

Ewan Kennedy submission of 12 August 2022

PE1951/D: Reinstate inshore coastal limit on the use of dredge and trawl fishing gears

I am writing to comment on the [Scottish Government's response](#), dated 4 August, to the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation (SCFF) petition. I have not engaged before, as I felt that what the SCFF had submitted was comprehensive and well informed, but points in the response cause me considerable concern. I'm sure SCFF will respond to the Scottish Government's accusation that they want a "broad brush national blanket closure", which in my view is untrue. Here are a few points of my own.

I have had a lifelong interest in our coastal waters and the fishing industry. I'm old enough to remember the Clyde towns being full of Glasgow folk sea angling on the Firth, in fleets of small boats that sustained the local communities providing accommodation and maintaining the vessels involved. While later generations chose to fly to the sun for their breaks that is rapidly changing with our rural areas flooded by post-Brexit staycationers. While what I view as the UK Government's policy of isolation may not last, when the implications of a declining currency, repeated pandemics and measures to slow climate change sink in, foreign holidays will likely become a thing of the past, except for the super-rich.

From early childhood until my teenage years I spent a month each summer in St Abbs, where I was taken out creeling countless times by the legendary Jake Nisbet BEM, a hero of the Atlantic convoys. I learned a lot about a truly sustainable industry. Jake, along with the other men in the village, spent each Scottish winter in South Georgia, and it's true to say that the village would have been a sad place without the revenue from whaling with Salvesen. Ironically, Jake and his generation knew how important it was to protect the environment they lived in, but didn't understand what they were doing elsewhere. Dare I say, this blindness is not uncommon.

But times change and the community there has had to adapt and develop to new conditions in a world more aware of how destructive the human race can be. It is easily possible, with some short-term support

and intelligent thinking, to create new ways of “sustaining” without wrecking the environment.

Nobody will suggest that if a major source of local income were to be removed in one swoop there would be no implications. Instead, in anything I’ve read from SCFF, I’ve seen a recognition that massive and expensive measures would be required to fill the gaps.

I am very troubled by references in the Scottish Government response to “these continued calls”, without any specification and “the economic and cultural fabric of our coastal communities”. Just whom are the Scottish Government listening to?

For more than a decade I’ve studied what’s going on around our shores, with increasing concern at how polarised things are. For example, at a meeting a few years ago, chaired by former MSP Michael Russell, I and a number of other members of Coastal Communities Network were accused by some attendees of being in the pay of unidentified American interests intent on wrecking the economy.

It’s also my experience that those who live on the coast but don’t work in fishing are regularly accused on social media of being middle class intruders, seeking to destroy the lifestyles of local people. In my view, that sits very badly in modern, multicultural Scotland. Not only this, it denies the reality on the shore front. The Scottish Government will have, I assume, figures for the numbers of actual workers in the fishing industry who hail from outside Scotland; I suspect it’s a substantial percentage. There are understood to be vessels currently tied up due to the shortage of foreign crew members.

Modern Scotland is desperately short of working age people, with an ongoing loss of young talent and an influx of incomers who are often ageing retirees notoriously outbidding for local homes. The answer, in my view, is not to denigrate those younger immigrants and immigrants who arrive with new ideas and skills.

Some years ago I attended, at Scottish Association for Marine Science (SAMS), a discussion hosted by Marine Scotland as part of their initiative to get the fishing industry to come up with its own plans, rather than imposing them from above. I watched in horror at, what I felt was a poisonous atmosphere between the very few creel fishers brave enough to attend and the representatives of the industrial sector. Sadly, it seems that solutions will need to be imposed from above, underlining that the

Scottish Government must listen carefully and impartially to all voices, including the weakest ones in terms of money and connections.

I'm not at all sure the Government are doing that.