

LLTNPA Board rejects the Loch Long fish farm planning application

Description

On Monday, at a special Board Meeting which I am informed last five hours, the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) voted 10 to 1 to reject the application to build an enormous fish farm in Loch Long. At last, a decision worthy of a National Park!

Having written a post the day before explaining how the planning application appeared to mark a change in direction by the LLTNPA, with Planning Officers doing their best to uphold the Park's planning policies rather than undermining them ([see here](#)), I was slightly concerned the LLTNPA Board might get cold feet because of the risks of a legal challenge. Indeed, a good lawyer could have a field day looking at past planning reports and contrasting what was said in them with what was said in the Loch Long Committee Report. But if the developers, Loch Long Salmon, are considering an appeal they would be wise to think very carefully. The problem is not the LLTNPA's grounds for rejecting the Loch Long planning application, but the dodgy grounds the LLTNPA has given for approving various planning applications in the past. such as the Cononish Gold Mine and Hunter Foundation Leadership Centre at Ross Priory. Unfortunately, it has been almost impossible to challenge those decisions because there is no right of appeal by objectors (third parties) in Scotland, only developers are allowed to do that.

This was the second LLTNPA meeting in a row where attendance by Board Members has been poor (11 out of 17) but the local elected member for the area, Shonny Paterson, had to excuse himself having previously commented on the application in public. I have been unable to find out whether Mr Paterson, who is also a local councillor, had spoken for or against the application. But whichever is the case, it is wrong that locally elected representatives can be prevented from contributing to the decision-making process where they have expressed an opinion. We need more democracy in the planning system, not less. In that respect it was a good thing the decision on Monday was not unanimous.

Two other interesting things have emerged from discussions with one of the people who observed the meeting.

The first was that Board Members raised further questions about the application which were not fully covered in the Committee Report. For example, although Loch Long Salmon claim 85% of the salmon faeces would be pumped out of the enclosures, that still leaves 15% that would enter the sea-loch. That might not sound too bad but because of the enormous size of the proposed fish farm it would come to something like 600 tons of waste every nine months. What is incredible is that the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, which is responsible for water quality, never objected. These fishfarms also raise significant animal welfare issues which are even more pertinent in our National Parks which should be promoting the wild, not industrial scale farming.

The second point was about local communities. Loch Voil Community Council had initially supported the application but this caused so much disagreement in the local community that new people have been elected onto the community council and the original comments withdrawn. Democracy at work. Unfortunately while locally elected members involved in planning decisions are muzzled from talking

about planning applications, developers are allowed to offer local communities and others benefits as part of proposed developments. While ostensibly these cannot be treated as reasons for refusing or rejecting an application, they are used to influence local opinion. I am told that when the locally elected LLTNPA member for Balloch, Sid Perrie, asked at the meeting whether the £100k Long Long Salmon had offered for the next twenty years had influenced local opinion in Arrochar he was cheered.

Local communities in our National Parks need high quality investment that protects the natural environment and creates jobs, not bribes.

All these issues about the Loch Long application are pertinent to the Flamingo Land application at Balloch about which more soon.

Below is the news release the LLTNPA issued after the meeting:

[Statement on Loch Long Fish Farm planning application](#)

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