they contributed to the economy and community. He confirmed that MacFadyens were an approved contractor with

Marine Harvest and that hopefully there will be future opportunities to continue. He advised that Marine Harvest were one of their key customers not only contributing directly through jobs but also through the supply chain of local opportunities. He said that working with them over the years has allowed them to develop their skills and has allowed them to take on apprentices for construction work and that he would like to see the company expand.

He said that Campbeltown was a fragile and rural community. He advised that Marine Harvest were repeat customers and that the proposed new hatchery would bring the opportunity of further maintenance and support work. He said that the fragile economy in Kintyre could not be underestimated and that there was a need to grab these opportunities and that they should not be missed. He commented that there was little opportunity for young people to gain employment here and that the majority left the area for further education with no opportunity to return. He said that there was a need for job opportunities to keep the community alive and growing.

He referred to a final report prepared by the Argyll and Bute Economic Forum which recognised the need for Argyll and Bute to maximise opportunities for aquaculture and which highlighted five things which were key to that:- staying close to the key decision makers; streamlining the planning application and consent process; encouraging the widening of species produced; enabling greater local processing to help add value to the local product; and enabling greater collaboration with the academic sector to ensure Argyll grows as a centre of excellence for aquaculture technology and product improvement. He advised that he hoped that this planning application would be granted in order that Campbeltown and the Kintyre community can continue to survive and evolve.

#### Allan McDougall

Allan McDougall advised that he was Project Manager with MacFadyens Contractors and that he had a close relationship with Marine Harvest. He confirmed that they had a skilled workforce on call to Marine Harvest not just one or two men and that they carried out a wide variety of works to support Marine Harvest. He said that should Marine Harvest no longer be a key investor in the area there was concern that this would lead to a downturn in the area and an impact on jobs. He confirmed that he fully supported Marine Harvest's inward investment and said that this development should be embraced by the community as there were those who depended on it for employment.

#### Lyle Gillespie

Lyle Gillespie advised that like many people in the area he went to university with limited opportunities to return to the area. He said that he was fortunate to work for MacFadyens Contractors whom enabled him to retrain as a quantity surveyor. He confirmed that he has been employed for 4 years now and that he knows of many others who have had to remain in the central belt. He advised that it was projects like this that will allow companies in the supply chain to employ more people and that this opportunity needed to be grasped with both hands.

#### Bill Roy

Bill Roy advised that he was the Manager at the University of Stirling Research Laboratory at Machrihanish but was speaking today in a personal capacity. He said

that he has worked and lived here for 25 years. He also said that the Research facility supported aquaculture research with sea lice being key to the work they have been doing. He advised of being interested in the use of cleaner fish since the early 90s. He said that when Marine Harvest came on site in 2010 this led to research funding and support from Marine Harvest. He confirmed that they have continued with this research project and have been able to employ staff at the Marine Laboratory. The support from Marine Harvest as enabled investment in the marine laboratories and has allowed the unit to produce outputs of research and that they could see the benefits with their commercial partners. He advised that this project has been very important and that they he did not expect this to stop but to expand. He confirmed that he supported the project because of the benefits it has brought to his workplace and also to the local residents and that he was keen to see more jobs and more economic benefits. He advised that working with Marine Harvest has started something brand new in Scotland. He pointed out that it was first developed in Machrihanish and therefore it was only fair that it should continue at Machrihanish and that the development be allowed to go ahead.

### David Bassett

David Bassett confirmed that he worked with Bill Roy at the Research facility. He advised that he was also the Chair of Southend Community Council but was speaking today in a personal capacity. He said that he was encouraged by what Marine Harvest and Bill have said about the cleaner fish. He said that from a personal perspective he believed cleaner fish were the short and medium term way forward as other methods were difficult and slow. He added that from the point of view of residents this investment was required in terms of jobs for the area and the young people. He advised that Campbeltown Grammar School and Argyll College were already teaching aquaculture and that there needed to be jobs in this industry here to enable the young people to stay in the area.

## **OBJECTORS**

### Bob Miller

Bob Miller confirmed that he was a Council employee. He advised that he was speaking in a personal capacity and also as a representative of the Save the Gauldrons Group. He said that the Group was an online group with a Facebook page and that as of last night had 960 followers, overwhelmingly from people that were opposed to this development. He said that it touched people who not only lived here but also visitors to the local community and people who used to live here. He acknowledged that everyone wants the benefits of the extra jobs and that everyone can see the benefits of Wrasse fish as an alternative to using chemicals and that this was taken as read.

He advised that the issue for the Group was the location of the proposed development. He referred to developments of this type normally being on brownfield sites and said that they did not think that an exceptional local need case has been shown in this case to build on the countryside site. He said that they believed that for this particular location the dis-benefits outweighed the benefits that have been muted and that Marine Harvest should be asked to look at alternatives within Argyll and Bute. He said that the Group think the Committee should reject this proposal. He advised that nowhere has it been demonstrated that this is the best site. He commented that it was hard to believe there were no other brownfield sites. He

pointed out that the Local Development and Plan (LDP) and the Supplementary Guidance on Coastal Development was only passed by the Council last year and states that "It is important that the character of the Argyll and Bute coast is protected from inappropriate development and that development which requires a coastal location is directed in the first instance to areas where development has taken place". He said that the overwhelming presumption is that the LDP is adhered to.

He said that the Group believe that the MACC site is such an alternative brownfield site. He referred to Marine Harvest giving four key reasons why they could not consider the MACC development. The first being skills transfer and having all that experience was vitally important. Mr Miller pointed out that Marine Harvest had another site down in Anglesey for the production of Wrasse and Lump sucker. He advised that an article in the Fishfarmer magazine said this site could produce enough fish for Scotland. He questioned how it was possible to transfer skills all the way down to Anglesey and not to the MACC site.

