



# Planning Statement

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North Gravir, Isle of Lewis

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## Glossary of Abbreviations

Term	Definition
Application	The Planning Application for the Proposed Development
BAP	Best Aquaculture Practice
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BFS	Bakkafrost Scotland Ltd.
CAR	The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011
CnES	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
ECCLRC	The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee
EclA	Ecological Impact Assessment
ECP	Escapes Contingency Plan
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIA Regulations	The Town and Country (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017
EIAR	Environmental Impact Assessment Report
EmBz	Emamectin Benzoate
EMP	Environmental Management Plan
EPS	European Protected Species
EQS	Environmental Quality Standard
FMP	Fish Mortality Plan
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GVA	Gross Value Added
HOS	Designated Seal Haul Out Site
ID	Identification
IEF	Important Ecological Feature
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LDP	Local Development Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MD	Marine Directorate
MHWS	Mean High Water Springs
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NCMPA	Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area
NLB	Northern Lighthouse Board
NMP	National Marine Plan
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPF3	National Planning Framework 3
NPF4	National Planning Framework 4
NS	NatureScot
NSA	National Scenic Area
OIOF	Our Island Our Future Initiative
PMF	Priority Marine Feature
PPM	Planned Preventative Maintenance
Proposed Development	The North Gravir Fish Farm Proposal
RECC	The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee
SG:MFF	Supplementary Guidance: Marine Fish Farming
SLVIA	Seascape, Landscape, Visual Impact Assessment
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPP	Scottish Planning Policy

## Executive Summary

This Planning Statement (the 'Statement') has been prepared to accompany a planning application (the 'Application'), under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), made by Bakkafrost Scotland (BFS) to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar ('CnES') for the development of an Atlantic salmon marine arm located off the east coast of the Isle of Lewis (the 'Proposed Development').

The Proposed Development is believed to represent a sustainable model for marine Atlantic salmon farming. The development location has been specifically chosen, following an extensive spatial analysis exercise, due to favourable hydrographic and environmental conditions. The development location is considered to be an exposed, high energy location which, in turn, means that the location has a very high dispersion potential. High energy locations, such as the development location, allow the stocked Atlantic salmon to benefit from improved water exchange rates and higher dissolved oxygen gradients than are normally associated with traditional sheltered loch locations. Furthermore, the very high dispersion potential of the development location means that waste discharges and treatment medicines will be dispersed to very low levels over a large area, thereby reducing the potential impact on the benthos and water column. High energy locations also improve fish health and welfare, by reducing the potential for environmental and biological challenges, with both sea lice and algal blooms more readily and easily dispersed in comparison to the traditional sheltered loch system development locations.

The intention of this Statement is to provide CnES, as the Local Planning Authority, with sufficient information to allow the objective determination of this Application. As highlighted within the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended), planning decisions shall be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. On this basis, this Statement has assessed the Proposed Development against the relevant policies of the current Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan (LDP), National Planning Framework 4 (NPF 4) and the National Marine Plan, along with relevant material considerations.

The Application is accompanied by a full Environmental Impact Assessment Report ('EIAR') in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017. Within the technical assessment sections of the EIAR, the Proposed Development is assessed against several environmental considerations, which have been determined through the Scoping Opinion. These assessments are relevant to the policies of the Outer Hebrides LDP and Supplementary Guidance: Marine Fish Farming (SG:MFF), as well as higher level national policy considerations. The technical assessment sections concluded that, through a combination of embedded and additional mitigation, the Proposed Development is highly unlikely to have a significant negative impact. Therefore, the EIAR provides clear and objective evidence that the Proposed Development fully accords to the relevant local and national policy considerations.

In conclusion, it is determined that the Proposed Development complies with the relevant policies of the Development Plan, which consists of the Outer Hebrides LDP, SG:MFF, and NPF 4. Due to the alignment of the Proposed Development with both national policy and guidance and all other relevant material considerations it is believed that there are no material considerations that would outweigh the conclusions made in relation to the Development Plan. As a result, it is respectfully requested that planning permission for this Application be granted.

# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background

This Planning Statement ('the Statement') has been prepared to accompany a planning application ('the Application') submitted to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES) by Bakkafröst Scotland (BFS) ('the Applicant') for an Atlantic salmon fish farm ('the Proposed Development'). The Proposed Development will be located off the east coast of the Isle of Lewis, with the site centre location at 143036'E, 915999'N. The Application for the Proposed Development is made under the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning etc. (Scotland) Act 2006 ('the Planning Act').

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has also been undertaken for the Proposed Development under the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('EIA Regulations'). The outcomes of this EIA are presented within the EIA report (EIAR), which has been submitted in support of this Application.

## 1.2 The Applicant

BFS aims to become the leading most sustainable producer of farmed Atlantic salmon in Scotland. With 50 sites in remote and rural communities of the West Coast of Scotland and Hebridean Islands and a Head Office in Edinburgh, BFS is committed to the environmental, cultural, and economic growth and sustainability of rural Scotland.

BFS is engaged in all stages of the value chain, from freshwater and marine farming, to processing, sales and marketing, ensuring total value chain integrity, full traceability and Scottish provenance.

BFS rears Atlantic salmon at both freshwater and marine sites across the west coast of Scotland and the Western Isles and produced over 10,000 T (gutted weight) of Atlantic salmon in 2020. BFS employs more than 540 staff across remote and rural communities and engages with many suppliers and contractors throughout the supply chain. Over 60 % of production is exported to 26 countries around the world, with a key focus on North America and the Far East. BFS was the recent recipient of two Scotland Food & Drink Excellence Awards with the Native Hebridean Smoked Scottish Salmon product, winning both the 'Product of the Year' award and the 'Artisan Product of the Year' at the Scottish Food and Drink Awards 2022.

Aquaculture continues to contribute significantly to global food production, with aquaculture currently accounting for 52 % of global seafood consumption<sup>1</sup>. BFS is focused on sustainable business development following international demand for Scottish salmon, the UK's largest food export. BFS is committed to Scottish provenance and takes great pride in producing quality Scottish salmon, whilst being committed to the environmental, cultural, economic growth, and sustainability of rural Scotland. BFS is the first salmon producer in Europe to be awarded 4-star Best Aquaculture Practice (BAP), with certification covering feed production, freshwater, marine, harvesting and processing operations.

## 1.3 Planning Statement Purpose

This Statement has been written to present the Proposed Development in the context of national planning policy and guidance, the Development Plan, and identified material considerations that should be taken into consideration when determining the Application.

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<sup>1</sup> FAO, (2020). The State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2020. Sustainability in action. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9229en>

## 2. Description of the Proposed Development

### 2.1 Location and Site Layout

BFS currently operates a number of fish farms throughout the Outer Hebrides, with two active fish farms (Gravir Outer and Gravir West) located off the east coast of the Isle of Lewis. During the site selection and design process, alternative development locations and alternative development technologies were considered. Further detail of which is provided within **Section 4** of the EIAR.

The final development location for the Proposed Development was identified from initial surveys as having excellent environmental characteristics with favourable bathymetric and hydrographic parameters, further detail is provided in **Section 3** of the EIAR. The Proposed Development will also benefit from using the existing shore-based infrastructure at Gravir, that was developed to service the existing BFS fish farms.

#### 2.1.1 Operating in High Energy (Exposed) Locations

Hydrographic data for the development location indicates that the Proposed Development is in an area of very high dispersion. This highly dispersive hydrographic environment means that the development location will have a very high capacity for erosion of material from the seabed and also that discharges of bath medicines will be dispersed to low levels over a large area<sup>2</sup>. As a result, the siting of the Proposed Development in this location will help mitigate any potential impact on the marine environment.

The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee ‘Salmon Farming in Scotland’<sup>3</sup> report 2018, recommended under Recommendation 54 the following:

***“The Committee recommends that work to examine the scope for siting salmon farms in suitable offshore and other locations where there are higher energy water flows should also be treated as a high priority by the industry. It acknowledges that there are significant technological challenges associated with locating farms in these areas, as well as risks in terms of workforce health and safety. However, it also notes the benefits this could bring in terms of addressing fish health issues, reducing the environmental impact of waste and providing scope for the industry to develop higher capacity sites.”***

BFS are confident that the Proposed Development is in line with the above Recommendation 54 and the Strategic Plan for Farming Scotland’s Seas<sup>4</sup>. The benefits associated with operating in the higher energy (more exposed) environment potentially include:

- Reduced risk of gill health challenges;
- Reduced risk of sea lice challenges; and
- Reduced risk of disease challenges.

### 2.2 Infrastructure

The Proposed Development will be comprised of the following individual components. A more detailed overview of the proposed infrastructure is provided in **Sub-Section 3.2** of the EIAR.

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<sup>2</sup> SEPA: Screening Modelling and Risk Identification Report: North Garvir. [Online] Available at: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/aquaculture/screening-modelling-and-risk-identification-report/#:~:text=SEPA%20will%20then%20prepare%20a,to%20address%20any%20identified%20risks.>

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government: Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee: Salmon Farming in Scotland. [Online] Available at: <https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/REC/2018/11/27/Salmon-farming-in-Scotland/REC-S5-18-09.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> Scotland Food and Drink: Aquaculture Growth to 2030: A Strategic Plan for Farming Scotland’s Seas. [Online] Available at: <https://www.hie.co.uk/media/6164/aquaculture-growth-to-2030.pdf>



**Table 2.1: Summary of the proposed infrastructure**

Infrastructure	Overview
Pens	5 x 200 m (circumference) circular pens held in one group (1 x 5)
Pen Nets	15 m deep side walls
Top Nets	Each pen will have pole mounted bird top nets, with a ceiling and side wall mesh size of 75 mm.
Feed Barge	The proposed feed barge has a length of 28.35 m and a width of 13.5 m. The height of the barge from the water level with fully loaded will be 8.7 m and when unloaded the height will be 10.95 m.
Lighting	<p>Navigational lighting will be in line with the requirements of the Northern Lighthouse Board (NLB). Sub-surface lighting may be required during the production cycle. Each pen will have lighting equipment installed at 6 m depth.</p> <p>All operational lighting will be designed and installed to avoid and reduce the generation and propagation of obtrusive lighting.</p>

## 2.3 Access and Communications

The Proposed Development will be accessed from the existing BFS Gravir shorebase, located on the east of the Isle of Lewis, adjacent to Loch Odhairn. Access to the Proposed Development will be via either a 9 m RIB or a larger, slower moving, landing craft workboat of up to 23 m in overall length. Under normal operating conditions, it is anticipated that a single return trip per day per vessel will be required. A full overview of access and communications is provided within **Sub-Section 3.4** of the EIAR.

