

Re: Marine Scotland Presentation Arran 29th October.

Dear Sirs,

Having attended the above presentation I would be grateful if you would take the time to consider the following personal thoughts in relation to the consultation.

With the exception of the representative for the fishing industry I was probably in a minority in the audience in not being an island resident but a visitor having travelled from West Yorkshire to attend.

I have been an annual visitor to the island since my childhood in the early 1960s. An early memory is of ferry journeys surrounded by numerous fishing vessels, the ferry often having to adjust course to safely negotiate around their paths. More vivid though is the memory of the excitement of hiring a rowing boat and hand lines, rowing out into the bays at Brodick, Lamlash and Whiting bay and pitting our wits against the fish below us. There never seemed to be a shortage of catches, my father suggesting that we return the smaller ones to let them grow a bit, after all we could return next year and catch them again.

These fishing trips continued into adulthood but over the years, despite many hours out in the bays, the catches declined and increasingly we were faced with the disappointment of returning to shore with nothing. Now either the fish had become very adept at recognising the threat or they had simply gone. My own children although enjoying the thrill of being out on a boat found it very hard to believe my tales from the past.

Although I never took part in any of the fishing festivals we did get to see boats returning for weigh ins, hard to believe so many fish could be caught in a single day, but now there are no festivals as it seems there are no fish. Sustainability appears to be a key word used in these proposals for the future, which suggests sustainability wasn't really in the thoughts of those who are presumably responsible for the state of the seas around the Clyde now, indeed if sustainability had been built into the methods of harvesting the seas over the past decades would there be any need for MPAs, No Take Zones and the like now. It was emphasised that fishermen have a legal right to fish where and how they do, no mention of any moral obligations whilst doing so. Did those fishermen I saw as a child simply fish themselves out of a job and livelihood, it would seem that there are ex-fishermen who accept that this was probably the case. On the other hand there are members of the fishing industry who deny any responsibility, even suggesting that scientific evidence proves nothing, and those who conduct their research below water are probably manipulating their findings simply to paint a bleak picture. Of course not being able to get below the water to see the evidence first hand I have no means of knowing who is right, perhaps the fish are still there, having simply become more intelligent than those at the helms of the boats, unlikely, but a nice thought though.

Thor Hyerdahl the naturalist and explorer is attributed with suggesting that man is destroying nature, he is killing off the very things that keep him alive. Despite considerable opposition from some quarters it seems to me that, for the benefit of everyone connected with the sea, COAST and the wider community on Arran are simply trying to prove him wrong. I hope they are given the opportunity to succeed.

Yours,

Graham Wood.