The Chair asked Mr Miller to pause his submission to allow a comfort break and the meeting adjourned and reconvened within a few minutes when Mr Miller was invited to resume his submission

He then referred to a second reason being biosecurity hazard and said there were two elements to this. He said that the first was biohazard from contamination and that the contamination element related to the proximity of the Niri fish farm on the site. He pointed out that this fish farm had now shut down. He said that this was a close containment facility which did not pump anything out. He then advised that the other element was the concept of lockdown if a nearby fish farm was contaminated which would mean Marine Harvest having to close down its site. He advised that this would only be an issue if this was the only site producing Wrasse. He pointed out that they had an alternative backup facility in Anglesey which would also produce Wrasse. He commented that the Planning Officer said that Marine Harvest were best placed to make the call if there was a biosecurity hazard he did not agree with that view. He then read out Marine Science Scotland's independent assessment in respect of lockdowns. He referred to Marine Harvest saying that they had intensive discussions with MACC. He commented that the MACC site was huge and that the only location they looked at was a single site at the end of the runway. He advised of an area where there was plenty flat land at the north end of the site and said that they had not looked at sites to the north.

He also referred to the supply of sea water and to tearing up the SSSI. He commented that this would not be necessary as Scotland was renowned for its drilling capacity. He said that no one has seen the paperwork or costings. He also referred to the tanks and the issue of sediment and to noise. He asked if the Committee had seen any evidence about noise and vibration at the airbase site compared with this site. He said they did not believe that it has been demonstrated that there are no other alternative sites across Argyll and Bute.

He referred to the disused radio station and commented that this was not an unappreciated site just an unexploited site. He commented that the WoSAS have said that this area should not be developed. He advised that this was not an insignificant field and once destroyed would be gone forever.

He also commented that Marine Harvest intended putting in a discharge pipe in an entirely different direction to the pipe which was already there. He advised that they

wanted to put in a pipe a minimum of 850m straight out to the north into the bay. He advised that in that bay was an 18<sup>th</sup> century shipwreck and it was also the site of a Viking battle and that all that archaeology has not been explored. He said that there was a need for a underwater archaeology survey to be done.

He then commented that the Committee have not benefited from the receipt of a full environmental impact assessment. He advised that Marine Harvest applied for and were granted a screening exemption. He said that the Group believe this was granted incorrectly under Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act particularly as the planning team did not have the full facts in front of them at the time as they did not have the assessment from HES. He referred to the Planning Officer advising that HES said the site had some cultural significance but have declined to afford the remains any protection my means of scheduling or listing. Mr Miller advised that the only reason HES did not do this was because the site was the subject of a planning application which meant they could not. He then advised that this site has a unique landscape character type.

He referred to the Biodiversity Officer mentioning a couple of studies undertaken by Marine Harvest and he commented that these were only done after the planning application had been submitted and that the Biodiversity Officer only required these to be undertaken over a couple of months. He commented that this was only one season in the year and that this was a place used by migratory species at all times. He also referred to the large number of different species that had been recorded.

In terms of social amenity, he said that the distressing element of submissions so far was that element referred to as the north of the Gauldrons. He said that this development would completely cover the top green part and to say that it was not of any consequence was an absolute travesty just because people would be walking passed it to get to the rocky bit. He advised that the green bit was used and valued just as much as the rocky part and that it was not a low value plot of land that could be sacrificed. He said that this would be a significant amenity loss. He referred to Councillor Kelly advising of the number of people that had contacted him and he said that they had hundreds of postings from people about this site. He advised that coastal development guidance says that you should not destroy pieces of the coastline without an understanding of local community use. He said that no study has been undertaken about this.

In respect of visual amenity he advised that you could not take a bit of coastline in isolation and take it out of wider panoramas. He advised that coastal guidance says it is imperative that consideration is also given to the views from the sea to the land and not just the land to the sea. He pointed out that the only view provided in a slide was a view from the cutting. He said that the main view was from the trig point and that there was no way you would not have that view ruined by having a large industrial building there.

He referred to economics and suggested that if Marine Harvest put this site somewhere else in Kintyre or Argyll and Bute all of these economic benefits would still apply.

He referred to the issue of the discharge pipe being glossed over as SEPA would deal with that. He advised that he believed this issue need to be addressed. He said that the sandy bit was a designated bathing water site with a Blue Flag status and this was where the proposed discharge pipe would point to. He said that part of

the economic viability of the area was tourism and he asked the Committee to imagine the impact on tourism if this Blue Flag status was jeopardised. He stressed that public health has not been assessed and that it was not enough to say that SEPA would take care of that. He also referred to comment about Wrasse being ecologically beneficial and stated that you could not grow 1 million fish per year without subjecting them to chemical treatments.

He referred to the Roads Officer confirming that Marine Harvest would be responsible for the cost of upgrading the road etc. He advised that this work has already been done and that the Council have already put roads infrastructure into the airbase already. He also referred to the increase in traffic movements along the road.

In summary he advised that the Group think the exceptional locational circumstances sufficient to overturn the LDP and SG have not been evidenced and have been insufficiently demonstrated. He said that the dis-benefits and potential dis-benefits outweighed the benefits. He suggested an alternative scenario. He advised that if this planning application was rejected the Group would go for community buyout of this site to be used for community use to be protected in perpetuity. He advised that the landowner would still get extra money. He said that this alternative approach would mean the benefits would flow for the many rather than profits for the few. He confirmed that the Group would like to oppose this application.

### Valerie Nimmo

A summary of Valerie Nimmo's presentation is detailed below.

My husband was born and brought up in Drumlemble, while I have lived and visited Drumlemble and Campbeltown for almost fifty years. In that time I have enjoyed many walks to the Gauldrons. These always started at the gate and latterly at the cattle grid. On my early walks there was only a neglected lifeboat station but then the University of Stirling took this over as a marine research station and I applauded the restoration of a derelict building. However since Marine Harvest came on the scene the site has gradually become industrialized. While I didn't like this, it was acceptable in that it was confined to one area and did not encroach on the exquisite place beyond. Because it is when you turn left at the present Marine Harvest facility and climb the small rise that you enter a magical place with views to Rathlin Island and Ireland. It was magical to William MacTaggart, Scotland's most famous landscape artist, who painted "The Coming of St. Columba" here. It was magical to Reginald Fessenden when he chose this place for its uninterrupted pathway for his first transatlantic radio communication. It is magical to the large number of visitors who walk this way all year round. It is also a sacred place. My brother-in-law was a miner at the Machrihanish pit. When it closed down he relocated to a coal mine in the north of England, but he always indicated that he wanted his ashes scattered at Uisead Bay and they were. Our family is only one of many local families who consider Uisead Bay a hallowed place.

Now Marine Harvest want to destroy this magical and sacred place by concreting over it, building a huge warehouse type building as big as a mega supermarket, diverting a burn, destroying the environment and habitats. This makes no sense to me when there is an alternative site available.



