



To: Scottish Ministers
Cc: Highland Council, Fire Scotland, NHS Scotland, Police Scotland, Maritime & Coastguard Agency, Crown Estate Scotland, Northern Lighthouse Board, SEPA & Nature Scotland
From: Scamon Scotland
Date: 18 November 2022
Subject: Unanswered Questions re. “Explosive” Hydrogen Sulphide Toxic Gases Off Portree

Scamon Scotland (formerly Scottish Salmon Watch) is alarmed to read damning documents disclosed by the Scottish Government on how Hydrogen Sulphide toxic gases were detected at 55,000 ppm (within the “explosive range”) at a sunken salmon feed barge in Loch Portree close to Portree Harbour yet inexplicably failed to issue a public warning or alert tourists, kayakers, swimmers, cruise liners, coastal path users, residents and divers to the risks of explosion:

[Bakkafrost is Dead in Water in Scotland - "Explosive" FOI Disclosure Lifts Lid on Hazardous Scottish Salmon!](#)

Hydrogen Sulfide

CAS RN: 7783-06-4

Spill Location: 57.4209917099168,-6.15139257815114 Spill Size: Large Time of Day: Day
First ISOLATE 400 m in all directions, then PROTECT downwind 2.2 km ENE



The [document dump on 11 November 2022](#) – initially [refused by the Scottish Government on 20 September 2022](#) who [subsequently apologized on 8 November 2022 for failing to follow FOI disclosure rules](#) – raises serious questions with respect to public accountability and the actions (or more appropriately the lack of them) of government officials and Bakkafrost Scotland ([known as The Scottish Salmon Company until June 2022](#)).

In reading the [Scottish Government's belated 83-page FOI disclosure](#) (and more disclosures from other agencies are in the pipeline) it becomes painfully clear from the moment the salmon feed barge sank at the Portree salmon farm during Storm Arwen on 26 November 2021 that various government agencies acted to protect the commercial interests of a [Norwegian/Faroese salmon farming company](#) ahead of protecting public health and the marine environment.

The whole sorry saga has played out via a series of cock ups and cover ups. Safety was sacrificed for secrecy. That the economic interests of a foreign-owned salmon farming company rode roughshod over everything else is certainly nothing new but this case study illustrates how the [\\$almafia](#) has captured, co-opted and corrupted government officials. It stinks of rotten eggs.

Moreover, there will plenty more dirt to come out in the FOI wash. It appears that the Gael Force feed barge – [delivered to The Scottish Salmon Company in September 2018](#) and [launched at the Portree site in March 2019](#) – is still rotting on the bottom of Loch Portree. If the feed barge is not lifting within the next 10 days the salvage operation requires a licence (the [FOI documents](#) show that a licence is required if a feed barge is not salvaged within a year of a sinking) with the costs and consequences continuing to rise.

\$cottish \$camon therefore calls on the Scottish Government to investigate the multi-agency handling of the Portree feed barge sinking including the aborted salvage, emergency response, lack of public warning, venting of the “explosive” gases and the ongoing salvage operation. \$camon \$cotland urges the Scottish Government to learn lessons from this clusterfuck and publish recommendations to avert similar problems in the future.

This issue clearly warrants high-level government attention. “The Secretary of State’s Representative for Maritime Salvage and Intervention (SOSREP) has been engaged in the process from the outset and is also monitoring the recovery operation,” [wrote the Maritime & Coastguard Agency in a letter to \\$camon \\$cotland dated 1 November 2022](#).

If Bakkafrost cannot be sanctioned then hopefully the [Norwegian/Faroese company](#) can be reminded of their responsibilities to protect public safety and the marine environment. The [heavily redacted FOI disclosure by the Scottish Government \(11 November 2022\)](#) makes it impossible to identify individuals who aided and abetted Bakkafrost to keep a lid on the “explosive” problem but an investigation would perhaps remind civil servants that their employer is ultimately the taxpaying public in the UK not [shareholders in Norway and the Faroe Islands](#).

\$camon \$cotland will also be writing to the Norwegian Government – as the largest shareholder in Bakkafrost – to [update them on the unethical and irresponsible nature of their investment](#).

