

Noeleen Roche

Subject: FW: Donegal Bay - Killybegs Harbour

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Sent: 12th January 2017 15:37

To: Licensing Staff

Subject: Donegal Bay - Killybegs Harbour

To follow: Under letterhead:

Donegal Bay Sub Aqua Club Search & Recovery Unit
Killymard Church
Donegal Town
Co Donegal

12th January 2017

Environmental Protection Authority

To Whom It May Concern

We represent a group of scuba divers based in Donegal Town and Dive in Donegal Bay and have done so for over 25 years. We are members of Irish Water Council of Ireland which represents divers throughout the Island.

We are fortunate to have worldclass dive sites here in Donegal - we dive from ie Killybegs Harbour, St John's Point, along the cliffs near Sliabh League, including a very popular dive site in the area of Carrigeen head, piers such as Cassan Sound, Portnacross etc. These sites are visited by many divers throughout the Island of Ireland including the Garda Siochana divers who train at Malin Beg and St John's Point every year. This brings Tourism to our county.

This sport enjoys the natural beauty of our natural habitat that other county's don't necessarily enjoy (waters off the North West Coast of Ireland some of the clearest in Europe) for other reasons such as silt dumping on the East Coast ie Dublin Bay. The muddy waters make it impossible visibility wise but more importantly, the natural habitat and species are in danger.

We have been made aware through the local media that Killybegs Harbour will be dredged during the coming months to clear the area for a proposed pier extension at Smooth Point.

Killybegs Harbour was dredged a couple of years ago, the dumping site as Option A in the current proposal, it is considered that and the red tide algae resulted in the plantlife suffering. We were witness to this decline in plantlife and the absence of a lot of fish etc. It was a sorrowful experience for divers that season to see all types of marine life dying and everyone ineffectual to do anything. The plantlife is only coming back to full growth and the knock-on effect the fish getting bigger.

If the silt drifts and destroys the plankton, the knock on effect will endanger the sealife crabs, lobsters and fish and the myriad of other species, urchins, starfish, sea cucumbers, sea squirts and sponges, hydroids, anemones, corals and jellyfish that live on reefs, rocks and crevices including sand and muddy bottoms, All of which feature off the coast of Donegal. The knock on effect of that, will loose the dolphins, basking sharks and whales from the bay that we have enjoyed as Divers along with communities in Donegal and Tourism has benefited over the last couple of years. The impact on marine life is a real concern.

Being based in Donegal, Tourism and Fishing are two of our industries that a lot of us divers work in, the Wild Atlantic Way being promoted by Failte Ireland and our communities are being able to enjoy the growth in Tourism.

There are 3 proposed dump sites on the bay A. 54° 33.70'N, 8°37.30'W, and site B.54°32.30'N, 8°43.90'W, are too close to the shoreline. Site C. 54°34.40'N, 9°05.00'W would be a safer option for Donegal Bay as it is in an area where the tides are stronger and better able to disperse the spoil.

We are wondering if all options have been fully considered, for example, has landfill been fully explored or an option for a mix of both. It would be important to ensure that contaminated materials are not dumped at sea which have the potential to enter the food-chain and hence a risk to human health.

If there is no other alternative we are writing to you to please consider looking at Site C (the furthest from land and less likely to impact negatively on inshore marine life) when looking at a licence for dumping this silt/gravel/rocks in Donegal Bay for Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

We are writing to ask you to consider all this when issuing a licence for dumping in Donegal Bay to the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine.

Yours sincerely

John J Staunton
Chairman

Margaret Storey
Secretary

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