

# Anger over plans for salmon farm on Isle of Arran

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Lochranza residents fear that the facility will ruin the area's natural beauty

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Plans for one of the UK's largest salmon farms are being opposed because of fears that it will harm a picturesque holiday destination.

The Scottish Salmon Company (SSC) has lodged plans to build on the northern tip of the Isle of Arran.

The farm, at Millstone Point near the coastal village of Lochranza, would be spread over 240 acres, equivalent to 135 football pitches, 200 metres off the coast. It would be more than twice the size of most salmon farms, consisting of 20 cages capable of producing 5,000 tonnes of salmon a year. It is set to create ten full-time jobs.

Planning documents submitted to North Ayrshire council also reveal that the SSC has applied to install 32 acoustic deterrent devices, which send out high-pitched soundwaves to scare off seals that try to break into the cages.

Island residents argue the farm will damage the environment and the area's outstanding natural beauty that attracts about 400,000 people each year. Tourism is worth £60 million a year.

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They also fear that the farm could generate sewage in the sea equivalent to a town of up to 66,000 people and that the acoustic deterrents will scare porpoises and dolphins.

More than 243 objections to the plans have been received, including one from Scottish Natural Heritage, the government conservation agency.

Paul Chandler, executive director of Community of Arran Seabed Trust, said: “It’s in a national scenic area, it’s the wrong kind of development in the wrong area. There will be noise impact, visual impact and pollution.”

One resident’s submission said: “The Scottish Salmon Company’s primary concern is that of its shareholders. I do not believe the best interests of the Arran community are being served by this proposal. Arran’s economy is heavily dependent on tourism: the proposed salmon farm is totally at odds with the main reason visitors flock to Arran each year.”

The resident added that the farm would be an eyesore on an unspoilt stretch of Arran’s coastline and raised concerns about diseases spreading from farmed to wild salmon.

A petition set up by another resident, Russ Cheshire, has attracted more than 7,000 signatures. The petition says: “The proposal by the Scottish Salmon Company for a new and larger site off the northeast coast of Arran will not only spoil the enjoyment of a previously undeveloped part of the island, but also disturb the native wildlife such as otters, seals, porpoises and basking sharks.”

Scottish National Heritage said that the site threatened the migration route of wild Atlantic salmon spawning in the River Endrick, which is legally protected by a special area of conservation, because it will attract parasitical sea lice.

The SSC, which was recently purchased by the Faroe Islands aquaculture giant Bakkafrost, said: “The environment and health of our fish are fundamental and site location is important. Selection is a rigorous process. [It] has been carefully designed in such a way to ensure that environmental effects have been minimised through the use of innovative technology and enhanced best practice management measures. No significant effects on the natural heritage environment have been identified.”

The company stressed that it would generate £1 million for the local economy and said that many of the environmental concerns had been answered in its application.