

PENTLAND FIRTH AND ORKNEY WATERS MARINE SPATIAL PLAN: PLANNING ISSUES AND OPTIONS PAPER

Consultation Response: Colin Kirkpatrick



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Pilot Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters Marine Spatial Plan. Planning Issues and Options and draft Environmental Report Consultation

Dear Sir / Madam

I attended the recent Marine Spatial Plan workshop in Kirkwall and would like to add the following points.

1) It was generally agreed at our table that everyone is suffering from consultation fatigue, especially the few people who have to engage voluntarily on behalf of community organisations and local groups. We also came to the conclusion that there was a complete mistrust locally after repeated local consultations had effectively ignored many well known concerns. I notice a new raft of consultations are currently out with regard to marine and country planning and there is a feeling that they exist not to protect our land and seascape any more but to allow politically motivated, big business growth in previously “no go” areas.

2) What is considered to be justifiable when it comes to allowing development in previously undeveloped and wild areas of coastline seems to now rest on phrases like “in the national interest” and again this seems to put a national political agenda in higher priority than local cultural concerns. This needs to be addressed especially with regard to Orkney’s unique cultural identity where we are Orcadian first and Scottish only second. Along with Shetland, Orkney is the least “Scottish” of all the island groups therefore we also have our own version of “national interest” it being “Orcadian interest” !

3) In respect to the above Cultural identity and what it means to be Orcadian is informed by where you were brought up and what you associate with being Orcadian. I have a part time career as a contemporary visual artist and am heavily involved in Orkney’s cultural sector. I completely associate Orkneys wild western coastline with my identity as an islander and would hate to see - as yet - unproven technology strewn it’s length and breadth as is already proposed.

Therefore I feel very strongly that cultural identity, quality of life and general well being need to be considered separately and wherever possible within the document.

4) To many local artists and Orkney's largely unrepresented creative sector the undeveloped western coastline of the mainland of Orkney epitomises a unique creative cultural heritage in particular. In its undeveloped state it has been an inspiration to generations of globally recognised writers and internationally exhibited artists. All these people have to make a living and it is therefore an existing economic resource, crucially in its current "undeveloped" state. This sort of creative economy remains a great model of true sustainable development in an island community. In the same sense tourism and its huge influence on the Orkney economy relies on visitors wanting to come to experience this place. Time and again I am informed by visitors to Orkney (that actually spend more than a day here) that one of the main reasons for coming here is their expectation and desire to see unspoiled "island" views and nature in the "wild" which is something they are not disappointed by. Again this is part of an existing economic resource which is eminently sustainable for future generations. Therefore it needs to be quantified and properly assessed in its current state as to its future importance to a truly long term sustainable Orkney.

5) Orkney currently, despite the recession, has one of the lowest unemployment figures in the country. Do we really want to see 4000 new jobs in Orkney by developing Marine Energy to its biggest projected conclusion as has recently been claimed. That would mean, along with employees partners and family's, a population increase of nearly a third !! What effect would that have on our quality of life, well being and the Orkney identity ? Socio economic assessment has to look at the negative as well as the nationally perceived positive.

6) I hold (value) my environment and culture in the highest regard : it makes me who I am. Recent public surveys have found Orcadians and Shetlanders to be some of the happiest people in the country. This is no accident – we do enjoy a fine balance between development and nature at the moment. This could easily be destroyed. So- called future large scale economic growth shall not necessarily benefit Orkney in the long term. However I am confident that Orkney shall survive and continue to thrive if none of this development goes ahead. Can any consultant prove otherwise ?

Yours sincerely

Colin Kirkpatrick