

Social license for UK Seaweed Farming

MEASURES FOR DEVELOPING SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY

Suzannah-Lynn (Suzi) Billing, Laura Ferguson, Sofia Franco & Adam Hughes -
Scottish Association for Marine Science
Mollie Gupta & Piers Hart - World Wildlife Fund UK

Please visit our website: <https://readymag.com/u1892175579/4217590/>

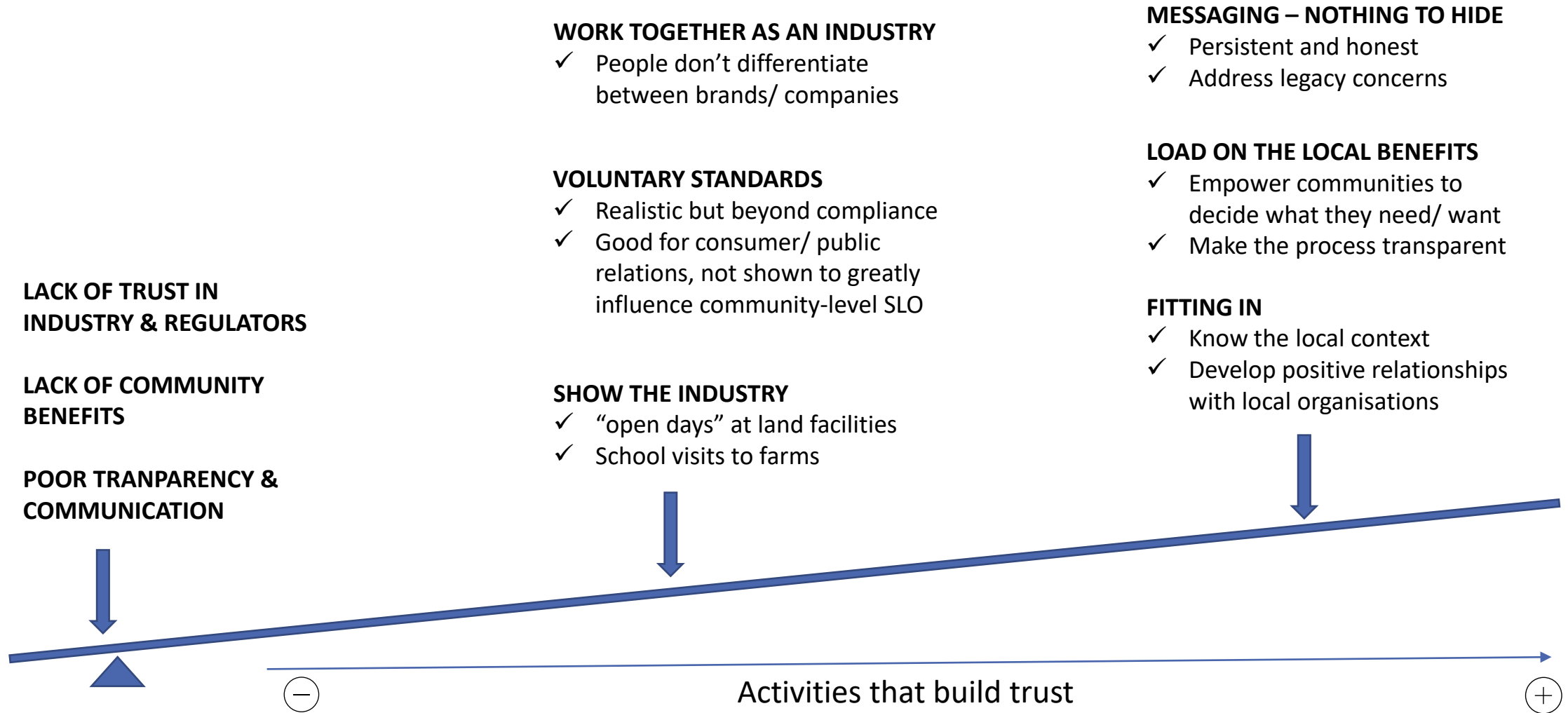


What is social license to operate?



- Industry-coined term
- Appropriate licenses
- Economically lucrative
- Why were they still experiencing disruptive local and national social opposition?