## 3. Legislative Landscape

### 3.1 Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997

The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (as amended) states that decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The process for determining a planning application can be defined as:

- Identification and consideration of the relevant provisions within the Development Plan;
- Clarification of whether the Proposed Development is in accordance with the Development Plan;
- Identification and consideration of relevant material considerations; and
- Conclusions on whether planning permission is justified.

### 3.2 Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) (Scotland) Regulations 2017

The Town and Country Planning (EIA) (Scotland) Regulations 2017 ('the EIA Regulations') are the regulations that transpose the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive (2011/92/EU as amended by 2014/52/EU) into the Scottish planning system. The EIA Regulations entered into force on the 16 May 2017.

Regulation 2 (1) of the EIA Regulations defines EIA development as either:

- Schedule 1 development; or



- Schedule 2 development likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location.

Intensive fish farming is listed under Schedule 2 of the EIA Regulations, with the following thresholds and criteria for classification as Schedule 2 development:

- The installation resulting from the development is designed to produce more than 10 tonnes of dead fish weight per year;
- Where the development is situated in marine waters the development is designed to hold a biomass of 100 tonnes or greater; and
- The development will extend to 0.1 hectares or more of the surface area of the marine waters, including any proposed structures or excavations.

Based on the above thresholds and criteria the Proposed Development is classified as Schedule 2 development under the EIA Regulations.

Regulation 7 (1) of the EIA Regulations indicate that when making a determination as to whether Schedule 2 development is EIA development the selection criteria outlined in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations should be considered. This selection criteria in Schedule 3 include an assessment of the below parameters:

- Characteristics of development;
- Location of development; and
- Characteristics of the potential impact.

Due to the potential impacts on the environment, the Application for the Proposed Development is accompanied by a full EIAR.

### 3.2.1 Local Authority Screening and Scoping Opinion

BFS submitted a Screening and Scoping request under the EIA Regulations to the Council on 21 June 2022. The Screening Opinion (22/00290/FFSCSC) was received in December 2022, stating that the Proposed Development had been screened as EIA development and that an EIAR would be required to accompany the planning application.

CnES issued the Scoping Opinion (22/00290/FFSCSC) on 02 December 2022, which outlined the key elements that should be considered within the EIAR.

## 3.3 The Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011

SEPA regulate discharges from marine fish farm, such as the Proposed Development, through the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) Regulations 2011. Regulation is delivered through the setting of licence conditions which limit the impacts associated with marine fish farm production.

BFS has made a separate application under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 for the Proposed Development.

## 3.4 Marine (Scotland) Act 2010

Under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 the Scottish Ministers are responsible for the marine licencing system and enforcement in the Scottish inshore region (0 to 12 nm). The licencing regime as defined under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, allows for regulation of the deposit and removal

of substances and objects within the Scottish inshore marine environment, below MHWS. All activities must therefore take place in accordance with the conditions outlined within the licence.

BFS will make an application under Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 to the Marine Directorate (MD) for a 'Licence to deposit any substance or object in the Scottish Marine Area'.

## 4. National Planning Policy and Guidance for Aquaculture Development

This section of the Statement clearly outlines national level planning policy and guidance that relates to the development of marine aquaculture. Within the national policy landscape there is a clear and concise narrative of support for sustainable aquaculture development.

### 4.1 National Planning Framework 4 (2023)

On 08 November 2022, Scotland's fourth National Planning Framework<sup>5</sup> (NPF4) was presented to the Scottish Parliament for approval along with a report that detailed the changes from the Draft NPF4 to the current revised NPF4. On 11 January 2023, NPF4 was approved by the Scottish Parliament. The Scottish Government formally adopted NPF4 on 13 February 2023. NPF4 is a long term plan that looks forward to 2045, with the goal of achieving a sustainable, net zero Scotland. NPF4 guides spatial development, sets out national planning policies, designates national developments and highlights regional spatial priorities.

NPF4 is significantly different from National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3) as it holds a higher status, as part of the statutory Development Plan. As such, NPF4 will be afforded more weight, and therefore have a stronger role in the planning determination process than the previous NPF3 and Scottish Planning Policy (SPP).

NPF4 is built around six overarching spatial principles, these are:

- **Just transition:** *We will empower people to shape their places and ensure the transition to net zero is fair and inclusive;*
- **Conserving and recycling assets:** *We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy;*
- **Local living:** *We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work, and leisure locally;*
- **Compact urban growth:** *We will limit urban expansion so we can optimise the use of land to provide services and resources, including carbon storage, flood risk management, blue and green infrastructure and biodiversity;*
- **Rebalanced development:** *We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline, and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand;*
- **Rural revitalisation:** *We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together.*

Through the application of the above spatial principles, NPF4 intends to support the planning and delivery of:

- **Sustainable places:** *Where we reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity;*

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<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government. National Planning Framework 4. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-planning-framework-4/pages/2/>

- **Liveable places:** *Where we can all live better, healthier lives; and*
- **Productive places:** *Where we have a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy.*

Aquaculture is primarily aligned and can provide key contribution to three of the overarching spatial principles:

- **Just transition;**
- **Rebalanced development;** and
- **Rural revitalisation.**

Therefore, aquaculture development will help contribute to the delivery of; sustainable places, liveable places, and productive places.

NPF4 acknowledges that Scotland faces different challenges and opportunities on a regional scale, therefore the spatial principles and strategy will be taken forward in different ways across five broad regions, that reflect the diverse character, assets and challenges of Scotland. The Proposed Development falls within the 'North and West Coast and Islands' regional area. Within the regional spatial priorities for this regional area, it is stated that:

***“An aging population in some parts of the area will mean that we need to do more to reverse past patterns of population decline and sustain local facilities and services that support rural and dispersed communities”.***

It is also acknowledged, within NPF4, that job opportunities can be limited in this region, with employment typically being dependent on low skill and low wage jobs, with the following stated:

***“Employment varies across the area, and can tend to rely on the public sector, tourism and lower wage sectors, limiting the scope and choice of skilled jobs in some locations”.***

As a result, NPF4 states that:

***“It can be difficult to attract and retain a local workforce to support some jobs, underlining the importance of building skills and promoting fair work principles to support future investment”.***

However, despite the above challenges faced within the 'North and West Coast and Island' regional area, NPF4 acknowledges that there are:

***“Also substantial economic opportunities presented by development”.***

Aquaculture development, such as the Proposed Development, is perfectly placed to contribute directly and indirectly to tackling the challenges faced within the 'North and West Coast and Islands' regional area, through the continual development of an economically viable food production sector that brings employment to remote and rural locations that have historically had limited employment opportunity. Aquaculture jobs, particularly those in finfish production, are markedly higher skilled and higher paid than other employment opportunities in the rural locations and communities where aquaculture is typically based. Therefore, these jobs contribute to attracting younger, working cohort age people, and their associated expenditure to fragile rural economies<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> BiGGAR Economics. Estimation of the Wider Economic Impacts of the Aquaculture Sector in Scotland, 2020. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/estimation-wider-economic-impacts-aquaculture-sector-scotland/>

Within NPF4, this concept is supported, with the statement, specifically in relation to the 'North and West Coast and Islands' regional area, that:

***“Food and drink is a key sector, with aquaculture, distilleries, commercial fishing, and seaweed farming providing a crucial and growing source of employment for many local communities”.***

NPF4 also acknowledges the significant contribution of the farmed Atlantic salmon sub-sector of aquaculture, within the wider food and drink sector and states that farmed Atlantic salmon account for:

***“More than 40 % of total food exports”.***

Within NPF4 there is an aquaculture specific policy, which is designed to encourage, promote and facilitate aquaculture development and minimise any adverse effects on the environment, including cumulative impacts.

NPF4 calls for the planning system to:

***“Support an aquaculture industry that is sustainable, diverse, competitive, economically viable and which contributes to food security, whilst operating with social licence, within environmental limits and which ensures there is a thriving marine ecosystem for future generations.”***

The Aquaculture Policy (Policy 32) of the NPF4 outlines the specific requirements that aquaculture proposals should align with:

- a) To safeguard migratory fish species, further salmon and trout open pen fish farm developments on the north and east coasts of mainland Scotland will not be supported;
- b) Development proposals for aquaculture will be supported where they comply with the LDP, the National Marine Plan and, where relevant, the appropriate Regional Marine Plan;
- c) Development proposals for fish farms will demonstrate that operational impacts (including from noise, acoustic deterrent devices (where applicable), light, access, navigation, containment, deposition, waste emissions and sea lice, impacts on wild salmonids, aquaculture litter (and odour and impacts on other marine users)) are acceptable and comply with the relevant regulatory framework;
- d) Development proposals for fish farm developments will only be supported where the following impacts have been assessed and mitigated:
  - i. Landscape and visual impact of the proposal including the siting and design of the cages, lines and associated facilities taking into account the character of the location;
  - ii. The impact of any land based facilities, ensuring that the siting and design are appropriate for the location;
  - iii. Impacts on natural heritage, designated sites and priority marine features; and
  - iv. Impacts on historic marine protected areas.
- e) Applications for open water farmed finfish or shellfish development are excluded from the requirements of policy 3b) and 3c) and will instead apply relevant provisions from National and Regional Marine Plans.