Argyll & Bute Council spent thousands of pounds producing a Local Development Plan in which this area was designated "countryside". Large-scale industrial development such as this should not routinely be permitted, where there are suitable sites elsewhere. As I have already said there is a suitable site elsewhere at MACC Business Park. Marine Harvest Scotland has not shown that they have investigated all sites in the business park. They have cited some dubious science to the effect that there would be cross contamination from a nearby onshore salmon farm yet failing to show any evidence that diseases of salmon can be transmitted to wrasse. They have stated that there would be problems accessing seawater. Yet the miners of Drumlemble and Machrihanish could tunnel under the dunes and out to sea with their limited technology in the fifties and sixties. Again Marine Harvest has failed to show at their public meeting or subsequently that they have investigated the feasibility of such a pipeline.

Argyll & Bute Council has spent thousands of pounds developing the infrastructure in and around the MACC Business Park and if, this proposal goes ahead they will have to spend thousands more on the infrastructure at Machrihanish. While I note that the developer has to improve the public road from the end of the two-lane carriageway to the site access this does not take into account the damage that will be done to the approaching road surfaces.

In addition, according to the Committee Planning Application Report, Scottish Water cannot confirm that there is sufficient fresh water supply for this development. It is inconceivable that a development of this size can be permitted without a guaranteed water supply. Argyll & Bute Council will have to ensure that the local villagers have priority for water.

Argyll & Bute Council are presently consulting on a new local development plan where there is a possibility of creating a new National Park on Argyll's west coast and its islands. This is an excellent proposal, which would combine protection of the environment and expansion of tourism. Marine Harvest's proposed plans will desecrate a countryside coastline zone popular with tourists.

Tourism is one of the most important employers in Campbeltown and surrounding areas. The shipyard came and went, Jaeger came and went. Dairy farming and fishing are in decline. The one employment area, which is expanding, is tourism. It is important that we protect the countryside that tourists come to enjoy.

It appears to me that a development at Lossit Point may be a cheaper option for the company but not for Argyll and Bute Council. The council taxpayers of Argyll and Bute I would suggest are not going to be happy to learn that in these cash strapped times that they are subsidising a multi-national company.

I appeal to you to uphold the Local Development Plan and reject this proposal.

Save Argyll and Bute Council from needless expenditure. Save our tourism jobs. Save our countryside.

Christine Russell

Christine Russell advised that she was an artist and lived and worked in Argyll. She said that she mainly painted pictures of Kintyre and that her pictures could be seen in galleries all over Argyll. She said that she was in no doubt that the area of the

Gauldrons was the best loved part of Argyll and she sold the most pictures and received the most commissions for that area. She said that the Gauldrons were the most beautiful part and advised that when you left the present industrial part this opened up to important vistas of green fields where you could see the headland. She pointed out that on one side was the Atlantic. She referred to the remoteness and uniqueness of the area and described it as quite beautiful and unspoilt. She referred to visitors to the area and commented that one local business took in £4,000 in one day when a cruise ship recently visited Campbeltown. She advised that she and her husband have agreed to take two coach trips to the Gauldrons when the next cruise ship comes in. She said that if this industrial proposal was allowed to go ahead then we must forget about tourism. She said that this part of the country was one of the most valuable we had and that to destroy it would be short sighted and wrong.

#### Livingston Russell

Livingston Russell said he echoed what his wife had said. He advised that one particular thing had struck him – cost benefit analysis. He said that all the costs seemed to be on the local community and all the benefits seemed to be for Marine Harvest.

#### Fiona Walker

Fiona Walker said that the Gauldrons was a very special place. She advised that she and her family have been coming here for 72 years and that her grandparents and parents came on holiday and that they owned a small cottage at the end of the loch. She referred to there already being traffic to the development with the fish farm buildings already there. She advised that there was an alternative that must be taken up. She commented on the proposed five large sheds and said that no natural screening could stop it looking dreadful. She advised that the existing fish farm already made a lot of noise and had lots of lights. She said that she understood the argument for jobs. She asked the Committee to grasp the alternative suggested by Mr Miller. She confirmed that she would not like to support this application.

The Chair ruled and the Committee agreed to adjourn the meeting at 12.40 pm for lunch.

The Committee reconvened at 1.15 pm.

### **MEMBERS' QUESTIONS**

Councillor Redman referred to the creation of new jobs and jobs for life and asked the Applicant to comment on job security and the opportunity for career advancement. Mr Reid said the job for life term was a difficult one. In terms of job security, he advised that the area of cleaner fish was a growth industry where lots of investment was being made not just by Marine Harvest but by others. He said that Marine Harvest had a lot of fluidity for employees to move from within one area to another. He said that they recognised that people were likely to arrive with certain skill sets and that there would be opportunities there if people were willing to develop. He added that people could start at this site and go on elsewhere in the country or take what they have learnt and build on it somewhere else. He advised that the jobs were as secure as they could be in terms of what they were trying to do

Councillor McCuish referred to Mr Miller saying that this development would destroy the coastline. He asked Mr Miller to advise what effect the existing building has had on the coastline and if this site was of such national importance, he asked why the Group had waited until now to consider a community buyout. Mr Miller replied that he thought it was obvious if you were to stand at the trig point and look northward the existing site only has a deleterious effect. The difference, he thought, was that here this was a much larger size and magnitude. He commented that the existing facility did impinge on the distinct and enclosed bay and that this was an unspoilt vista. He referred to the Coastal Supplementary Guidance and advised of the need to consider the land to the sea, the sea to the land and the 360 degrees around that.

In regard to Councillor McCuish's second question, Mr Miller advised that the Save the Gauldrons Group was set up after the first presentation given by Marine Harvest to the community. He advised that it was not set up to promote that area per se. It was for the same reason that no one decided to go for a designation as it was already designated as countryside. He advised that they did not think that because of this designation that someone would build on it. He commented that the HES designation that this site was culturally significant was the highest it could give out without listing or scheduling the site. He pointed out that the community right to buy law was only relatively new. He commented that they had the expertise to do this as they knew the people involved with MACC and that they would tap into this if the Committee decided to go against this application.