The Portree feed barge sinking is certainly not the first of its kind in Scotland – a [Mowi feed barge sank off Lochboisdale in 2019](#) and a [Grieg Seafood feed barge sank in Loch Snizort in 2017](#). It is not clear if [Salmon Scotland's 'Code of Good Practice for Scottish Finfish Aquaculture'](#) includes best practice with respect to the salvage of feed barges. Even if it does (and \$camon \$cotland cannot readily find any reference), Bakkafrost’s decision to let the feed barge to rot on the bottom of Loch Portree is a shining example of worst not best practice.

Instead of pumping ca. 350 tonnes of feed out of the barge – that safer option was referred to in the [FOI disclosure by the Scottish Government](#) as “extremely expensive” –Bakkafrost decided to keep farming salmon above the leaking feed barge. It is not perfectly clear from the [FOI disclosure](#) but it seems that Bakkafrost was more interested in checking what their insurance company AON in Glasgow covered than in ensuring public safety and protecting the environment (a FOI review request has also been filed by SEPA to uncover more documents on the environmental front).

Reading the [email disclosures from December 2021](#) an observer cannot escape the conclusion that Bakkafrost was attempting to gain a hefty insurance payout for pumping out the feed and wanted the enforcement authority (SEPA) to force Bakkafrost to “remove the contamination” (i.e. the feed):

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@aon.co.uk>
Sent: 06 December 2021 16:26
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@aon.co.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@aon.co.uk>
Subject: Portree

Hi [redacted]

Assuming the PL policy is the right home noting loss circumstances the policy defines clean up as;

means the cost of Remediation incurred by the Insured (or for which it is legally liable) as required by any Enforcing Authority but shall not include the costs of achieving any improvement or alteration in the condition of the land the atmosphere or any watercourse or body of water beyond that required under any relevant and applicable law or statutory enactment at the time Remediation commences It shall include the costs reasonably and necessarily incurred by the Insured or for which it is legally liable to curtail or minimise Pollution or Contamination once it has occurred to prevent further harm being caused but only to the extent required by any Enforcing Authority

I would emphasise required by and therefore your ability to evidence this point.

Cheers

[redacted] | BA ACII CIP
[redacted]
Aon
60 York Street | Glasgow | G2 8JX
[redacted]
[redacted]@aon.co.uk

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Sent: 06 December 2021 17:02
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>
Subject: FW: Portree

[redacted] [redacted]

I take it when the feed breaks down if there is any leakage of marine oils from the feed this would constitute pollution and we are required by an enforcing authority to contain and remove the contamination? Feel free to call me if required. The feed has started to show signs of breaking down and I have arranged for an environmental response vessel to mitigate any leaks before we seal the barge. But the cost is significant and we are just checking with our insurance see below email from them.

I know this is probably a daft question sorry.

Regards

[redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>
Sent: 07 December 2021 12:01
To: '[redacted]' <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk> Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; HQ_SOSRep <HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk>; 'MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot' <MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Portree

Good morning [redacted],

Thank you for taking my call.

As discussed, you mentioned that the feed had been seen by the divers as leaking from the barge and there is now a 'film' on the sea surface.

We appreciate the efforts that have been made so far to mitigate any environmental impact. It was expected the feed would start to decompose and begin to leech into the marine environment, but obviously we weren't sure exactly when this would happen. As you have advised there is now a 'film' on the sea surface, this would seem to suggest there is a higher level of nutrient in the water column, which is one of the concerns the environmental agencies had. I have copied into this email Marine Scotland, who are the Chair of the Scottish Environment Group so they are aware of this update.

You have advised that it is still your intention to seal the feed silos, whilst continuing to look at full barge recovery. Recognising the weather warnings in place for the next 24 hours, and the time of year, it's expected the sealing of the silos could take a few days / weeks due to safety concerns.

You advised you were in direct contact with SEPA who are due to get back to you regarding any regulatory instruction in terms of feed recovery / removal to assist with the insurance question noted below.

You also advised Briggs Marine had developed a pollution response plan. If you would be able to send myself and those in copy, a copy of this plan, we will be able to provide you with any further advice and / or seek any clarification. If you are also able to send a copy of any images of the 'film' on the surface, that would be appreciated. Once you start to develop the recovery of the barge, please ensure those copied into your updates are kept appraised, so we can monitor the progress and pose any questions.

When it became clear that the answer to ‘the insurance question’ was not economically favourable, it appears that Bakkafrost took the commercial decision to carry on farming and put the salvage operation on hold.