Social license to operate for aquaculture



Why does social license for seaweed farming, matter?

- General public has limited knowledge
- Knowledge gaps are filled with experiences from other industries
- Local scepticism
- Fit to place and values of local communities
- Scale is a challenge

change.org Start a petition Browse Subscription

Q Log in

Do not allow mechanical kelp dredging in Scottish Waters.



25,293 have signed. Let's get to 35,000!



 Wan Rozaman Awang signed 11 hours ago

 Tania Smith signed 13 hours ago

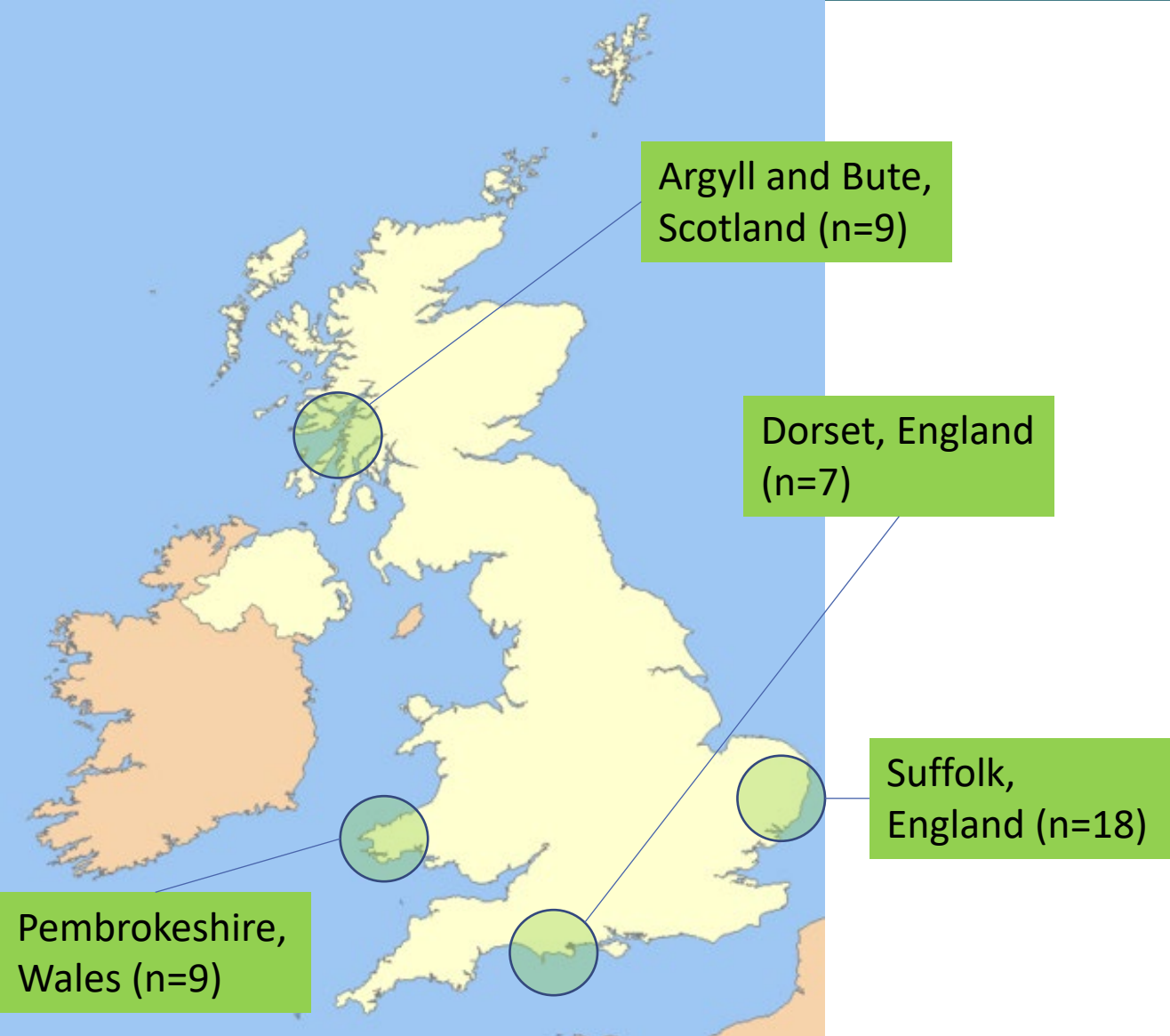
 Stop Mechanical Kelp Dredging started this petition to Scottish Cabinet Secretary for the Environment Roseanna Cunningham