Councillor Colville referred to the Applicant advising in their presentation about their partnership working and he asked for some background on this. He also asked the Applicant to advise on the process for receiving an operator's licence from Marine Scotland Science. Mr Reid confirmed that the existing trial facility was a joint venture between Marine Harvest and Scottish Sea Farms and that this was supported by the University of Stirling which provide research. He said that the actual activity on the site was a joint venture and that the University of Stirling used this facility to carry out their research. Mr Featherstone confirmed the relationship with the University. Mr Reid confirmed that this development was Marine Harvest's only facility. In terms of the future of Wrasse he said that they saw that as a massive growth part and the optimum thing for addressing sea lice issues. Mr Featherstone advised that he regarded Wrasse as the end game in the battle against sea lice and he explained the benefits of using Wrasse. He advised that ultimately by 2021 we will have cleaner fish as a farmed source.

Councillor Colville commented that he remembered visiting the site 12 – 15 years ago and that research at that time was undergoing in respect of cod. He also commented that there was a big debate about raising salmon out with the sea in tanks and asked if this was the case would there still be a need for Wrasse. He said that it was his interpretation that raising salmon in tanks was unhealthy for the salmon. He asked the Applicant if he was correct or could Wrasse be done away with if everyone moved to onshore fish farming. Mr Featherstone advised that onshore or close containment was in its infancy and that there were a lot of technical challenges in creating salmon up to 4 or 5kg in this way and a lot of work needed to be done to make it viable. He said that it has been tried in other parts of the world and has not been successful so far. Referring to onshore systems he said the challenge would be finding available sites for onshore salmon farming as extensive space was required. He advised that it was also more expensive to run than cage systems. He agreed that it was quite right that the behaviours of salmon in tanks meant it was more stressful to salmon than in cages. He advised that he could see it

being a long time in the future for the salmon industry to go into tanks onshore. Mr Bracken gave an example of a smolts hatchery in Lochailort and the size that these hatcheries need to be. He advised that they have tied their colours to the mast and that they wanted to rear fish in the sea and to have better containment in the sea. He advised that he could not see the Wrasse disappearing like that. He said that in Norway they have 30 or 40 facilities growing cleaner fish so they are committed as well. Mr Reid agreed about the behaviours of salmon in tanks and that they were trying to avoid that. He said that they would prefer a good current flow in pens. He advised that to give the salmon the same environment they currently had in the sea on land would need large volumes of water. Mr Reid advised that Marine Scotland authorisation was principally carried out for salmon farms to make sure salmon farms did not overlap and create opportunities where a disease could hop from one place to the next. He confirmed that there would be no issue of overlapping at the location of the site.

Councillor Colville asked the Applicant if granting this application would mean the Marine Scotland would not grant a fish farm nearby. Mr Reid advised that he would expect Marine Scotland would cluster the two facilities into one disease management area. He advised that he did not know the details of what other proposals there were.

Councillor Colville sought and received confirmation from Mr Kerr on the conclusions of the Area Capacity Evaluation.

Councillor Douglas expressed concern that this proposal was moving away from the LDP. She also referred to the number of environmental issues raised. She asked the Applicant to confirm what the lifespan of the Wrasse was and what the production rate would be. She also asked that if further expansion was required would this be the best place. She referred to the issue raised about the Blue Flag status of the beach and ask what the impact of the proposal would be on this beach. Mr Featherstone advised that the Wrasse process took 18 months from eggs to final size. He said that once the Wrasse reached their final size there was about three inputs into the sea every year – early spring, late spring and late autumn to coincide with the input of smolts into cages. He confirmed that Marine Harvest had a facility in Anglesey and that the idea was to work in tandem with the development at Machrihanish. He advised that he did not see any cause for the existing application to be expanded on as there was good scope to bring the fish to a certain stage and to then have them transported onto Anglesey to grow to their final size.

Referring to environmental issues and the Blue Flag status of the beach he advised that he thought the existing discharge pipe was going to be extended into slightly deeper water and that was all. He pointed out that SEPA seemed quite happy with the situation and that they have received no adverse comments from SEPA. He advised that the base has been operating since 2002 initially as a cod hatchery and now for Wrasse. He confirmed that SEPA regularly take samples and no adverse comments having been received over this time. He pointed out that SEPA were consulted on this application and that he assumed they were happy with the proposal. He confirmed that they did use chemicals and medicines from time to time during the process and that SEPA were aware of this. He confirmed that they were looking at reducing the need for chemical use with Wrasse and that they were looking at probiotics as an area to be looked at to reduce chemical usage.

Mr Reid advised that in terms of the length of time Wrasse were on farms, they were permitted to be on a site for 2 cycles which was 4 years and at that point this was the limit when any population of cleaner fish could be on site. At that point they required to be culled and new fish used. He advised that Marine Scotland were concerned that over time the cleaner fish would start to harbour diseases from salmon and that there was a need to limit this risk. He confirmed that under the current guidance there was a need to refresh at least every 2 cycles. He confirmed that because of this there would be an ongoing need to ship cleaner fish to farms. He advised that the new development would be for brood stock and that it would be critical in the overall process. He confirmed that Anglesey would grow them on. Mr Featherstone confirmed that they had their own brood stock and that they were now into the first generation of farmed Wrasse and that it was very important to maintain the integrity of that. He stressed that if they had to go through a lock down if any disease came in they would have to start again. He confirmed that it has taken 7 years to get to this stage as the Wrasse were very slow growing. He confirmed that biosecurity was of paramount importance to them.

Councillor Douglas asked Planning to clarify what their understanding was of an exceptional case. She also asked the Objectors and the Applicant to confirm whether or not they felt there was enough consultation carried out on this planning application. Mr Kerr advised that he firstly wanted to make it clear that the issue of discharge consent is solely for SEPA under their control regulations and was not a planning consideration. He pointed out that there was plenty of Government guidance for planning not to go into pollution control and that was why very little comment has been made on this in the report. In terms of the exceptional case he explained that the reason there needed to be an exceptional case was because the land was not allocated for development. He confirmed that it was in the countryside zone which allowed certain kinds and scales of development. He advised that this was a large scale development which would not normally be considered so, to be accepted, there needed to be an exceptional case put forward. He said that this stems from being a marine development which requires a coastal location. He advised that they had few coastal sites in Argyll available for development and that the obvious one was at the MACC base. He confirmed that they raised this initially and alerted the company to the MACC base as a potential alternative site and they did go off and look at the opportunity of developing that site. This was discounted and therefore in the absence of an allocated site to put this development on, in the absence of a brownfield site and a site for development at the coast all that pointed out that this was an exceptional case. He confirmed that as there was a requirement for a coastal location, that there were benefits to the Applicant's capitalising on their existing facility and in the absence of other suitable sites, Planning have regarded this as an exceptional case with a locational need. Subsequently to that, he confirmed that the ACE process was able to show the landscape had capacity.