Through thorough and complete analysis and assessment within the EIAR, BFS is of the opinion that the Proposed Development fully accords to all the requirements outlined within the Aquaculture Policy (Policy 32) of the NPF4. As a result, the Proposed Development is believed to contribute to and align fully with the Policy Outcomes stated within NPF4:

- New aquaculture development is in locations that reflect industry needs and considers environmental impacts;
- Producers will contribute to communities and local economies;
- Prosperous finfish, shellfish and seaweed sectors; and
- Migratory fish species are safeguarded.

## 4.2 Scotland's National Marine Plan (2015)

Scotland's National Marine Plan<sup>7</sup> (NMP) was introduced in April 2015 and was prepared in accordance with EU Council Directive 2014/89/EU, which came into force in July 2014. The Directive introduced a framework for maritime spatial planning and aims to promote sustainable development of marine areas and the sustainable use of marine resources. The NMP provides a single overarching framework for managing activities within both the inshore and offshore waters for the protection of the environment. In regard to aquaculture, the NMP states that aquaculture:

***“has potential to contribute to future community cohesion by providing high quality jobs in rural areas and help to maintain community infrastructures such as schools, ferries and other services”.***

The NMP outlines seven key objectives for the Scottish aquaculture industry, as detailed below:

- An aquaculture industry that is sustainable, diverse, competitive, economically viable and contributes to food security whilst minimising environmental impact;
- With due regard to the marine environment and carrying capacity, support for the industry's target to grow marine finfish (including farmed Atlantic salmon) production sustainably to 210,000 T, and shellfish, particularly mussels, to 13,000 T sustainably by 2020;
- A proportionate and transparent regulatory framework within which the industry can achieve these targets;
- Quality employment and sustainable economic activity in remote and rural areas, as well as more widely in Scotland;
- Improve business confidence and industry investment and reduce environmental impact by identifying areas where sustainable aquaculture growth is optimal, taking account of key resource and constraints considerations;
- Maximise benefits to Scotland and to local communities from the Scottish aquaculture value chain; and
- Support research and development, including trials and technical innovation, to improve knowledge and understanding of the requirements for sustainability of the industry, with a particular focus on the issues of sea lice, containment and interactions with other activities.

The Proposed Development fully accords to the above objectives identified within Section 7 – Aquaculture of the NMP.

In addition to the above identified objectives, the NMP also outlines 14 Aquaculture marine planning policies, those directly relevant to the Proposed Development are outlined below in **Table 4.1**.

Following a review by Scottish Ministers of the NMP in 2021, under the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010, it was identified that the NMP needed to be updated to reflect the significant changes to the wider policy and legislative landscape, rapid developments in technology, the need to deliver a green recovery from COVID-19, as well as to reflect the improved understanding of the marine environment, including the

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<sup>7</sup> Scottish Government: Scotland's National Marine Plan. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-marine-plan/documents/>

socio-economic benefits of marine development. Final consideration, adoption and publication of NMP2 is scheduled for Spring / Summer 2025.

**Table 4.1: Consideration of the Proposed Development against relevant National Marine Plan policies.**

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b>AQUACULTURE 3:</b> In relation to nutrient enhancement and benthic impacts, as set out under Locational Guidelines for the Authorisation of Marine Fish Farms in Scottish Waters, fish farm development is likely to be acceptable in Category 3 areas, subject to other criteria being satisfied. A degree of precaution should be applied to consideration of further fish farming development in Category 2 areas and there will be a presumption against further fish farm development in Category 1 areas.</p>	<p>The Proposed Development would be located within the Rubha na Creige More to Gob Rubh Uisinis (ID: 200179) waterbody, which has an overall 'Good' status.</p> <p>This waterbody is unclassified in terms of the 'Locational Guidelines for the Authorisation of Marine Fish Farms in Scottish Waters' and therefore is a suitable location for aquaculture development in terms of benthic and water column capacity.</p> <p><b>Section 8</b> of the EIAR assessed the impact of the Proposed Development on the water column and determined that any impact and resultant effect would be insignificant in terms of EIA regulations.</p>
<p><b>AQUACULTURE 5:</b> Aquaculture developments should avoid and/or mitigate adverse impacts upon the seascape, landscape and visual amenity of an area, following SNH guidance on the siting and design of aquaculture.</p>	<p>The Proposed Development follows the NatureScot (NS) (formally Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)) guidance on 'The Siting and Design of Aquaculture in the Landscape – Visual and Landscape Considerations'.</p> <p>The Seascape, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) (<b>Appendix N</b>) concluded that there would be no significant landscape effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development and no significant seascape effects given the medium - large scale of the receiving seascape in this location.</p> <p><b>Section 13</b> of the EIAR assessed the impact of the Proposed Development on the landscape, seascape and visual receptors and determined that there would be no significant landscape effects from the Proposed Development.</p>
<p><b>AQUACULTURE 6:</b> New aquaculture sites should not bridge Disease Management Areas although boundaries may be revised by the Marine Scotland (now the Marine Directorate) to take account of any changes in fish farm location, subject to the continued management of risk.</p>	<p>The Proposed Development will be located within DMA 5a (<b>Appendix H</b>).</p> <p>The Proposed Development will result in an increase in the overall spatial extent of DMA 5a, as detailed within <b>Section 10</b>, however this will not result in the bridging of any DMA boundaries.</p>
<p><b>AQUACULTURE 7:</b> Operators and regulators should continue to utilise a risk based approach</p>	<p><b>Section 10</b> of the EIAR assessed the risk to wild salmonids as a result of the operation of the</p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p>to the location of fish farms and potential impacts on wild fish.</p>	<p>Proposed Development, the assessment determined that it is highly unlikely that there would be significant negative residual effects on wild salmonid populations.</p> <p>A comprehensive Environmental Management Plan (EMP) for the Proposed Development and the two other fish farms operating within Farm Management Area W-4 in provided as <b>Appendix E</b>.</p>
<p><b>AQUACULTURE 8:</b> Guidance on harassment at designated seal haul out sites should be taken into account and seal conservation areas should also be taken into account in site selection and operation. Seal licences will only be granted where other management options are precluded or have proven unsuccessful in deterrence.</p>	<p>There are no designated seal haul-out sites within the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Development, the nearest site being the Eilean Glas Cheann Chrionaig haul-out site, located 15.46 km to the southwest.</p> <p>The Proposed Development is located within the Outer Hebrides Seal Conservation Area for common seals and grey seals.</p> <p>Interactions between the Proposed Development and both common and grey seals are assessed within <b>Sections 9</b> and <b>11</b> of the EIAR. Predator control measures are also outlined with the Predator Control Plan (<b>Appendix E</b>).</p> <p>The assessments carried out within <b>Sections 9</b> and <b>11</b> concluded that it is highly unlikely that the Proposed Development would have significant negative effects on nearby seal populations.</p>
<p><b>AQUACULTURE 9:</b> Consenting and licensing authorities should be satisfied that appropriate emergency response plans are in place.</p>	<p>Relevant emergency measures will be in place for the Proposed Development. These measures are outlined within the Escapes Contingency Plan (ECP) (<b>Appendix E</b>), the EMP, and the Fish Mortality Plan (FMP) (<b>Appendix G</b>).</p> <p>The Proposed Development will also be licenced under the Part 4 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010. Under Part 3 (conditions) of the marine licence, the licence is likely to have a condition requiring that:</p> <p><b><i>“The Licensee must complete the Marine Emergency Action Card provided and send it to <a href="mailto:oelo@mcqa.gov.uk">oelo@mcqa.gov.uk</a> prior to Commencement of the Licensed Activity.”</i></b></p>



Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
	Compliance with this condition will ensure that an emergency response, in the event of a serious incident, will be effective and safe. BFS routinely reviews and updates the Marine Emergency Response Cards.
<b>AQUACULTURE 10:</b> Operators should carry out pre-application discussion and consultation and engage with local communities and others who may be affected, to identify and, where possible, address any concerns in advance of submitting an application.	BFS has undertaken pre-application consultation with the local planning authority (LPA), statutory consultees, non-statutory consultees, and the local community.  A full summary of all consultation is provided within <b>Section 5</b> of the EIAR.
<b>AQUACULTURE 11:</b> Aquaculture equipment, including but not limited to installations, facilities, moorings, pens and nets must be fit for purpose for the site conditions, subject to future climate change. Any statutory technical standard must be adhered to. Equipment and activities should be optimised in order to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.	All infrastructure for the Proposed Development will be designed to ensure it is capable of dealing with the specific environmental conditions predicted at the development location. <b>Section 3</b> of the EIAR provides a full assessment and summary of the infrastructure intended for use at the Proposed Development.  In particular, the mooring system has been specifically designed based on the environmental parameters of the development location.
<b>AQUACULTURE 12:</b> Applications which promote the use of sustainable biological controls for sea lice (such as farmed wrasse) will be encouraged.	As detailed within <b>Section 3</b> of the EIAR, BFS make use of cleanerfish, either lumpsuckers or ballan wrasse, from either farmed or wild origin. The Proposed Development will also make use of this biological control method.  The use of biological control for sea lice allows for a reduction in use of traditional medicinal treatments.

### 4.3 Summary of Compliance to National Planning Policy

Through the review of relevant national policy and guidance, it is evident that, at the national level, there is acknowledgement and understanding of the significance of the aquaculture industry in Scotland along with its current and potential future contribution to the blue economy (see **Sub-Section 6.7**).

Through review of the Aquaculture Policy Outcomes stated within NPF 4, it is determined that the Proposed Development fully accords to the Scottish Government's vision for a sustainable and prosperous aquaculture industry, which forms an integral part of the national economy.

The Proposed Development is located in an exposed, high energy location with high dispersion potential. This transition from more sheltered, lower energy locations has the potential to further mitigate against any potential negative environmental impacts, whilst also allowing sustainable production within the assimilative capacity of the marine environment.