Kelp dredging is currently **not allowed** in Scotland. A company called Marine Biopolymers seek to change that, and have submitted a scoping report to Marine Scotland with a view to gaining permission to dredge over a large area of Scotland's West Coast where they say there could be a 'Significant' Kelp dredge industry.

The importance of our wild kelp beds cannot be overstated.

Example of a grass-roots campaign against an extractive industry; kelp dredging. Source: Change.org 2019

Studying the factors that might lead to social license for seaweed farming



- “Null” case study
 - 18 exploratory qualitative interviews
- Three “aquaculture” case studies
 - Q-method approach
 - 9 initial interviews
 - 16 q-method interviews.

Community perspectives from areas without aquaculture



"I think it's a fairly alien concept to most people. Most people don't really think about seaweed as something that can be cultivated."
– Civil Society

"Clear presentation of objective factual information, in a manner appropriate to the target audience, is the best way to allow stakeholders to make informed decisions." - Fisheries

- Associations with other marine industries
- Desire for more information
- Strong request for robust planning

Groupings of views on social license to operate for seaweed farming

Group 1: Prioritising environmental sustainability and a variety of development models and scales

- ✓ Perceived environmental sustainability
- ✓ Social and political legitimacy
- ✓ Economic feasibility

Stakeholders from:

Government & Regulation, Aquaculture (Salmon and Seaweed), and Academia in Scotland and Wales



Group 2: Prioritising smaller scales, local social benefits and environmental sustainability

- ✓ Perceived environmental sustainability
- ✓ Social and political legitimacy
- ✓ Understanding socio-economic contexts

Stakeholders from:

Aquaculture (seaweed cultivators) and Civil Society (NGO) in Scotland and Wales

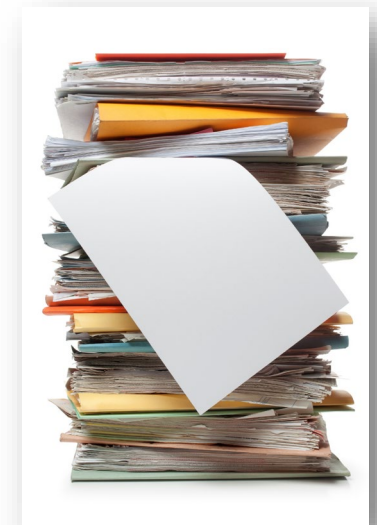


Group 3: Prioritising regulation and business development

- ✓ Trust in regulations and regulators
- ✓ Economic feasibility

Stakeholders from:

Fisheries and Civil Society in Wales and England



What makes a seaweed farm acceptable?

- **Environmental sustainability**
- Smaller scales
- Communication and meaningful engagement
- National, regional or local ownership models
- Monitoring, adaptation, and regulation



What can seaweed farmers do to foster social license?



- ✓ Build a context-specific approach to site selection
- ✓ Engage with local communities and relevant stakeholders
- ✓ Adapt farming practices towards sustainability
- ✓ Develop and contribute to ocean literacy activities
- ✓ Communicate with industry bodies and regulatory agencies



Thanks!

With special thanks to all of the participants that freely contributed their time and expertise to this work.



Our website is here: <https://readymag.com/u1892175579/4217590/>

The full study report is available on the website and here: <https://www.sams.ac.uk/science/projects/sloseafarming/>

The original “Handbook for Social License to Operate for Seaweed Cultivation” is available here:
[https://www.sams.ac.uk/t4-media/sams/pdf/publications/Handbook-on-Social-License-to-Operate-for-Seaweed-Cultivationv4\(2\).pdf](https://www.sams.ac.uk/t4-media/sams/pdf/publications/Handbook-on-Social-License-to-Operate-for-Seaweed-Cultivationv4(2).pdf)