Mrs Russell referred to regularly visiting the Gauldrons at least once a month and that on a wild day you may meet no one and on a nice day you may meet 20 people. She confirmed that no one has asked her about the Gauldrons and she did not think there has been any survey of tourism uses. She said she did not know anything about Save the Gauldrons.

Mr Miller advised that he thought there had been an adequate consultation process. He said that they thought the deficiency was the lack of evidence they could comment on. He advised they had no environmental impact analysis, no evidence of Marine Harvest's options appraisal of other areas, no evidence of appraisal of the

MACC site. He questioned how they could judge how good their appraisal process was. He commented that there was no noise study and no independent analysis of biohazard and no study of leisure impact.

Mr Reid said it was difficult to say whether enough consultation had been carried out. He advised that there will always be some that will take the view there should have been more information. He confirmed that anything they have been asked to provide they have produced in a timely manner.

Councillor Trail asked the Roads Officer to comment on the concerns raised about road safety and the risk to pedestrians in the village. Mr Ross confirmed that the biggest concern would be during the construction phase. He advised that this could be addressed through a driver's code of conduct. He advised that he did not know who the main contractors would be but quite a lot of the local contractors would know the area well. He confirmed that driver's codes of conduct have been used before eg. Timber transport driving passed schools. He advised that if a code was put in place all contractors would need to sign up to that and the only way of keeping an eye on that would be through the public and if we receive any complaints. He acknowledged that when the construction work was finished there would still be an increase in vehicle movements. He pointed out that there were speed limits in the village and if there was irresponsible driving this should be reported to the Police.

Councillor Blair asked if a traffic survey had been done. Mr Ross confirmed that for this scale of development they had asked for a report on existing vehicle movements and predicted vehicles movements and tonnage during construction and after construction. He advised that this was all looked at and it was obvious that there would be an increase during the construction phase and that once that has all settled down they would be looking at 10 extra employees and possibly 10 extra vehicles per day. He pointed out that the biggest problem was the local road users and those familiar with the area. He advised that if the single track road was used a lot by pedestrians they could look at erecting pedestrian road signs to warn drivers.

Councillor Blair sought and received confirmation from Mr Reid that Marine Harvest have never been prosecuted in respect of biosecurity.

Councillor Blair sought and received confirmation from Mr Kerr that the Council were involved in the shellfish environmental. He confirmed that this was a food hygiene issue for environmental health. He advised that SEPA were in charge of the CARS licence process. He confirmed that the ability to discharge was controlled by SEPA and the impact on shellfish and food hygiene concerns were Environmental Health and that both industries would work together to a degree. He confirmed that this was not a planning consideration.

Councillor Blair referred to comments made about the wildlife survey that was carried out only being a snapshot in time and he asked the Biodiversity Officer if this was the normal practice to do a snapshot or would it be more appropriate to do a longer survey. Ms Curran-Colthart confirmed that the survey was carried out during the optimum time. She advised that as there was no additional information in terms of rough grazing and that there was ample other rough grazing adjacent what the Applicant has come up with in terms of mitigation was fit for purpose.

Councillor Blair asked Mr Roy if they saw their current research in Wrasse coming to a close and, if so, would they diverse into other areas. Mr Roy confirmed that they

have been working on salmon for 50 years since commercial farming started. He confirmed that their main work was salmon but they did not expect their work on Wrasse to stop very quickly. He advised that similar technology for Wrasse was being used for other fish species. He said that they have tried cod and others were trying halibut. He confirmed that the work gone in so far would not be wasted and could be diverted but he did not see the work on Wrasse stopping anytime soon.

Councillor Currie commented that Mr Miller went on at length of the potential loss of visitors to the area as it was so picturesque just now. He asked Mr Miller if he also thought this was the case for other picturesque places such as Ardnamurchan, Ross of Mull, the head of Loch Fyne and Kerrera. He commented that these areas all had fish farms and he asked Mr Miller if he believed visitor numbers to these areas had decreased. Mr Miller advised that he could not comment on whether visitor numbers have fallen in other areas. He advised that anywhere where you have a special place with unique qualities you could not deny its benefits. He said that the issue here was why the development had to be on this beautiful special site. He advised that he believed the Applicant had not proved that this was the only site possible.

Councillor Forrest referred to Scottish water saying they have no objection but also saying there was no guarantee that the proposed development could be serviced. She asked Planning if this was a massive hurdle and whose responsibility would it be to deal with it. Mr Kerr advised that the onus was on Planning to consult with Scottish Water and that they had the opportunity to object if they were not happy with the proposal. He advised that if they could not service the site at the moment this would be because there was insufficient capacity at the treatment works etc and this would not be an impediment to any development necessarily. He said that if augmentation of the system was required that would need to be carried out at the developer's expense and condition 15 detailed in the report refers to this. He advised that there would be no prospect of the development going ahead without a public water supply being available. He commented that obviously the majority of the water required on site would be sea water.

Mr Reid confirmed that it would be their responsibility to deal with that and if they got passed this hurdle this would be the next step and they accepted that this was their responsibility.

Councillor Colville sought and received confirmation from Mr Kerr that condition 9 related to the landscape mounding and reference to it being naturalistic.

Councillor Kinniburgh asked Planning why it was deemed that an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was not necessary in this case and he also sought clarification on Schedule 3 of the Town and Country Planning Act. Mr Kerr advised that through initial discussions with the Applicant it was identified that this was a scale of development that would be appropriate to go through screening for environmental impact to determine if a report was required or not. He advised that there were circumstances set out and derived from European directives which would mean a report was mandatory and in this case it did not fall into any of these circumstances. In this case a discretionary screening process was gone through and it was determined that an EIA was not required as it was not a designated site in relation to the historic environment or nature conservation. He advised that the only one was geological and it had already been arranged for SNH to go out on site. He confirmed that as the site had no qualifying interests it was agreed that an EIA was not required.

Mr Kerr also advised that schedule 3 was an environmental impact regulation and not planning legislation. He advised that the schedule set out things to take into account when determining whether or not an EIA was required.

