

Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture: Island Communities Impact Assessment

July 2023

1. Step One - Develop a clear understanding of your objectives

1.1 What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?

The objective of the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture is to provide clarity on Scottish Government's long term ambitions for the sustainable development of the finfish, shellfish and seaweed farming sectors, with an enhanced emphasis on environmental protection and community benefits.

1.2 What are the intended impacts/ outcomes and how do these potentially differ across the islands?

It is intended that the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture will influence how all stakeholders (industry, policy makers, regulators, NGOs, communities) work towards developing a sustainable aquaculture sector.

2. Step Two – Gather your data and identify your stakeholders

2.1 What data is available about the current situation in the islands?

The number of aquaculture farms operating from each island is available through National Marine plan Interactive. Data on finfish and shellfish production and direct employment is available on a regional level (including Orkney, Shetland and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar) but not at the individual island level (e.g. Skye and small Isles would fall under Highland Region). There is not yet any published data on seaweed farm production or employment levels. There is no definitive published data set on the number of aquaculture supply chain businesses that operate from each island.

2.2 Who are your key Stakeholders?

Aquaculture area communities, Industry (finfish, shellfish and seaweed), Internal SG, Regulators, Local Authorities, Enterprise Agencies, NGOs, Innovation Centres, Universities and Research Councils and other third parties.

2.3 How does any existing data differ between islands?

Shetland has the highest numbers of aquaculture sites, Orkney, Lewis/Harris, Skye and Mull are also well developed. A range of other islands have a small numbers of farms (1-3) such as Barra, Gigha, Rum, Muck, Colonsay, Arran, Eigg, Islay.

3. Step Three Consultation

3.1 Is there information already gathered through previous engagements?

Information was not previously collected for the purposes of the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture, however contributions to other Scottish Government consultation exercises and the resulting outcomes, such as National Planning Framework 4, were considered whilst producing the Vision. Meetings were also held with internal Scottish Government departments to discuss the intersect of the Vision with rural housing, population, transport, ferries and Islands Plans policies, for example.

3.2 How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales? Public meetings/Local Authorities/key Stakeholders?

Throughout development of the Vision, meetings have been held with key stakeholders as described in 2.2. Meetings were offered on a 1:1 basis. The Scottish Aquaculture Council met to discuss the developing Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture, providing advice to Cabinet Secretaries on its contents. A final round of written feedback was requested from Scottish Aquaculture Council members and other key stakeholders in advance of publication.

3.3 What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?

When dealing with stakeholders that are based or work with Island communities we have asked what they would like to see included in the Vision. We have also sought input on barriers to further development of aquaculture in Island locations and what the perception of the industry is in Island communities.

3.4 Separate consultation events for Island communities/Local Authorities?

Consultation has taken place through a series of 1:1 meetings and discussion at the Scottish Aquaculture Council. Producers organisations were asked to provide views on behalf of their members operating across Scotland. Many companies which provided individual contributions operate across Scotland's mainland and in the Highlands and Islands.

4. Step 4 Assessment

4.1 Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?

Demographic – The aging population of the islands may have an impact on recruitment to fill aquaculture vacancies. This challenge is similarly faced by rural Highland and Argyll and Bute areas where aquaculture also operates. Engagement with industry has indicated that businesses see opportunities for growth in island locations.

Economic - The Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture will not set out any presumptions as to where aquaculture development should take place. This is appropriately addressed by National, Regional and Local planning regimes and environmental regulation. The Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture will support sustainable aquaculture development across Scotland. We are aware of concerns from some parts of island communities about the potential impacts of further aquaculture development on the environment and other industries important to the islands such as fishing and tourism. The Vision introduces a number of outcomes relating to communities and is clear that the ability for communities to contribute meaningfully to development proposals should be

protected and improved. The Vision also introduces outcomes relating to Environment and Biodiversity and Climate Change and Circular Economy to ensure that aquaculture plays its part in addressing and responding to the nature and climate crises and the Scottish Government's priorities.

Gaelic – No anticipated unique impacts

Social – One of the key themes of the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture is enhanced community benefit, which applies to communities across Scotland where aquaculture and its supply chain operates. The Vision details specific community based outcomes. Communities that host aquaculture should benefit, not just through induced benefits such as employment, but through improvements in how statutory and voluntary financial benefits are passed on to communities and their flexibility to determine how that resource is best used. The Vision also aims to achieve improved engagement with communities on development proposals and indicates the intention to develop good practice principles for community benefits.

4.2 Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?

Development of aquaculture in island locations faces a number of challenges, some of which are consistent with mainland aquaculture areas, including; instances of local opposition to further development due to perceived impacts on the local environment, tourism and access to fishing grounds; aquaculture skills development and labour supply and housing supply impacting on recruitment and digital connectivity.

Impacts unique to island communities includes transport, such as freight capacity on ferries, ferry timetables and operation.

The Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture will endorse changes to aquaculture seabed lease charges announced by Crown Estate Scotland, which included withdrawal of a discount in charges for some island sites (the 'Outer Isles Discount'). This policy change was itself subject to an ICIA.

4.3 Are there mitigations already in place for these impacts raised?

The team has engaged with relevant Scottish Government policy leads dealing with issues detailed above. The Vision makes the link to relevant Scottish Government strategies which seek to address the aforementioned issues which can impact on aquaculture, broader businesses and island communities, and outlines the plans in place to address them.

5. Is a full Island Communities Impact Assessment required?

5.1 Are there mitigations in place for the impacts identified and noted above from stakeholders and community consultations?

Yes – detail provided under previous points in Step Four

5.2 Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)?

Evidence from stakeholders has suggested that there are limited differences in circumstances between island communities and those on the mainland that host aquaculture businesses. As mainland aquaculture businesses are located in rural areas within the highlands and Argyll & Bute, similar issues are raised, for example in relation to infrastructure and demographics.

5.3 Are these different effects likely?

No

5.4 Are these effects significantly different?

No

5.5 Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the mainland or between island groups?

No - due to the locations of existing aquaculture developments and where industry anticipates further development, we do not believe the outcomes of

the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture will disadvantage island community groups compared to the mainland or other island groups. We expect the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture to support the development of responsible, sustainable aquaculture across Scotland.

A full Islands Community Impact Assessment is NOT required

In preparing the ICIA, I have formed an opinion that our policy, strategy or service is NOT likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities). The reason for this is detailed below.

The Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture sets out the Scottish Government's long term ambitions for the sustainable development of the sector in Scotland. It does not introduce legislation or place statutory obligations on stakeholders. Instead, the purpose of the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture is to influence how all stakeholders (industry, policy makers, regulators, NGOs, communities) work towards developing a sustainable aquaculture sector in Scotland. The Vision will be used to guide further policy development by the Scottish Government to 2045, with individual components completing impact assessment checks and associated impact assessments where necessary.

Due to the nature of where aquaculture businesses currently operate and where we would anticipate further development to take place, namely islands and rural communities, we would not expect to see significant differences in the impact of the Vision between island community groups compared to the mainland or other island groups.

Screening ICIA completed by (name): Joe Triscott (Aquaculture Vision Policy Manager)

Signature and date: Joe Triscott – 05/10/2022

Screening check on completion by Jill Barber (Head of Aquaculture Development) 17/07/2023.

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