How much feed contaminated the marine environment is unclear. An [email from MCA to Nature Scotland, Marine Scotland and SEPA on 8 December 2021](#) detailed photos showing the release of feed from the sunken silos:

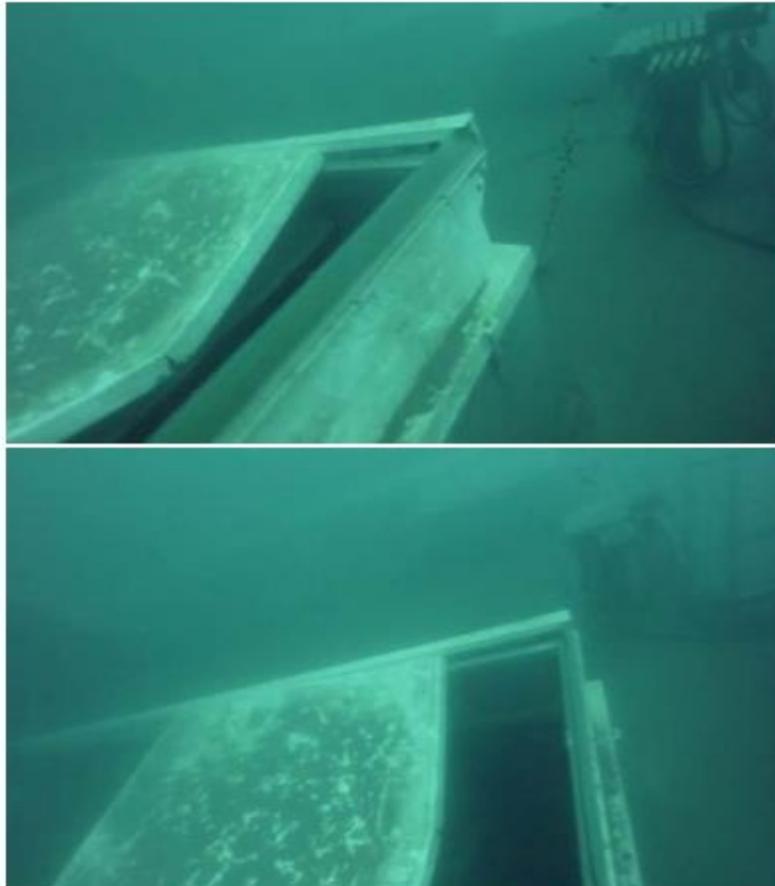
From: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>
Sent: 08 December 2021 09:27
To: marinepollution@nature.scot; MS SpillResponse; Emergency Planning;
scc@sepa.org.uk
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: FW: Portree Barge Incident Update 6/12/2021
[redacted]

Dear all

Yesterday (Tue) the divers recovered the final missing fuel cube, site confirmed that the fuel cube was recovered full.

There are some early signs of feed oils reaching the surface from one silo which is believed is the source. The observations were seen to surface directly above the site so far. The weather was fairly calm when this was observed so it will be good to see what they find onsite today. Site team will send photos of surface and an update on this.

See below photos of the release. On the first picture you can see the release coming from the feed silo and in the second faintly. This appears to be coming from one feed silo only at present. There are no photos from the surface as no one is on site due to the weather. They have said they will send these through ASAP once they get back out to site. There is no sign of hydrocarbons (fuel & Oil)



Bakkafrost's decision not to disclose the financial costs and significant risks to shareholders is arguably in breach of [disclosure/reporting rules via the Norwegian Securities Trading Act and the Oslo stock exchange's 'IR Code of Practice'](#) (the largest shareholder in Bakkafrost is the

[Norwegian Government as represented by Folketrygdfondet](#) and [Bakkafrost has been listed on the Oslo stock exchange since 2010](#)). This lack of transparency contrasts with [Grieg Seafood's decision in 2018 to report a £921,000 cost of salvage of a feed barge which sank in Loch Snizort on the Isle of Skye in 2017](#) and was [finally lifted in late 2021](#).



Feed barge sinking scuppers Grieg Shetland's Q1 profits

The costs associated with raising a sunken feed barge have caused a first-quarter loss for Grieg Seafood Shetland.

In fact, the sinking of Bakkafrost's barge off Portree on 26 November 2021 was only [reported publicly in a brief snippet in The Oban Times on 29 November 2021 on fallout from Storm Arwen](#) and even then The Oban Times did not name the exact site location (only naming The Scottish Salmon Company and Skye). The cover up continued throughout 2022 as the public remained unaware of the sunken feed barge let alone the build-up of "explosive gases".