Councillor Kinniburgh sought comment from Planning on the statement made that HES could not designate the site because a planning application had been submitted. Mr Kerr advised that this was a policy decision taken by Historic Scotland before it became Historic Environment Scotland. He said that he thought the reason for adopting this stance was to avoid them trumping the decision by planning decision makers. Mr Kerr advised that he did not think there was a statutory bar on them doing it. He commented that they obviously routinely survey areas.

Councillor Blair sought and received confirmation from Mr Kerr that Planning Officers determine whether or not an EIA is required.

## **SUMMING UP**

### **Planning**

Richard Kerr summed up as follows:-

This proposal represents an important initiative in the evolution of the aquaculture sector. One of the most difficult challenges facing the fish farming industry is the prevalence of parasitic sea lice on farmed fish, which present a welfare issue for fish producers and which by their propagation into surrounding waters pose a threat to the health of wild fish.

The conventional method of lice control by the fish farm producers has been by means of chemical treatments the effectiveness of which has diminished as increased resistance has been built up. This has led to the need to use innovative methods to augment conventional treatments and has led to experimental biological control. The most successful species employed for this purpose have been Ballan Wrasse, although their use in numbers means that wild caught fish do not provide a sustainable source sufficient to meet the needs of the industry. This has led to research into the production of wrasse by farmed methods, using recirculation equipment. Much of this developmental work has been conducted by the Applicant at the Marine Research Facility at Machrihanish.

This has now progressed to a point where the Applicant wishes to commence commercial scale production in order to meet the demands of their marine farms up and down the west coast, many of which are located in Argyll and Bute. The production of seawater fish on land is dependent upon access to the sea in order to be able to secure the necessary seawater abstraction and discharge. This necessarily prompts a site search limited to coastal sites. Given that the Applicant's expertise in this innovative area has been accrued at Machrihanish, their preference has been to build upon this by establishing a production scale facility nearby; although the need for a single production point to serve geographically dispersed sites across a wide area means that this is ultimately a footloose proposal, albeit confined to prospective coastal locations.

Readily suitable development sites on the coast in Argyll for a venture on this scale, within a settlement bounded by the coast for example, are not available and the



development plan does not specifically allocate coastal sites for this purpose. Following pre-application discussion the Applicant was advised to give consideration to the suitability of the MACC base and we are aware that despite having done so, for reasons which have been given, that site was discounted. Brownfield coastal sites suitable for aquaculture purposes are few and far between. Permission has already been given for the redevelopment of the redundant former fish farm at Tayinloan, and there are no similar sites available elsewhere in Kintyre. Most undeveloped land on the coast in Argyll falls within the 'countryside' development management zone, which presumes against many forms of development, including proposals on this scale, unless there is a justifiable exceptional case advanced, supported by a landscape analysis in the form of an Area Capacity Evaluation.

In sourcing a prospective site there have been a number of factors influencing the Applicant, namely the desirability of exploiting expertise gained thus far during the developmental stage of wrasse cultivation, the ability to secure consentable seawater abstraction and discharge, and the need to locate in an area remote from either existing or likely proposed aquaculture sites, in order to minimise biosecurity risk. The latter is a particular issue for this type of process, which will see fish produced on the farm being distributed across many production sites over a wide area; hence the aversion to anything which presents an avoidable disease transmission risk. These factors have pointed to the suitability of a site adjacent to the existing facility at Machrihanish.

The process for Members to follow in the adjudication of this application for is therefore a) does the proposition advanced by the Applicant amount to a justifiable exceptional case sufficient to satisfy development plan policy, if so, b) does the ACE assessment provide sufficient reassurance that the site selected is appropriate to accommodate the scale of development proposed, and then c) what other material considerations are there to be weighed in the balance.

The report and the presentation today confirm the Officers' conclusion that, on the basis of the facts of the case and the views expressed by consultees, the development ought to be approved having regard to the Applicant's case, the conclusions of the ACE undertaken by Officers, and consideration of other material considerations; including views expressed by consultees, and supporters and objectors. The development is one which will make a contribution to the local economy of South Kintyre and which will be an important initiative in aquaculture production in locations up and down the west coast. In weighing the balance between these economic advantages and the local environmental impacts, it has been concluded that permission ought to be granted as an exceptional case sufficient to render the proposal consistent with the provisions of the development plan.

Suitable vehicular access to the site and connection to existing seawater abstraction and discharge points can be readily achieved. The buildings although extensive in footprint have been kept as low as possible and benefit from rising land at the rear, which serves to provide a backdrop in short range views, and screens opportunity for long distance views. There will be some localised adverse visual amenity effects, but the use of materials appropriate to a rural location will help assimilate these structures in their landscape setting. Footpath access along the coast will require a localised diversion under separate powers, but those accessing the coast would continue to enjoy the most compelling views without interruption, which are out to sea. There are no significant adverse nature conservation implications and the

interests prompting a local geological designation are unaffected. The proposal will pose some historic environment implications in that some remnants of the foundations of the former radio transmission station will be lost to development. These are neither listed nor scheduled as monuments and do not therefore benefit from any ongoing protection as historic assets. Interpretation facilities proposed by the Applicant will address not only the intended use of the site, but also the historical use of the land as a transmission station.

I commend the application to you on the basis of the recommendation and the conditions set out in the report.

### **Applicant**

Chris Reid clarified some minor points in relation to the MACC base in respect of biosecurity and lock down. He said that if they were located on the MACC base and an issue arose which required lock down at another facility this would affect them. He confirmed that this element of separation will give them extra security to continue. He added that the MACC base were looking to develop further over the next 20 years and Marine Harvest would not like to be in the middle of a large development at that location. He confirmed that the Anglesey operation would run in tandem with the Machrihanish one and that both were needed to achieve fish numbers. He advised that recruitment processes have run for Anglesey and that he did not see the staff being interchangeable with those here.

### **Consultees**

#### Council's Roads Officer

James Ross confirmed that he had taken on board comments about pedestrians and that he would look at a driver code of conduct and the erection of pedestrian signs on the single track road.

