

**Scottish Government (SG)
Task and Finish Group Meeting
Monday 13th of December 2021**

1. Attendees:

Name	Initials	Business Area
[redacted]	[redacted]	Whiteshore Cockles Ltd (WCL)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (CnES)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Scottish Government (SG)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Scottish Government (SG)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Scottish Government (SG)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Scottish Government (SG)
[redacted]	[redacted]	Marine Scotland

2. Welcome and Introductions

- No Animal and Plant Health Agency staff were present due to the current Bird Flu situation.

3. Update from Whiteshore Cockles Ltd (WCL)

- [redacted] informed the group that work on the site was almost 95% complete.
- Electrical work including the installation of the control panel is complete.
- The Bio Mass Boiler is scheduled to be commissioned by the start of February 2022 with Inspection at the end of February 2022.
- All plant machinery will be in place by the end of February 2022.
- Work began on submitting the application for a Pollution Prevention and Control (PPC) Permit Part A two years ago, unfortunately this process was not completed to an adequate standard resulting in WCL hiring a second consultant to take over the application process.
- The new consultant has been working closely with SEPA over the past several months and regular meetings have been taking place between the two parties to help ensure the application is of the appropriate standard.
- WCL are hopeful that the PPC Permit Part A application will be submitted to SEPA by the end of January 2022.

4. Background to the Task and Finish Group

- Following compliance to the European Commission, we stopped farmed salmon from using the Animal By-Products (ABP) remote area derogation on 1 January 2016.
- This meant farmed ABP fish waste would not be able to be disposed of via landfill.
- Approved ABP disposal routes needed to be established and used.
- However, 2 derogations were granted to continue burial of ABP fish waste.
 - Shetland
 - WCL
- Both were for 6 months. Shetland completed works within timeline but the fish waste dryer at WCL is still delayed to this day.
- Moving to the Task & Finish Group, SG received complaints via Council back in March of this year.
- We relayed this information to the Cabinet Secretary. She stated situation could not continue and action must be taken to resolve complaints.
- New burial conditions drafted where Group feels official controls can be applied and monitored to WCL.

5. Burial Conditions

- **[redacted]** started off the discussion regarding the burial conditions by reiterating that overall this project is positive for moving the aquaculture industry towards a more sustainable future.
- **[redacted]** also noted that the SG supports this project but we do need to stop burying fish ASAP.
- **[redacted]** explained to the meeting that the initial project for the drier system was based on tonnage from the Southern Isles only.
- The fish companies in Lewis and Harris approached WCL to ask if they could take fish waste from them as well.
- This resulted in a large re-design of the plans, which trebled the size of the plant and the overall cost and also required a PPC Permit Part A from SEPA. This has resulted in a much longer timescale for completion.
- **[redacted]** asked what was a realistic timescale for PPC Permit Part A approval.
- **[redacted]** informed the group that a minimum of 4 months would be required from application submission but in most cases it would take longer than that.
- Normally more clarification is required on certain points, additional equipment, alternating plans, Statutory Instruments and advertising mean a timescale between six months and a year is more likely.
- The possibility of using the site from March next year whilst the PPC Permit Part A application was being processed was discussed between **[redacted]** and **[redacted]**.
- **[redacted]** informed the group that CnES would not be in a position to monitor the site or carry out inspections in the future but reiterated concerns regarding the smells coming from WCL.

6. Proposed Derogation Conditions.

1. No burial above ground (no bunded pits).

- [redacted] burial above ground is not permitted at all and should not be happening.
- [redacted] explained that the bunding at the top of the pits are used to support seagull nets.

2. Weekly list of morts detailing daily tonnage and origin sites to be emailed to CNES.

- [redacted] described the record keeping process at WCL including how a Waste Transfer Document accompanies every load received which are then kept at the site office.
- The group was also informed that a daily log is also stored which covers all loads received and their origins.

3. No pits left uncovered overnight, if pit has capacity left then predator net is firmly secured over the site – records and daily time stamped photographic evidence to be kept.

- This requirement was in the original method statement and [redacted] agreed that this would be done including photographic evidence.

4. Animal by-product waste from aquaculture to be buried within 4 hours on arriving at site.

- [redacted] explained that during the months between March and October this will be achievable.
- During the winter months however sometimes the loads do not arrive from Skye/Harris until after 4 o'clock when it is dark. In this instance the consignments are sealed in containers, disinfected, stored overnight and buried first thing the next morning.

5. Skips to be cleaned and disinfected immediately on emptying in accordance with cleaning schedule agreed in advance with competent authority.

- [redacted] assured the group that this was already standard procedure and would continue in the future.

6. Only animal by-product waste from aquaculture from finfish farms operated by authorised Aquaculture Production Businesses and within the Western Isles Council planning authority area is received.

- [redacted] insisted that this was already the case and guaranteed that no fish morts that are not under the derogation would be getting buried at WCL.

7. Any disposal of animal by-product waste from aquaculture above background levels (event mortality) have to be pre-notified to Western Isles Council and the Scottish Government with quantities, origin location and disposal plan.

- [redacted] agreed to the above and explained that during the winter months a lot of the sites that use WCL are empty so he was not expecting much fish mort movement between now and April.

8. To end on 31/03/22 – to be debated.

- If the site was not operational by the 31 March 2022 what are the options?
- The stopping of the burial of fish waste was discussed.
- [redacted] explained that there is no other easy way to get the fish waste of the Island due to such circumstances as poor weather and lack of transport options.
- [redacted] also noted to the group that this could cause a major environmental problem on the island.
- [redacted] pointed out that two months ago there was 11 pits counted, 4 were sealed but 7 were left open where visible brown/dirty water could be seen lying on the top. This is a major cause of the smell which results in complaints being received by the Council from local residents.
- Covering the open pits with sand was discussed however [redacted] pointed out that the sand would sink to the bottom of the pits resulting in an overflow.
- [redacted] also raised concerns of capacity at the site which [redacted] alleviated by suggesting the use of land to the south.

9. The site will be subject to a weekly unannounced inspection.

- [redacted] informed the group that WCL were happy to facilitate any form of visits but suggested that due to current lack of activity at the site they may not be worthwhile.
- [redacted] also requested “announced” inspections due to current Covid restrictions and low number of staff being utilised at the site.
- [redacted] confirmed that CnES were not currently in a position to carry out inspections on the site.
- [redacted] suggested inspections carried out independently.
- [redacted] also noted that he has two companies ready to utilise any by-products produced by the new drier system when operational.

- An application for an approval under Animal By-Products (Enforcement) (Scotland) Regulations 2013 has also been submitted but requires the PPC Permit Part A to be in place before it can be progressed further.
- [redacted] noted the scale of this problem and how everyone in the group is working towards finding a satisfactory outcome for all concerned.
- [redacted] also acknowledged the time frames involved and discussed the possibility of allowing the site to start operating pending PPC Permit Part A.

6. Next Steps/Actions

- It was agreed by the group that once the plant is fully operational all burying of fish waste must cease immediately.
- [redacted] insisted that WCL must adhere to the original method statement which RT agreed too.
- SG to liase with CnES regarding official supervision.
- [redacted] to discuss the wording required in the new derogation with SGLD.
- [redacted] to also update the relevant Ministers and await feedback on derogation conditions.