The Proposed Development will contribute to the local economy of the Isle of Lewis, as well as the regional (Outer Hebrides) and national (Scotland) economy. As a result, the Proposed Development, in combination with BFS current operations within the region, will contribute to the achievement of three overarching spatial principles of NPF 4; just transition, rebalanced development, and rural revitalisation.

The Proposed Development is also fully aligned to the seven key objectives and relevant aquaculture policies of the Scottish NMP. Further detail of the considerations made against the specific aquaculture policies of the NMP is available in **Table 4.1**.

In conclusion, when considered against relevant national policy and guidance the Proposed Development is determined to be fully aligned to the defined principles, requirements, objectives and outcomes. Therefore, the Proposed Development is considered to contribute to the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry within Scotland.

## 5. Local Planning Policy and Guidance for Aquaculture Development

The Development Plan is the primary consideration when determining planning applications and forms the basis for the assessment of the Proposed Development in this Statement. The weight which is given to relevant planning considerations is based on the merits of each planning application.

The Proposed Development falls under the jurisdiction of CnES as the Local Planning Authority, therefore the relevant statutory Development Plan comprises the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan<sup>8</sup> ('the LDP') and Supplementary Guidance: Marine Fish Farming<sup>9</sup>.

### 5.1 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Local Development Plan

The LDP is the primary document used by CnES to assess development proposals within the CnES Council Area. The LDP:

***“Sets out the Comhairle’s land use planning policies to facilitate sustainable economic growth in our islands and helps realise the aspirations of the Outer Hebrides Single Outcome Agreement and the Our Islands Our Future (OIOF) Initiative.”***

A key purpose of the LDP is also to inform developer applications, over the temporal period covered by the LDP. The LDP sets out a strategy for development in the area:

***“The promotion of sustainable growth lies at the heart of our efforts to enable strong, thriving communities, and the Plan has a role to play in the delivery of this. By capitalising on the recent major investment commitment for affordable housing and growth sectors such as marine resources, energy, tourism and aquaculture, our islands will be empowered to build a more prosperous and fairer future for our communities. An up to date land use policy framework provides a sound basis for future investment and decision-making and will help maximise the opportunities arising.”***

The LDP also sets out an overall vision for the Outer Hebrides with key objectives clearly outlined:

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<sup>8</sup> Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES): Local Development Plan. [Online] Available at: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-service/development-planning/development-plan/local-development-plan/>

<sup>9</sup> Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES): Supplementary Guidance: Marine Fish Farming. [Online] Available at: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/media/12605/sq-marine-fish-farm-final-for-adoption-nov-web-version.pdf>

***“To encourage and facilitate sustainable economic growth and help build confident and resilient communities, the Plan will provide planning policy that delivers long term benefits to the communities of the Outer Hebrides by ensuring development contributes to the creation of well-designed and attractive places, and that our natural, marine, and cultural resources are valued and utilised efficiently and sustainably.”***

This demonstrates that the overall goal for development in the Outer Hebrides includes the sustainable and conscious growth of the aquaculture industry. CnES recognises that the sustainable growth and management of aquaculture is crucial to the economic future of the region, and if addressed in a suitable, sustainable and well-designed way, with regard for best practice principles, there should be no reason not to endorse aquaculture development.

Concurrent with the policies contained within the LDP, and relevant to the assessment of the Application, are the policies contained within the SG:MFF documentation, which accompanies the LDP, and forms part of the Development Plan. **Sub-Section** Error! Reference source not found., of this Statement, addresses compliance with the relevant policies of the LDP. Whilst **Sub-Section** Error! Reference source not found., addresses compliance with the relevant policies of the SG:MFF documentation.

### 5.1.1 Relevant Policies

Consideration has been given to the relevant policies contained within the LDP and the SG:MFF during the design phase of the Proposed Development. Individual policies are not always quoted in full, however, certain relevant extracts may be quoted. The following LDP policies are relevant to the Proposed Development:

- Policy DS1: Development Strategy;
- Policy PD1: Placemaking and Design;
- Policy PD6: Compatibility of Neighbouring Uses
- Policy ED1: Economic Development;
- Policy ED4: Fish Farming and Marine Planning;
- Policy EI3: Water Environment;
- Policy EI11: Safeguarding;
- Policy EI12: Developer Contributions;
- Policy NBH1: Landscape;
- Policy NBH2: Natural Heritage; and
- Policy NBH4: Built Heritage.

**Table 5.1: Consideration of the Proposed Development against the Outer Hebrides Local Development Plan.**

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<b>Policy DS1: Development Strategy:</b> Policy DS1 states development objectives for different geographical categories, including varying levels of a settlement hierarchy. In this instance, development in ‘Marine and Shore Environment’ is considered as follows:	Compliance with Policy DS1 is determined by compliance with policies contained within SG:MFF ( <b>Sub-Section</b> Error! Reference source not found.) and the aquaculture policies of the National Marine Plan ( <b>Sub-Section</b> Error! Reference source not found.).
<b><i>“The principal policy objective is to support the sustainable development of our aquaculture and marine energy resources (including any associated onshore facilities)”</i></b>	Beyond this, Policy DS1 is supportive of the aquaculture industry, in principle, subject to there being no unacceptable impacts on other uses or activities within the area.

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b><i>and facilitate an integrated approach to management of the intertidal zone.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Marine fish farming development proposals must demonstrate accordance with the Marine Fish Farming Supplementary Guidance.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Development proposals within the marine and shore environment will be assessed in accordance with the National Marine Plan, and any subsequent statutory Regional Marine Plan, and may be assessed for potential impacts on other uses and activities in the marine and coastal area, including: commercial fisheries, wild fisheries, ports and harbours, MOD activities, navigational aids, anchorages and marine and water based recreational and tourism activities, including 'prime beaches' and relevant environmental and cultural assets."</i></b></p>	<p>This Statement will address each of these activities and uses were relevant. It is considered that, by according with the relevant policies and guidance on each of the issues highlighted within this policy, the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with Policy DS1.</b></p>
<p><b>Policy PD1: Placemaking and Design:</b> Policy PD1 states that: <b><i>"Development proposals must demonstrate a satisfactory quality of place-making, siting scale and design that respect and reflect positive local characteristics and will complement or enhance the surrounding built and natural environment, while taking account of the guidance contained within the Outer Hebrides Design Guide.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>And:</i></b></p> <p><b><i>In determining planning applications, the Comhairle will take account of the potential impact on the Scottish Government's six qualities of a successful place: Distinctive, Safe and Pleasant, Easy to Move Around, Welcoming, Adaptable and Resource Efficient."</i></b></p>	<p>Principles of siting and design with particular reference to fish farming developments are considered in <b>Sub-Section</b> Error! Reference s ource not found. of this Statement.</p> <p>Through the process of site selection, design and layout, BFS has considered the existing character and potential impact of the Proposed Development to preserve and complement existing uses.</p> <p>It is noted that, whilst mentioned in Policy PD1, the Outer Hebrides Design Guide does not relate to aquaculture development. Similarly, principles of placemaking are intended to relate to onshore development more than aquaculture as the elements of human interaction are not the same as if it were for onshore development.</p> <p>The Proposed Development considers the existing uses and CnES's consideration of suitable locations for aquaculture developments.</p> <p>The design of the Proposed Development considers the potential for impact from a variety of sources and design and mitigation measures are incorporated to ensure that any impacts are</p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
	<p>avoided or reduced to acceptable levels. As such, it is determined that the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with the principle set out in Policy PD1.</b></p>
<p><b>Policy PD6: Compatibility of Neighbouring Uses:</b> Policy PD6 states:</p> <p><i><b>“All development proposals shall ensure that there is no unacceptable adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses. Where appropriate, proposals should include mitigation measures to reduce the impact on the amenity of neighbouring uses.”</b></i></p>	<p>As noted for Policy PD1: Placemaking and Design, neighbouring uses relating to marine development have a narrower scope than for onshore development.</p> <p>Through the process of site selection, design and layout, and ensuring that all potential impacts are avoided and reduced to acceptable levels, the Proposed Development considers neighbouring uses and is ultimately compatible as a location for aquaculture development.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with Policy PD6.</b></p>
<p>Policy ED1: Economic Development: Policy ED1 states that:</p> <p><i><b>“Development sites, in other locations, will also be considered in recognition of the diverse nature of economic activity within the Outer Hebrides.”</b></i></p>	<p>As set out in the LDP strategy, investment in aquaculture growth is, in principle, supported by CnES.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will be located within an ‘area for potential growth’ of aquaculture development.</p> <p>The Proposed Development will create a minimum of five new full-time positions and create manufacturing opportunities for local businesses. BFS is a strong economic provider across the Outer Hebrides and will continue to be with the consenting of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>All of this serves as evidence for the consideration of the Proposed Development as an economic development site. As such, it is considered that the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with the principles of LDP Policy ED1.</b></p>
<p><b>Policy ED4: Fish Farming and Marine Planning:</b> Policy ED4 states:</p> <p><i><b>“The Comhairle will take planning decisions in accordance with the National Marine Plan and any subsequent regional marine plan.</b></i></p> <p><b>And:</b></p>	<p>This Statement assesses the Proposed Development against the National Marine Plan (<b>Sub-Section</b> Error! Reference source not found.) and SG:MFF (<b>Sub-Section</b> Error! Reference source not found.).</p> <p>In demonstrating compliance with these planning documents, the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with the principles of Policy ED4.</b></p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b><i>Proposals for new marine fish farming developments or changes to existing marine fish farming sites will be assessed against the Supplementary Guidance for Marine Fish Farming which forms part of the Development Plan.</i></b></p>	
<p><b>Policy EI3: Water Environment:</b> Policy EI3 states that development proposals should avoid adverse impact on the water environment. All proposals involving activities in or adjacent to any waterbody must be accompanied by sufficient information to enable a full assessment to be made of the likely effects, including environmental effects, of the development.</p> <p>Where a site contains or is adjacent to the sea, it must be able to demonstrate that:</p> <p><b><i>“a) The site layout avoids development within the water environment unless the location is essential for operational reasons; b) The management or enhancement of existing and new habitats as the provision of riparian/green corridors, natural flood management within flood plains, control of invasive non-native species, removal of redundant structures such as weirs or culverts; c) No significant effect on both during construction and after completion on: • Water quality in groundwater, adjacent watercourses or areas downstream; • Existing groundwater abstractions within 250m; • Water quantity and natural flow patterns and sediment transport processes in all water bodies.”</i></b></p>	<p>BFS was granted a Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR) Licence by SEPA on November 5<sup>th</sup> 2024. This CAR Licence will regulate the levels of waste discharged from the Proposed Development to ensure that they are within the assimilative capacity of the marine environment, ensuring that potential impacts and subsequent effects are not significant.</p> <p>Under criteria a), it is considered that being located in a water environment is essential for aquaculture development. Other criteria are considered to relate specifically to onshore development and should not be considered under in the context of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>It is considered that the granting of a CAR Licence, and the mitigation and management measures proposed, demonstrate that the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with LDP Policy EI3.</b></p>
<p><b>Policy EI11: Safeguarding</b> Policy EI 11 states that:</p> <p><b><i>“For all development proposals the Comhairle will take account of the advice of the relevant agencies with regard to safeguarding and consultation zones notified by the Health and Safety Executive, Civil Aviation Authority, Highlands &amp; Islands Airports, NATS, Ministry of Defence, Meteorological Technical Sites,</i></b></p>	<p>Policy EI11 is instructive towards CnES to seek the advice of relevant agencies, rather than instructing the developer.</p> <p>It is considered that the Proposed Development is well-designed and appropriately sited with management and mitigation measures in place to limit the potential impacts.</p> <p>As such, while Policy EI11 does not contain any requirements for the developer, the Proposed</p>



Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<b><i>Marine Consultation Areas, relevant Harbour Authorities and Marine Protected Areas.</i></b>	Development is fully considered in the context of the potential concerns of the agencies and, therefore, the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with LDP Policy EI11.</b>
<p><b>Policy EI12: Developer Contributions</b> LDP Policy EI 12 states that:</p> <p><b><i>“The Comhairle may negotiate with developers a fair and reasonable contribution towards infrastructure and/or services required as a consequence of the proposed development.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The contributions will be proportionate to the scale and nature of the development (including cumulative) and will be addressed through planning conditions or through a legal agreement if appropriate.”</i></b></p>	<p>BFS is willing to engage and negotiate with CnES regarding appropriate conditions. As such, it is considered that the Proposed Development fully <b>accords</b> with LDP <b>Policy EI12.</b></p> <p>It is considered that, Policy EI12 is not intended to be a determinative policy at this stage of the development process and should not be considered a viable reason to refuse a planning application.</p>
<p><b>Policy NBH1: Landscape</b> Policy NBH1 states:</p> <p><b><i>“Development proposals should relate to the specific landscape and visual characteristics of the local area, ensuring that the overall integrity of landscape character is maintained.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The Western Isles Landscape Character Assessment (WI-LCA) will be taken into account in determining applications and developers should refer to Appendix 1 of this Plan for a summary of this guidance.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Development proposals should not have an unacceptable significant landscape or visual impact. If it is assessed that there will be a significant landscape or visual impact, the applicant will be required to provide mitigation measures demonstrating how a satisfactory landscape and visual fit can be achieved.”</i></b></p>	<p>BFS has undertaken The Seascope, Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (SLVIA) (<b>Appendix N</b>) which concluded that there would be no significant landscape effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development and no significant seascope effects given the medium - large scale of the receiving seascope in this location.</p>
<p><b>Policy NBH2: Natural Heritage</b> LDP Policy NBH2 states that:</p> <p><b><i>“Development which is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura site and is not directly connected with or necessary to the conservation management of that site will be subject to an Appropriate Assessment by the Comhairle.</i></b></p>	<p>The Application was preceded by a comprehensive Screening and Scoping Request (22/00290/FFSCSC). In response to this request CnES provided a Scoping Opinion outlining the various topics requiring further, detailed assessment under the EIA Regulations.</p> <p><b>Section 9</b> of the EIAR assessed the potential impacts and effects of the Proposed Development on predatory species. The assessment concluded that potential impacts are sufficiently avoided and</p>



Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b><i>Development which is likely to have a significant effect on a Natura site will only be permitted where:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>a) An Appropriate Assessment has demonstrated that it will not adversely affect the integrity of the site; or</i></b></li> <li><b><i>b) There are no alternative solutions; and</i></b></li> <li><b><i>c) There are imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature; and</i></b></li> <li><b><i>d) Compensatory measures are provided to ensure that the overall coherence of the Natura network is protected.</i></b></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Development that affects a Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) or National Nature Reserve (NNR) will only be permitted where:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>a) The objectives of designation and the overall integrity of the area will not be compromised; or</i></b></li> <li><b><i>b) Any significant adverse effects on the qualities for which the area has been designated are clearly outweighed by social, environmental or economic benefits of national importance.</i></b></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Development that affects a Marine Protected Area will only be permitted where there is no significant risk of the activity hindering the achievements of the conservation objectives of the Nature Conservation Marine Protected Area (NC MPA) or:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>a) There is no alternative that would have a lesser impact on the Conservation objectives of the NC MPA; and</i></b></li> <li><b><i>b) The public benefit outweighs the environmental impact; and</i></b></li> <li><b><i>c) The applicant will arrange for measures of equivalent environmental benefit to offset the anticipated damage.</i></b></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Where there is good reason to suggest that a European Protected Species (EPS) is present on site, or may be affected by a proposed development, the Comhairle will require any such presence to be established and, if necessary, a mitigation plan provided to avoid or minimise any adverse impacts on the species, prior to determining the application.</i></b></p>	<p>reduced to ensure that effects are not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p><b>Section 10</b> of the EIAR assessed the potential impacts and effects of the Proposed Development on wild salmonid populations. The assessment concluded that potential impacts are sufficiently avoided and reduced to ensure that effects are not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p><b>Section 11</b> of the EIAR assessed the potential impacts and effects of the Proposed Development on species and habitats of conservation importance (inclusive of designated sites, seabirds, marine mammals, and benthic species and habitats). The assessment concluded that potential impacts are sufficiently avoided and reduced to ensure that effects are not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p>As a result of the technical assessments within the EIAR indicating that no significant effects on natural heritage features within the baseline are likely, it is determined that the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with LDP Policy NBH2.</b></p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b><i>Planning permission will not be granted for development that would be likely to have an adverse effect on an EPS unless the Comhairle is satisfied that:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>a) There is no satisfactory alternative; and</i></b></li> <li><b><i>b) The development is required for preserving public health or public safety for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment; and</i></b></li> <li><b><i>c) The development will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of an EPS at a favourable conservation status in its natural range.</i></b></li> </ul> <p><b><i>Planning permission will not be granted for development that would be likely to have an adverse effect on a species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended in Scotland) unless the development is required for preserving public health or public safety. For development affecting a species of bird protected under the 1981 Act there must also be no other satisfactory solution.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Applicants should submit supporting evidence for any development meeting these tests, demonstrating both the need for the development and that a full range of possible alternative courses of action have been properly examined and none found to acceptably meet the need identified.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Development affecting the Loch Stiapavat Local Nature Reserve should aim to enhance the site and will not be permitted if it will have an unacceptable impact on the features of interest of the site.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Development proposals should avoid having a significant adverse effect on, and where possible should enhance, biodiversity and ecological interests of the site. Developers are encouraged to assess the impacts of their proposed development on UK Biodiversity</i></b></p>	

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b>Action Plan (BAP) priority species and habitats and Local BAP habitats and species. Developers should refer to the Scottish Biodiversity List for a full list of animals, plants and habitats considered to be of principal importance for biodiversity conservation in Scotland (this list includes all UK priority species).</b></p> <p><b>Development proposals that would potentially damage or destroy geological interests, such as those found within Geological Conservation Review sites, are unlikely to be supported. Application for development potentially affecting geological interests must demonstrate how damage will be avoided or minimised so that the interest of the site is preserved. The Comhairle will also seek to consider how geological interests can be created or enhanced through development."</b></p>	
<p><b>Policy NBH4: Built Heritage</b> Policy NBH4 states:</p> <p><b>"Development which preserves or enhances the architectural, artistic, commemorative or historic significance of built heritage assets will be supported.</b></p> <p><b>Where there is clear evidence of historic significance, development which would have a substantial adverse impact on this significance will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>a) all reasonable measures will be taken to mitigate any loss of this significance; and</b></li> <li><b>b) any lost significance which cannot be mitigated is outweighed by the social, economic, environmental or safety benefits of the development."</b></li> </ul>	<p>This Application was preceded by a formal Screening and Scoping Request (22/00290/FFSCSC), within which BFS assessed that significant impacts upon marine or terrestrial cultural heritage were unlikely. It was determined that potential impacts should be scoped out of further assessment.</p> <p>The CnES Scoping Opinion agreed with the conclusions made in the Screening and Scoping Request, with the following stated:</p> <p><b>"It is agreed that the Development will have no significant negative impact on marine or terrestrial cultural heritage human and that therefore the topic can be scoped out from further assessment."</b></p>

### 5.1.2 Supplementary Guidance

The Outer Hebrides LDP SG:MFF<sup>9</sup> was adopted in November 2018, alongside the Marine Fish Farming Spatial Strategy Map<sup>10</sup>. As stated within Policy ED4: Fish Farming and Marine Planning, of the Outer Hebrides LDP:

<sup>10</sup> CnES. Supplementary Guidance. Marine Fish Farming Spatial Strategy Map. [Online] Available at: <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/media/12629/marine-fish-farming-spatial-strategy-map.pdf>

***“Proposals for new marine fish farming developments or changes to existing marine fish farming sites will be assessed against the Supplementary Guidance for Marine Fish Farming which forms part of the Development Plan.”***

The following policies of the SG:MFF are considered to be relevant to the determination of this Application:

- Spatial Strategy Policy 1: Areas for Potential Growth;
- Development Policy 1: Siting and Design in the Landscape;
- Development Policy 2: Water Quality and Benthic Impact;
- Development Policy 3: Other Marine Interests;
- Development Policy 4: Noise and Lighting;
- Development Policy 5: Operational Impacts;
- Development Policy 6: Cumulative Impacts;
- Development Policy 7: Economic Benefit; and
- Development Policy 8: On-shore Facilities.