The FOI disclosure by the Scottish Government (via a [letter dated 8 November 2022](#)) that the salvage company (Briggs Marine) is now embroiled in legal action with Bakkafrost – with Briggs Marine admitting to \$camon \$cotland that their departure on 26 August 2022 was due to a "commercial dispute regarding payment" – hardly inspires confidence.

Erica Skoukine (Briggs Marine)

8 Nov 2022, 10:57 GMT

Hi Don,

There was no issue with our services, the reason for our departure was due to a commercial dispute regarding payment.

Kindest regards

Erica



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

Statement: "Briggs Marine was awarded a contract by Bakkafrost Scotland to salvage the sunken feed barge & its cargo. Following a payment dispute with Bakkafrost, Briggs have demobilised from the site & legal proceedings have commenced" tinyurl.com/nw7t9wh2 @Folketrygdfo



Briggs Marine

10:28 AM - Nov 14, 2022 - Twitter Web App

Bakkafrost's actions – or lack of them – raise alarm bells and red flags. Surely the safest and most sensible decision would have been to clear the site of farmed salmon immediately over the Winter of 2021 (especially when there were signs of leakage from the feed barge under the Portree farm) and pump out the feed to prevent pollution and thereby eliminate public health risks from explosion?

Documents [published by Salmon Scotland](#) show that Bakkafrost [moved fish off their Outer Portree salmon in January 2022](#) yet [carried on farming at the Loch Portree \(Torvaig\) site until June 2022](#). Salmon Scotland has now asked Food Standards Scotland if there was any testing of farmed salmon - and shellfish in the vicinity of the Portree salmon farms - for contaminants. Farming above a sunken feed barge leaking explosive gases gives a whole new meaning to smoked and flame-grilled Scottish salmon.



Bakkafrost's decision – driven purely by economic interests and to profit [shareholders in Norway and the Faroe Islands](#) – precipitated the “explosive” problem first disclosed on 12 August 2022 (but suspected of being known by Bakkafrost much earlier). As Bakkafrost maximized profits and delivered farmed salmon to the market, toxic Hydrogen Sulphide gases built up over a period of over eight months under the Portree salmon farm reaching the explosive level of 55,000 ppm.

 **Don Staniford**
@TheGAAIA

EXPLOSIVE WARNING: "A gas sample was collected directly from the sunken barge & analysed by a Marine Chemist which provided the results of H₂S in concentrations of 55,000 ppm which puts the gas into explosive range" @ScottishEPA @ScotlandSalmon @MCA_media tinyurl.com/26twstuw

OFFICIAL

MARINE MASTERS

Portree, Scotland

For

Marine Masters
Simon Stevinstraat 3b
3284 WC Zuid Bejerland
T: +31686 813 413 (24/7)
info@marinemasters.nl

"SALMON FEEDER BARGE"

H₂S GAS PURGING



During the relief of the gas and oils from the silos it became apparent that the gases were toxic in composition with Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) and Methane (CH₄) detected. During diving operations, a gas sample was collected directly from the sunken barge itself, analysed by a Marine Chemist which provided the results of the presence of H₂S in concentrations of 55,000 ppm which puts the gas into explosive range

IntraFish Media and 9 others

9:51 AM · Nov 8, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Bakkafrost may not have intentionally meant to create a time-bomb off Portree but that was the inevitable consequence of leaving ca. 350 tonnes of feed stagnating in the sunken barge. Instead of defusing the feed problem back in November 2021, Bakkafrost chose to ignore it in the hope that it would be flushed away. If that's not corporate negligence then it's certainly a clear-cut case of piss-poor management. [Bakkafrost's recent job vacancy advert for a new marine site manager at Portree salmon farm](#) may be evidence of the need for management changes.

So when Bakkafrost [notified government agencies late on Friday afternoon on 12 August 2022](#) there was an explosion problem it was a time-bomb entirely of their own making. Bakkafrost is culpable and liable although the subsequent cover-up by government officials – including [elected officials at Highland Council](#) - who desperately attempted to keep a lid on the explosive story warrants further investigation too. The public surely has a right to know why there was a cover-up, who were responsible and when Bakkafrost first knew of the explosion risk.



