Social licence for aquaculture

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Current/ past projects

• Blue Growth Farm 2018-2021
  – Integrating offshore renewable energy with aquaculture

• GENIALG 2017 – 2021 – GENetic diversity exploitation for Innovative Macro-ALGal biorefinery (@GENIALG_EU)

• AquaSpace 2015 – 2018 – Finding space for aquaculture in Europe through the Ecosystem Approach and Marine Spatial Planning (@AquaSpaceH2020)

• MERIKA 2014 – 2017

• SIFIDS 2017 – 2018
Social licence to operate and public perception

The difference between a fact or the best available information at the time and the views that the public (as a collective) have about a certain topic, normally informed by popular opinion, media, and/or reputation

Social licence; a form of acceptance or approval that companies or projects earn through consistent and trustworthy behaviour

Australia NSW – Opposition to a coal seam gas field
What are the social barriers to expansion of aquaculture in Scotland?

- Public perception of finfish farming as a whole
- Local social acceptability of farming activities
Why do people support or object to finfish farm planning applications?

Aquaculture industry in Scotland is growing
High value industry
Visually interesting
Sustainable business
Respects the environment on which farming relies
Provides year-round business
Dawnfresh farm nutritious fish
Provides jobs in rural areas
Supporting local supply-chain businesses
Employment in local area

Object

Support

Argyll and Bute Public Comment Data 2012-2016, collected within the AquaSpace Project
Where do people get information on finfish farming from?

- Information should be;
  - Transparent
  - Include issues which the public is concerned about

- Engagement and delivery effects impact

- The way that information is passed on and the individual who does it, is as much a part of the information as the statements that are made.

Argyll and Bute Public Comment Data 2012-2016, collected within the AquaSpace Project
Drivers for objecting are based on more than fact

- Personal philosophical arguments
- Practical/ legal arguments
- Social arguments;
  - Lack of, or poor engagement
  - Lack of transparent and easily digestible, non-polarised information leading to;
  - Lack of detailed understanding of environmental impacts

“...corporate big business that carelessly threatens marine biodiversity (by organic pollution) and wild salmonid fish populations (by sea lice, diseases and genetic contamination).” – Scottish Salmon Think Tank (Dr James Merryweather)
Three strategies for building social licence

Build a relationship with local host communities. Context is key.

Provide accessible, timely, and correct information on operations.

Be transparent and explicit about decisions and decision-making processes. Manage expectations.