Compliance with these policies is assessed in Error! Reference source not found..

**Table 5.2: Consideration of the Proposed Development against the relevant policies of the Supplementary Guidance.**

<b>Policy Reference</b>	<b>Proposed Development Consideration</b>
<p>Spatial Strategy Policy 1: Areas for Potential Growth</p> <p>Spatial Strategy Policy 1 states:</p> <p><b><i>“The areas for potential growth are shown in the Spatial Strategy Map. These are the Comhairle’s preferred areas for the location of new marine fish farming proposals or extensions to existing fish farms. Proposals within these areas will be assessed against Development policies 1 – 8.”</i></b></p>	<p>The proposed development location is located within the Areas for Potential Growth.</p> <p>Therefore, the <b>Proposed Development fully accords with Spatial Strategy Policy 1.</b></p>
<p><b>Development Policy 1: Siting and Design in the Landscape</b></p> <p>Development Policy 1 states:</p> <p><b><i>“Development proposals should relate to the specific landscape and visual characteristics of the local area.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The developer will be required to submit information which demonstrates that the proposal can be satisfactory integrated with the landscape through appropriate siting and design.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Siting - The placement, layout, and orientation of installations should reflect the scale and</i></b></p>	<p>A full SLVIA (<b>Appendix N</b>) has been undertaken by a specialist third party consultancy. The SLVIA concluded that:</p> <p><b><i>“There would be no significant landscape effects arising as a result of the Proposed Development and no significant seascape effects given the medium - large scale of the receiving seascape in this location.</i></b></p> <p>Significant visual effects would be limited to the visual effect on views for sea / water based recreational receptors 0.5 km of the Proposed Development.</p> <p>The Proposed Development would not exceed the cumulative capacity of the landscape seascape around the Pairc Peninsula, nor</p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><i>subtleties of the surrounding landform, coastline and coastal character.</i></p> <p><i>Design – The scale, configuration, number, cage grid size, and the form and height of feed barges and support structures, should ensure the proposal is capable of being absorbed into the landscape/seascape with minimal intrusion.</i></p> <p><i>Details of the colour of cage structures, nets, top-nets, barges and other surface equipment should be submitted, together with a statement detailing how the proposed colour scheme is appropriate to minimise landscape and visual impacts arising from the proposed development.</i></p> <p><i>Details of the associated on-shore facilities will also require to be submitted and will accord with Development Policy 8.</i></p> <p><i>A design statement is required for developments within a National Scenic Area (NSA). The design statement for proposed fish farming development within an NSA will be expected to demonstrate how the proposed development responds to the Special Qualities of the specific NSA and explain how the proposal has paid special attention to the desirability of safeguarding or enhancing the NSA's character or appearance.</i></p> <p><i>Proposals will be assessed to ensure that the overall integrity of landscape character is maintained and if sited within an NSA, against the special qualities of the NSA."</i></p>	<p>would it become the dominant characteristic of the landscape / seascape within the Study Area given the already established operational fish farms in the local landscape."</p> <p>Therefore, based on the conclusions of the SLVIA, the <b>Proposed Development</b> is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 1.</p>
<p><b>Development Policy 2: Water Quality and Benthic Impact</b></p> <p>Development Policy 2 states:</p> <p><i>"Proposals will require to be accompanied with modelling and calculations which demonstrate that the benthic and water column impacts of the proposed farm are localised and within environmental limits.</i></p>	<p>The Application is accompanied by a NewDEPOMOD Modelling Report (<b>Appendix K</b>) and a Marine Modelling Report (<b>Appendix L</b>).</p> <p>The NewDEPOMOD Modelling Report outlines the predicted discharges of organic material and in-feed residues (Emamectin Benzoate (EmBz)) from the Proposed Development in relation SEPA's Mixing Zone criteria.</p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b><i>Proposals will be assessed to ensure that impacts on water quality and benthic environment are minimised or mitigated.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Proposals will also be assessed against the requirements of LDP Policy EI3 Water Environment.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Proposals for new marine fish farming development and/or extensions to existing sites will not be permitted in locations where they would have a significant adverse impact on water quality.”</i></b></p>	<p>The Marine Modelling Report outlines the medium and far-field organic material deposition expected to occur as a result of the Proposed Development, whilst also detailing the predicted discharge of topical bath medicines in relation to the relevant Environmental Quality Standards (EQSs).</p> <p>A SEPA CAR Licence application has been submitted for the Proposed Development. The modelling outputs from both the NewDEPOMOD and marine modelling simulations have been utilised to determine the maximum passing biomass and the allowable quantities of medicants. The CAR Licence will regulate the discharge of wastes through a series of licence conditions.</p> <p>Therefore, compliance to the CAR Licence conditions ensures that the Proposed Development will operate, in terms of discharges to the water and benthic environment, within the assimilative capacity of the receiving environment.</p> <p><b>Sections 7 and 8</b> of the EIAR also assess the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on both the benthic and water environment in relation to the EIA Regulations. The respective assessments have determined that potential impacts are likely to be not significant.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 2.</b></p>
<p><b>Development Policy 3: Other Marine Interests</b></p> <p>Development Policy 3 states:</p> <p><b><i>“Developers should provide evidence that potential impacts of new or extended fish farm sites on commercial fisheries, wild fisheries, MOD activities, navigational routes, anchorages, and recreational and leisure activities have been identified. Where there are likely to be conflicts, details of impacts and the mitigating measures proposed should be submitted.</i></b></p>	<p>The Commercial Fisheries Impact Assessment determined that the potential impacts of the Proposed Development on the scoped in fisheries were not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p>Potential impacts on wild fisheries (wild salmonids) are assessed within <b>Section 10</b> of the EIAR. This assessment is supported by detailed sea lice modelling (<b>Appendix R</b>). The assessment concluded that the Proposed Development is unlikely to result in significant effects on wild salmonids, through the identified impact pathways. Therefore, potential effects are</p>



Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><b><i>Areas identified for energy exploitation, including oil, gas and renewable energy developments should be avoided unless the developer can demonstrate that the energy resource will not be sterilised by the proposed development.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Proposals for new or extended fish farm development will be permitted where it has been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposal would not have a significant adverse effect on wild fish populations, either individually or cumulatively with other fin fish developments. Applications for new fin fish farms or extensions to existing farms to increase cage surface area by 50% or more should include the following information:</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b><i>Location and where available catch data of salmon producing rivers which are judged to be potentially adversely impacted on in the loch system;</i></b></li> <li><b><i>A statement as to whether the area is known to support sea trout fisheries.</i></b></li> </ul> <p><b><i>The Comhairle will seek the advice of the Marine Directorate (formally Marine Scotland Science) and the Western Isles District Salmon Fisheries Board in respect of the information provided with regard to wild fish in informing its determination of an application."</i></b></p>	<p>determined to be not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p>An assessment on the potential impacts on commercial maritime activity and navigation has been undertaken within <b>Section 12</b>, of the EIAR and <b>Appendix Q</b>. The assessment concluded that potential effects would be not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 3.</b></p>
<p><b>Development Policy 4: Noise and Lighting</b></p> <p>Policy 4 states:</p> <p><b><i>"Developers will be required to provide details on noise and light emissions relating to the proposed development, along with details of any mitigating measure that will minimise the impacts. This should include details of surface and underwater lighting and if sited within 2km of a residential property, details of noise generating equipment and hours of operation.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>The Comhairle may require the applicant to provide further technical information or undertake survey work if the information submitted is not considered adequate.</i></b></p>	<p>This Application was preceded by a formal Screening and Scoping Request (22/00290/FFSCSC).</p> <p>The Scoping Advice received from the consultees, and CnES Scoping Opinion, did not highlight either noise or lighting as a topic requiring detailed assessment within the EIA.</p> <p>As such, both lighting and noise have been scoped out of assessment under EIA. However, to allow CnES to make a planning determination, a high level assessment following the EIA assessment methodology has been undertaken.</p> <p>The assessments concluded that impacts resulting from noise and lighting would result in effects that are not significant.</p>



Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><i>Proposals will be assessed to ensure that impacts arising from noise and lighting at fish farms are minimised.”</i></p> <p><b>Development Policy 5: Operational Impact</b></p> <p>Policy 5 states:</p> <p><i>“Information on the arrangements for waste management at the proposed site and should be submitted along with the planning application.</i></p> <p><i>The proposal should be designed so as to minimise any negative impacts arising from the operation and will be assessed to ensure adequate waste management measures; no adverse environmental or amenity impacts arising from the servicing and operation of the site; and satisfactory measures for the restoration of the site, including removal of redundant equipment.</i></p> <p><i>Conditions will be imposed on the grant of a planning permission to ensure management of equipment during fallow periods exceeding six months and to control the removal of damaged equipment and to ensure restoration of the site following cessation of operations.”</i></p>	<p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 4.</b></p> <p>This Application was preceded by a formal Screening and Scoping Request (22/002890/SCRSCO).</p> <p>The CnES Scoping Opinion stated that:</p> <p><i>“It is noted that Site-specific waste management is covered with the internal and external EMS audits, for operational sites and it is agreed therefore this element will be scoped out of the final assessment.”</i></p> <p>Therefore, non-fish waste management has been scoped out of assessment within the EIA. However, the site specific Waste Management Plan (WMP) under which the Proposed Development will be operated, is provided as <b>Appendix P</b>, in support of this Application.</p> <p>Within the Scoping Opinion, CnES requested information on fish waste management be provided. As such, a site specific Fish Mortality Plan (FMP) has been provided as <b>Appendix G</b>. The FMP outlines the fish waste management mechanisms that will be deployed at the Proposed Development to ensure efficacious fish waste management under normal and extreme operational circumstances.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 5.</b></p>
<p><b>Development Policy 6: Cumulative Impact</b></p> <p>Development Policy 6 states:</p> <p><i>“The potential cumulative impact of a proposal, in conjunction with all other existing and consented fish farming developments in the same loch system will be a factor in determining the acceptability of a development proposal. This assessment will have regard to the information submitted in relation to other policy areas and the potential cumulative impact on: landscape &amp; seascape</i></p>	<p>Cumulative impacts and subsequent effects have been assessed within each technical assessment section of the EIAR. Therefore cumulative impacts have been considered in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benthic Impacts;</li> <li>• Water Column Impacts;</li> <li>• Interactions with Predatory Species;</li> <li>• Interactions with Wild Salmonids;</li> <li>• Impacts on Species and Habitats of Conservation Importance;</li> <li>• Navigation, Anchorage, Commercial Fisheries and Other Non-Recreational Maritime Uses;</li> </ul>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p><i>character, including visual impacts (farms within same view from key viewpoints); noise and lighting impacts; carrying capacity of loch system; and water column and benthic impacts.</i></p> <p><i>Where adverse cumulative impacts are significant and cannot be mitigated, planning permission will not be granted."</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seascape, Landscape and Visual; and</li> <li>• Socio-economic, Access and Recreation.</li> </ul> <p>The cumulative impacts assessments determined that not significant effects, in relation to the EIA Regulations, are anticipated.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 6.</b></p>
<p><b>Development Policy 7: Economic Benefit</b></p> <p>Development Policy 7 states:</p> <p><i>"Proposals should include details of the anticipated economic benefits for the Outer Hebrides arising from the proposed development including direct and indirect employment (FTE and part time). The assessment should have regard to the potential for displacement of local jobs both within or out-with the sector.</i></p> <p><i>The potential benefits will be assessed to ensure there is no detrimental effect on the benefits to be derived from other economic activities unless it can be demonstrated that the benefits from the fish farming development outweigh the others."</i></p>	<p>Section 13, of the EIAR, assesses the socio-economic impact of the Proposed Development. The assessment utilises direct, indirect and induced Gross Value Added (GVA) to determine the magnitude of potential positive socio-economic impacts of the Proposed Development. Indirect and induced economic value are calculated via utilisation of the Scottish Type 1 and Type 2 multipliers for aquaculture.</p> <p>The assessment also considered the direct, indirect and induced employment that is likely as a result of the Proposed Development, through the utilisation of Type 1 and Type 2 Scottish Employment Multipliers for aquaculture.</p> <p>The assessment determined that the Proposed Development would result in positive significant effects in relation to direct and indirect socio-economic impacts.</p> <p>Within the commercial fisheries impact analysis, an assessment of the potential economic loss to the scoped in fisheries, as a result of displacement from the fishing grounds beneath the Proposed Development has been undertaken.</p> <p>The assessment concluded that the economic loss, as a result of displacement from the mooring area of the Proposed Development is likely to be not significant in relation to the EIA Regulations.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 7.</b></p>
<p><b>Development Policy 8: Onshore Facilities</b></p>	<p>As detailed within <b>Sub-Section 3.5</b>, of the EIAR. The Proposed Development will be routinely</p>

Policy Reference	Proposed Development Consideration
<p>Development Policy 8 states:</p> <p><b><i>“The Comhairle will only permit a marine fish farm development proposal where the associated shore based facilities are located within the Outer Hebrides.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Where new or upgraded on-shore facilities are necessary to service a development, developers are required to submit the planning application for on-shore facilities simultaneous with the associated marine fish farming application. On-shore facilities will be assessed against Local Development Plan policies.</i></b></p> <p><b><i>Developers proposing to utilise existing facilities will be required to identify the shore based location and facilities from which the development will be served in the planning application.”</i></b></p>	<p>served from the existing Gravir shorebase. A 600 T capacity feed barge will also be permanently moored at the southern end of the pen grid.</p> <p>As a result of the utilisation of existing shore-based infrastructure, no additional onshore development is necessary for the Proposed Development.</p> <p>As such, the <b>Proposed Development is determined to fully accord with Development Policy 8.</b></p>

## 5.2 Summary of Compliance to Local Planning Policy

Through the review of the Outer Hebrides LDP, SG:MFF and the Marine Fish Farming Spatial Strategy Map, carried out in **Section 5**, it is evident that, at the local level, there is acknowledgement and understanding of the significance of the aquaculture industry in supporting and contributing to the sustainable growth of the Outer Hebrides economy.

Through detailed assessment it has been determined that the Proposed Development fully accords with the relevant policies of the Outer Hebrides LDP (including the SG:MFF and Marine Fish Farming Spatial Strategy Map). Further details of the considerations made against the relevant policies are available in **Table 5.1** and **Table 5.2**.

The Proposed Development, through the iterative design process, has incorporated embedded mitigation to avoid and mitigate negative environmental impacts. Where necessary, operational mitigation has also been proposed to further reduce environmental impacts.

A full EIAR has been submitted with the Application, which fully assessed the effects of the Proposed Development. The conclusions of the EIAR provide clear, objective evidence that the Proposed Development fully accords to the relevant policies at the local level. As a result, the Proposed Development will represent a sustainable contribution to the Outer Hebrides economy and the Scottish aquaculture industry.

## 6. Material Considerations

### 6.1 A Fresh Start: The Renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture (2009)

The renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture<sup>11</sup>, published by the Scottish Government in 2009, sets out the shared vision of the Ministerial Working Group on Aquaculture for the sustainable growth of the industry and provides a platform to ensure a strong future for the industry in Scotland. It has five key themes:

- Healthier fish and shellfish;
- Improved systems for licencing aquaculture and development;
- Improved containment;
- Better marketing and improved image; and
- Improved access to finance.

Issues and desired outcomes are identified under each theme. The framework also sets out a more flexible approach to delivery through a smaller Ministerial Group on Aquaculture.

### 6.2 Supporting Aquaculture Growth and Protecting Scotland's Environment (2017)

The joint ministerial statement<sup>12</sup> published by the Scottish Government conforms that aquaculture is a key contributor to Scotland's rural economy. It provides employment and investment, particularly in some of the most remote coastal communities. The Scottish Government also recognises that a sustainable aquaculture sector is a carbon efficient means of producing animal protein and therefore contributes to national food security. The policy statement sets out how the Scottish Government and its agencies will work constructively with the sector, and others, to operate a policy framework to enable sustainable growth whilst balancing economic, environmental and social responsibilities. In particular, the Scottish Government will promote:

- Low-impact production systems, building on progress made to date by industry, which manage fish health challenges and enable continued growth while protecting marine ecology;
- New approach by SEPA to identifying Depositional Zones, to support appropriate growth of the industry whilst achieving River Basin Management Plan targets; and
- Collaborative and constructive relationships between the aquaculture sector and its neighbours to support positive interactions amongst marine users.

### 6.3 Aquaculture Growth to 2030: A Strategic Plan for farming Scotland's Seas (2016)

The Scottish Government supports the delivery of the Aquaculture Industry Leadership Group growth strategy<sup>13</sup> which aims to double the economic contribution of the sector from £1.8 billion in 2016 to £3.6 billion by 2030 and double the number of jobs to 18,000 over the same temporal period. To achieve these aims, the strategic priorities for the sector are identified and 20 specific actions are recommended. The delivery of these 20 recommendations should permit the sector to achieve significant long term social and economic benefits in Scotland.

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<sup>11</sup> Scottish Government: A Fresh Start: The renewed Strategic Framework for Scottish Aquaculture. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/fresh-start-renewed-strategic-framework-scottish-aquaculture/>

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Government: Supporting aquaculture growth and protecting Scotland's environment: statement. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-aquaculture-growth-and-protecting-scotlands-environment/>

<sup>13</sup> Scotland Food and Drink: Aquaculture Growth to 2030: A Strategic Plan for Farming Scotland's Seas. [Online] Available at: [https://scotlandfoodanddrink.blob.core.windows.net/media/1303/lr-sfd-aquaculture-doc\\_spread.pdf](https://scotlandfoodanddrink.blob.core.windows.net/media/1303/lr-sfd-aquaculture-doc_spread.pdf)

## 6.4 A Stronger and More Resilient Scotland: the Programme for Government 2022 to 2023

The 2022 – 2023 Programme for Government<sup>14</sup> includes continued commitment to the sustainable growth of the aquaculture industry stating that the Scottish Government will:

***“Develop a Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture with enhanced emphasis on environment and community benefit and continue to progress the regulatory review of aquaculture and measures to tackle environmental impacts associated with aquaculture, including SEPA’s implementation of a new sea lice risk assessment framework and support for local authorities to guide development to the right places through spatial planning.”***

## 6.5 Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee: Report on the Environmental Impacts of Salmon Farming

The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee (ECCLRC) published a report on the Environmental Impacts of Salmon Farming<sup>15</sup> (ECCLRC Report) on 05 March 2018. This report reviewed the various aspects of aquaculture and the associated environmental interactions. From the report, the ECCLRC a number of key conclusions, one of which being that:

***“The Committee is supportive of aquaculture, but further development and expansion must be on the basis of a precautionary approach and must be based on resolving the environmental problems.”***

The report also states that a key aspect to supporting the sustainable growth of the industry is

***“identifying where salmon farming can take place and what the carrying capacity of the environment is”***

This ECCLRC report was undertaken to provide detailed information on the impacts of salmon farming in Scotland for the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC). Therefore, the ECCLRC Report is more of an instructive document. However, the conclusions of the report were of material consideration to BFS when siting and designing the Proposed Development.