#### Council's Biodiversity Officer

Marina Curran-Cotthart confirmed that the site itself was not nationally designated. She advised that SNH were statutory consultees and had declined to offer comment on this application. She confirmed that the surveys were fit for purpose and were carried out at the optimum time and that they were also carried out by suitably qualified persons. She advised that she was interested to hear there were 400+ species of birds in the area. She confirmed that the purpose of the survey was to allow the Planning Authority to make decisions based on the outcome of a survey. In this case she confirmed that there was nothing specified in terms of threatened species. The survey also steers the developer to schedule works that will not disturb the wildlife. She added that she welcomed the naturalistic landscaping.

### **Supporters**

Councillor Kelly confirmed that if he felt this proposal was in anyway detrimental to the community he would be sitting with Mr Miller. He advised that he felt this development was very beneficial and should absolutely be embraced.

Tom Millar reiterated the importance of this project going ahead for the local community and for the survival and growth of Kintyre and the Campbeltown area.

He referred to comments made by objectors about the MACC base. He confirmed that he was the Chair of the MACC Airbase and he advised that they did have extensive discussions with the Applicant when HIE took the opportunity to them. He advised that they went back and forward with drawings and there was much discussion about biosecurity issues and also the problem that MACC did not have access to the sea. These obstacles all mounted up and from a MACC perspective they had to accept that.

Allan McDougall advised he had nothing further to say and that he fully supported the application.

Lyle Gillespie confirmed that he still supported the application.

Bill Roy advised he had no further comment to make.

David Bassett advised that if no one walked to the Gauldrons anymore they were welcome to come to Southend. He confirmed that a colleague who had children who walked to the bus stop, would have concerns about pedestrian safety during the construction phase.

### **Objectors**

Bob Miller advised that he did not say there were 400+ species of birds and what he had said was there were 430 species of all types of flora and fauna. He pointed out that SNH had not commented except about geology. He confirmed that when he asked why this was the case SNH had advised that this was not due to a lack of importance of the site but due to declining resources and that they were unable to respond to everything. He said that he hoped the Councillors would object and if the application was objected he had drafted a competent motion to support this objection which he read out.

Valerie Nimmo advised that she was not disputing the value of the Wrasse or the bringing of high quality jobs and jobs during the construction phase. She confirmed that she was disputing the location of the development. She advised that she did not think Marine Harvest had provided Planning with sufficient evidence to allow this development to be classified as exceptional and she said she did not think it should be given the go ahead.

Christine Russell advised that she was very pleased for all the Atlantic salmon that would be happy and pleased for the jobs coming to Kintyre. She said that she was distressed that the landscape was not valued as much.

Fiona Walker advised that she would like to support Bob Miller and Valerie Nimmo. She confirmed that she did not support the development which would spoil the area. She advised that she understood the improvements that would be made using Wrasse and the argument for jobs.

The Chair established that all those present had received a fair hearing. In terms of the Councillors National Code of Conduct, Councillor Donald Kelly, Supporter, and also Councillor Anne Horn, who had observed the hearing, left the meeting at this point.

## DEBATE

Councillor Colville advised that he was impressed by the existing facility. He commented that he did not believe the development would have a detrimental effect to visitors to the area. He advised that the existing facility had no impact on a wildlife observatory next to it. He said that the key thing for him was that one of the driving forces for economic development in Argyll and Bute was Dunstaffnage and that he has often thought that there was a real prospect here to have something similar at Machrihanish with the University of Stirling having a facility here. He commented that Kintyre has always been industrial and there was a need to replace the industries that have come and gone. He advised that the key policy was LDP 8 – Supporting the Strength of our Communities and for that reason he would be supporting the application.

Councillor McCuish advised that he would be supporting the application and said that this was not just a feather in the cap for Kintyre but a fantastic thing for Argyll and Bute. He commented that he understood the objectors' point of view and he acknowledged that this was wonderful scenery with wonderful views but you could not eat the scenery. He advised of the need to protect the people looking for jobs and wanting to stay here. He said he was jealous of this development coming to Kintyre and he wished it all the best.

Councillor Currie advised that for the reasons outlined in pages 14 and 15 of the agenda pack he had no hesitation in supporting the application.

Councillor Douglas said that she had given great thought to what she had read in the planning report and to what she had heard at the hearing. She advised that she had sympathy for the objectors. She advised that what came to mind was her visits and holidays to Ardnamurchan. She said that the introduction of fish farms there had not stopped her from visiting. She advised that the scenery in Scotland had to be balanced out with local jobs and the economy and for that reason she was supporting the application.

Councillor Forrest thanked the objectors for making a good case. As far as she was concerned, the Applicant had made an exceptional case and the recommended conditions were substantial and would address issues raised. In terms of the LDP to support the economy of rural communities, by encouraging the retention of this facility she said this was a start in this direction.

Councillor Redman advised that in his view industry was good and created jobs and growth. He said that Argyll needed more jobs and more growth and for that matter he would be supporting the application.

Councillor Blair advised that he had taken on board the environmental issues raised by objectors. He commented that he thought it was a missed opportunity for not having an EIA for this type of activity and that he was disappointed that there was none. He suggested that Marine Harvest should work in partnership with the community regarding their landscaping. He confirmed that he would be voting in support of the application with the proviso that he would expect the Applicant to have partnership working with the community in respect of landscaping mounding and biodiversity issues as heritage was so important.

Councillor MacMillan advised that all the questions he would have asked were asked by other Councillors and that he was delighted to support the application.

Councillor Trail advised that when he saw the Gauldrons for the first time today he was impressed with the beauty of the scenery. He said that the structures would only affect views from certain points and he did not think there would be an adverse effect on tourists as he believed they were robust and would keep coming back.

Councillor Kinniburgh confirmed that he thought the exceptional case had been made. He advised that he was in no doubt that this facility would be good for the economy. Lots of research has been done and he congratulated the Applicant in bringing such a facility to Kintyre and Argyll and Bute in general and said that this was something of national interest. Turning to the actual buildings he acknowledged that they would have a visual impact but personally his own opinion was that where it would be situated and the material used would limit its impact and that he certainly supported the application.

## **DECISION**

The Committee unanimously agreed to accept the conclusions of the Area Capacity Evaluation contained in Appendix C to the report of handling and having so concluded, to approve the planning application subject to a Public Path Diversion Order being promoted by the Council at the developer's expense in respect of the Core Path crossing the site, under Section 208 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1987 (as amended) and subject to the following conditions and reasons:-

1. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the details specified on the application form dated 6/2/17 and the approved drawing reference numbers:

AL (0) 006 B  
AL (0) 007B  
AL (0) 005 E  
AL (0) 10 A  
AL (0) 20 B  
AL (0) 40 C

unless the prior written approval of the planning authority is obtained for an amendment to the approved details under Section 64 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.