BFS is confident that the Proposed Development, in particular the development location, aligns with the conclusions of the ECCLRC Report.

## 6.6 Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee: Salmon Farming in Scotland

The ECCLRC Report<sup>15</sup> informed the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC): Salmon Farming in Scotland Report<sup>16</sup> (RECC Report). The RECC Report was published on 27 November 2018. The remit for this report was:

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<sup>14</sup> Scottish Government: A stronger and more resilient Scotland: the Programme for Government 2022 to 2023. [Online] Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/strategy-plan/2022/09/stronger-more-resilient-scotland-programme-government-2022-23/documents/stronger-more-resilient-scotland-programme-government-202223/stronger-more-resilient-scotland-programme-government-202223/govscot%3Adocument/stronger-more-resilient-scotland-programme-government-202223.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Scottish Government: Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee: Report on the Environmental Impacts of Salmon Farming. [Online] Available at: [https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5/Environment/Inquiries/20180305\\_GD\\_to\\_Rec\\_salmon\\_farming.pdf](https://archive2021.parliament.scot/S5/Environment/Inquiries/20180305_GD_to_Rec_salmon_farming.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government: Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee: Salmon Farming in Scotland Report. [Online] Available at: <https://archive2021.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/currentcommittees/107585.aspx>

***“To consider the current state of the salmon industry in Scotland, identify opportunities for its future development and explore how the various fish health and environmental challenges it currently faces can be addressed”***

The RECC acknowledges the contribution of the salmon farming sector to the economies of rural Scotland. With the following stated:

***“The Committee acknowledges both the economic and social value that the salmon farming industry brings to Scotland. It provides jobs to rural areas, investment and spend into communities and stimulates economic activity in the wider supply chain.”***

Recommendation 54 of the RECC Report states that:

***“The Committee recommends that work to examine the scope for siting salmon farms in suitable offshore or other locations where there are higher energy water flows should be treated as a high priority by the industry. It acknowledges that there are significant technological challenges associated with locating farms in these areas, as well as risks in terms of workforce health and safety. However, it also notes the benefits this could bring in terms of addressing fish health issues, reducing the environmental impact of waste and providing scope for the industry to develop higher capacity sites.”***

BFS believes that the Proposed Development fully aligns with Recommendation 54. Hydrographic data indicates that the development location is a high energy site, with very high dispersion potential<sup>17</sup>, which will mitigate potential environmental impacts.

## 6.7 Blue Economy Vision for Scotland

The Blue Economy Vision for Scotland sets out the Scottish Government's vision for Scotland's blue economy. This vision draws on the latest evidence and builds upon the current direction of travel. The Blue Economy Vision recognises that economic prosperity and well-being are embedded within nature, and in order to harness blue opportunities, society and the economy must be transformed to thrive within the planet's sustainable limits.

The vision identifies six outcomes up to 2045 that are anticipated to deliver the Scottish Government's long-term aspirations for the marine environment. These outcomes include:

- Scotland's marine ecosystems are healthy and functioning, with nature protected and activities managed using an ecosystem-based approach to ensure negative impacts on marine ecosystems are minimised and, where possible, reversed;
- Scotland's blue economy is resilient to climate change, contributing to climate mitigation and adaptation, with marine sectors decarbonised, resource efficient and supporting Scotland's Net Zero and Nature Positive commitments;
- Established and emerging marine sectors are innovative, entrepreneurial, productive and internationally competitive;
- Scotland is a global leader in healthy, quality, sustainably harvested and farmed Blue Foods, for our own population and beyond;
- Thriving, resilient, regenerated, healthy communities have more equal access to the benefits that ocean resources provide; and
- Scotland is an ocean literate and aware nation.

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<sup>17</sup> Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA): Aquaculture Modelling Screening and Risk Identification Report: North Gravir [Online] Available at: <https://www.sepa.org.uk/regulations/water/aquaculture/screening-modelling-and-risk-identification-report/>



The Blue Economy Vision recognises aquaculture as an integral part of the overall blue economy of Scotland. BFS is confident that the Proposed Development, in combination with BFS's other marine operations, will contribute positively to achieving the six outcomes of the Blue Economy Vision, as defined above.

## 6.8 Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture

The Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture sets out the Scottish Government's long-term aspirations for the finfish, shellfish and seaweed farming sectors, and the wider aquaculture supply chain. The vision acknowledges the crucial role that aquaculture plays in contributing to food security and Scotland's commitment to becoming a Good Food Nation, with farmed Scottish salmon representing the UK's biggest food export. The Vision also identifies that aquaculture supports highly skilled and well paid jobs, particularly in Scotland's most fragile and rural communities, helping to underpin valuable economic development.

The Scottish Government's Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture in 2045 is one where:

- Its produce makes a significant contribution to Scotland's reputation for premium food and drink – people at home and abroad choose our aquaculture products because they are high quality, healthy foods, farmed under strong environmental stewardship;
- Our communities are supported through the provision of highly skilled employment opportunities access to healthy local foods and other lasting benefits;
- Its environmental impact is within acceptable limits, with continual progress to minimise that impact through innovation, research and development;
- The aquaculture sector collaborates with other stakeholders to protect and restore biodiversity in the freshwater and marine environment;
- High standards for farmed animal health and welfare are a priority, maintaining Scotland's high health status and declared freedom from listed fish and shellfish diseases;
- Development happens in the right places, underpinned by an effective and efficient regulatory framework informed by the best available science and evidence;
- The sector is leading the way in reaching net zero and adapting to the challenges arising from climate change;
- Continual innovation facilitates opportunities for a highly resource efficient and productive industry to responsibly maximise value from the production process; and
- The sector is flourishing, attracting investment and delivering significant economic benefit to Scotland through domestic and international trade and through its supply chain.

In order for the above vision to be realised by 2045, the Scottish Government has identified six outcomes that will need to be realised. These outcomes relate to:

- Spatial Planning and Consenting;
- Environment and Biodiversity;
- Climate Change and Circular Economy;
- Health and Welfare;
- Community; and
- Productivity, Supply Chain and Infrastructure.

Through the thorough and iterative design process and assessment under the EIA Regulations BFS are confident that the Proposed Development will contribute directly to achieving the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture by 2045.

Furthermore, the BFS Healthy Living Plan sets out their commitment to sustainability across their five pillars:



- Healthy Business;
- Healthy Salmon;
- Healthy People;
- Healthy communities; and
- Healthy Environment.

These five pillars underpin all BFS operations and therefore directly relate to the Proposed Development. These five pillars directly align to the Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture, and therefore position BFS within the industry to help drive positive change and the realisation of the Scottish Government's Vision for Sustainable Aquaculture by 2045.

## 6.9 Summary of Compliance to Relevant Material Considerations

Review of relevant material considerations, within **Section 6**, other than that of national planning policy and the ABC LDP, indicates that the Scottish Government recognises the significant contribution made by aquaculture to the social and economic fabric of Scotland, particularly in rural and coastal areas. The relevant material considerations also highlight the need to ensure sustainable expansion of the industry.

The identified material considerations highlight the importance of aquaculture to the Scottish economy, but also highlight the need for improved sustainability within the industry to allow the growth of the industry. The Proposed Development is believed to represent a sustainable model for aquaculture development. With the Proposed Development located within an exposed, high energy site with very high dispersion potential. This, in combination with improved operational management and procedures, will ensure that the Proposed Development contributes directly to the sustainable expansion of the aquaculture industry within Scotland.

## 7. Conclusions

In compliance with the Planning Act, the Proposed Development should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This Statement clearly and objectively considers the Proposed Development in relation to the relevant policies outlined within the Outer Hebrides LDP (inclusive of SG:MFF and the Marine Fish Farming Spatial Strategy Map) and concludes that the Proposed Development fully accords to the requirements of the relevant policies.

National policy acknowledges the importance of the Scottish aquaculture industry and is supportive of the expansion of the aquaculture industry on a sustainable basis. The Proposed Development, when considered against relevant national policy and guidance is determined to be fully aligned to the defined principles, requirements, and objectives. Therefore, the Proposed Development is determined to represent a sustainable model for aquaculture development which will contribute to the sustainable development of the aquaculture industry within Scotland as well as also bringing social and economic benefits to Scotland.

The Application is accompanied by a full EIAR in accordance with the requirements of the EIA Regulations. Within the technical assessment sections of the EIAR, the Proposed Development is assessed against several environmental considerations, which have been determined through the Scoping Opinion. These assessments are relevant to the policies of the Outer Hebrides LDP, as well as higher level national policy considerations. The technical assessment sections concluded that through embedded mitigation the Proposed Development is highly unlikely to have a significant negative impact on the identified environmental receptors. Therefore, the EIAR provides clear and objective evidence that the Proposed Development fully accords to the relevant local and national policy considerations.

The Proposed Development is believed to represent a model for sustainable aquaculture development within Scotland. The development location, selected after an extensive spatial search, is considered to be an exposed and high energy location. As a result, the marine environment has a greater carrying capacity due to the very high dispersion potential associated with high energy locations. This will inherently mitigate the magnitude of potential environmental interactions whilst also supporting fish health and welfare.

In conclusion, it is determined that the Proposed Development complies with the relevant policies of the Development Plan, which consists of NPF 4 and the Outer Hebrides LDP (inclusive of SG:MFF and the Marine Fish Farming Spatial Strategy Map). Due to the alignment of the Proposed Development with both national policy and guidance and all other relevant material considerations it is believed that there are no material considerations that would outweigh the conclusions made in relation to the Development Plan. As a result, it is respectfully requested that planning permission for this Application be granted.