*Reason: For the purpose of clarity, to ensure that the development is implemented in accordance with the approved details.*

2. The development shall be constructed with finished floor levels which satisfy a Flood Protection Level of at least 5m AOD, or as may be otherwise agreed in writing by the Planning Authority following the submission of any site specific calculation which includes the 1 in 200 year coastal still water level and allowances for wave action, climate change and a 0.6 m freeboard.

*Reason: In order to safeguard the development from flood risk.*

3. Prior to development being commenced, proposed alignment and cross-section information relating to the proposed channel providing realignment of the existing burn crossing the site shall be submitted to and shall be approved in writing by the Planning Authority. The re-directed burn shall be designed in order to convey the 1 in 200 year design flows plus surface water emanating from the development site. The development shall be completed in accordance with the duly approved details.

*Reason: In order to safeguard the development from flood risk.*

4. Surface water drainage serving the development hereby permitted shall be to be designed in accordance with CIRIA C753 and Sewers for Scotland 3rd Edition.

*Reason: In order to safeguard the development from flood risk.*

5. No development shall be commenced until the developer has submitted for the approval of the Planning Authority in consultation with the Council's Roads Engineers, a scheme for the improvement of the public road approach to the site between the termination of the two lane carriageway and the termination of the public road at the access point to the site, and this has been agreed in writing. This shall address the need to improve the running surface of the carriageway and to improve passing place provision along this single track section. It shall identify the timing of works to be carried out which shall be phased to address the needs of construction traffic and to provide for the final condition of this section of road once construction operations have been completed. The development shall not be first occupied until the duly approved works have been completed in full.

*Reason: In order to secure road access to the site commensurate with the scale of development in the interests of road safety.*

6. No development shall be commenced until an Access Management Plan (AMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Planning Authority. This AMP shall provide details of the location of the diverted Core Path including details and timings of any temporary diversions required during the construction period as well as the width of the proposed path(s) and a cross section showing the proposed construction details. Thereafter the development shall be completed in accordance with these details following the confirmation of a Path Diversion Order under section 208 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997. The final path shall be completed prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved.

*Reason: In order to ensure that the proposed path has an acceptable design and location and in order to avoid conflict between construction and public access.*

7. The development shall not be first occupied until the car parking and servicing areas shown on the approved plans have been constructed, surfaced and made available for use. These areas shall remain free of obstruction thereafter for the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles.

*Reason: In order to ensure adequate car parking and loading/unloading provision within the confines of the site in the interests of road safety.*

8. Prior to site clearance or construction works being commenced, a protocol for checking for the presence of bird species and any mitigation required, and for daily checks for otter for the duration of the construction period, shall be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Council's Local Biodiversity Officer. No ground disturbance works shall be carried out during the bird nesting season (end of February to beginning of October) unless otherwise agreed in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

*Reason: In the interests of nature conservation.*

9. Prior to the first occupation of the development the landscaped mounding indicated on the approved plans shall be formed to the height and extent as shown and this shall be landscaped during the first planting season following the substantial completion of the development. Details of the 'naturalistic landscaping' relating the mounding and realignment of the path referred to in the Planning Policy Statement accompanying the application shall be shall be agreed in writing in advance by the Planning Authority in consultation with the Council's Local Biodiversity Officer. These details shall include proposed species and rock features intended to be employed. Any landscaping which fails to become established shall be replaced in the following planting season with equivalent planting to that originally required to be planted.

*Reason: In order to secure an appropriate appearance in the interests of visual amenity.*

10. Prior to the commencement of development the developer shall submit for the Council's approval an archaeological mitigation strategy. Thereafter the developer shall ensure that the approved strategy is fully implemented and that all recording and recovery of archaeological resources within the development site is undertaken to the satisfaction of the Planning Authority in agreement with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service

*Reason: In order to protect archaeological resources.*

11. No external storage of goods, materials or waste products shall be permitted on land outside the buildings other than in locations and subject to containment which has been agreed in advance in writing by the Planning Authority. Prior to the development being commenced a Site Waste Management Plan addressing both the construction and operational phases of the development shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented and occupied thereafter in accordance with the duly approved details or such revisions as may be agreed subsequently by the Planning Authority.

*Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to avoid bird attractants in the vicinity of an operational aerodrome.*

12. Prior to development being commenced, samples and/or full details of the proposed external walling and roofing materials to be employed on the buildings hereby approved shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. Notwithstanding the effect of condition 1 and the details provided in the application submission, the outermost seaward facing (north-west) elevations of the buildings and the outermost return elevations (south-west and north-east)

shall be clad in untreated vertical timber boarding, left to weather naturally unless any alternative finish is agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

*Reason: In order to secure an appearance appropriate to the landscape setting of the development in the interests of visual amenity.*

13. Prior to the installation of any external lighting at the site details of the location, number and luminance of the intended lighting units, the manner in which they will be aligned or shielded to avoid glare outwith the site boundary, and the means by which they will be controlled so as to restrict times of operation shall be submitted for the written approval of the Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented and occupied thereafter in accordance with the duly approved details or such revisions as may be agreed subsequently by the Planning Authority.

*Reason: To ensure that the lighting of the site is controlled so as to avoid unnecessary illumination in an area largely free of artificial light sources, in the interests of amenity.*

14. Prior to the development being first occupied, the visitor interpretation facilities detailed in the application submission shall be equipped and made available for use by the public. These shall address the historic use of the site for radio transmission purposes and details of the intended signage and displays for that purpose shall be agreed in advance in writing by the Planning Authority. Thereafter the interpretation facilities shall remain available for access by the public during hours which shall also be agreed in advance in writing by the Planning Authority.

*Reason: In the interests of maintaining awareness of the cultural heritage value of the former use of the site preceding development taking place.*

15. No development shall commence on site until authorisation has been given by Scottish Water for connection to the public water supply. Confirmation of authorisation to connect shall be provided in writing to the Planning Authority before commencement of development.

*Reason: To ensure the development is adequately served by a public water supply.*

(Reference: Report by Head of Planning, Housing and Regulatory Services dated 9 November 2017 and supplementary pack 1, submitted)