Until the full facts are known and further FOI disclosures are published, the public will still be in the dark. When, for example, did Bakkafrost discover the level of dangerous Hydrogen Sulphide gases? The [Scottish Government's FOI disclosure](#) refers to the salvage operation by Briggs Marine planned for 'mid to late July' although there is a black hole in terms of email correspondence from May 2022 until August 2022.

A [FOI reply by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency dated 1 November 2022](#) stated that levels of Hydrogen Sulphide were identified "at the beginning of July 2022" but does not detail the exact levels:

At the beginning of July 2022, the initial preparation for recovery works was ongoing when levels of Hydrogen Sulphide were identified within the feed silos. It is believed that the natural decomposition of the fish feed was causing the production of the gas. Consequently, operations were halted while a technical solution to reduce the gas levels was sought. A number of multi-agency meetings involving the previously mentioned stakeholders, Local Councillors, Emergency Services and the NHS were convened to identify a solution and ensure public safety was maintained. An exclusion zone was put in place and a guard vessel was deployed to patrol the area.



Don Staniford
@TheGAAlA

"An exclusion zone was put in place & guard vessel was deployed to patrol the area" @MCA_media "The Secretary of State's Representative for Maritime Salvage has been engaged in the process from outset" tinyurl.com/hr5mnu8
Why no public warning?
@ScotlandSalmon @KateForbes



The Highland Council and 9 others

10:43 AM · Nov 8, 2022 · Twitter Web App

The [FOI disclosure from the Scottish Government](#) reveals that Marine Scotland emailed Nature Scotland on 29 August 2022 reporting that “preliminary diving work started in July 2022 where bubbles were observed during the relief of the gas and oils from the silos” and “it became apparent that the gases were toxic in composition with Hydrogen Sulphide and Methane”:

Preliminary diving work started in July 2022 where bubbles were observed during the relief of the gas and oils from the silos. It became apparent that the gases were toxic in composition with Hydrogen Sulphide and Methane. Air gas monitors have been placed in ten locations surrounding the site and remotely monitored 24 hours a day to allow for early warning of any large release. The incident is very much public health focused, with little environmental impact discussed.

As far as I'm aware; there has been no change to the barge condition and no increase in gas being released, however gas bubbles are still being observed coming up to the surface.

If Bakkafrost knew the “explosive” levels in July 2022 then why did it take them until mid-August 2022 to report them to various government agencies?

This [email from Bakkafrøst dated 5 August 2022](#) to SEPA, the Crown Estate, Briggs Marine, the Maritime & Coastguard Agency, the Northern Lighthouse Board, the Scottish Government, HM Coastguard and Highland Council refers to 'readings' but did not disclose exact levels:

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Sent: 05 August 2022 14:17
To: AHSH@sepa.org.uk; [redacted]@crownestate.scotland.com; [redacted] <[redacted]@briggsmarine.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_CounterPollution@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted]@briggsevenvironmental.com; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@nlb.org.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; navigation@nlb.org.uk;

[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted]@nlb.org.uk; [redacted] ([redacted])[redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; zone36@hmcg.gov.uk
Subject: Update From Barge Recovery works

All

As you are aware, from our ongoing correspondence with you, we have been carrying out lifting and fish feed removal works on the sunken feed barge at Portree

As previously advised and predicted we have readings and samples, from our contractor, that suggest that the feed remaining and sealed in the barge, has begun to naturally decompose and is producing gas. Our investigations to date would suggest that the gas is Hydrogen Sulphide. There also appears to be a small leakage of gas through the concrete wall of a feed silo. As a result of those investigations and to ensure that the issue is dealt with swiftly, we have taken the safety precaution of pausing operations, while our contractor and specialist advisors assess and determine the appropriate technical and safe operational solutions

Our advisors are making use of various risk management/guidance materials, including the internationally recognised '2020 Emergency Response Guidebook'

Given the nature and the scale of works undertaken to prepare for the recovery operation, we have put an exclusion zone in place and a Notice to Mariners has been issued for the site on that basis. We will now extend the active time period for the Notice to Mariners

Additional monitoring will be put in place as a priority, and our contractor and specialist advisers are expecting to update on readings and technical advice daily

We will provide a further update once the recommended course of action has been determined by our contractor and specialist advisers

Reference above to the '2020 Emergency Response Guidebook' certainly alludes to Bakkafrøst already being fully aware of the explosive nature of the sunken cargo off Portree. A '[Notice to Mariners' dated 5 August 2022 was published by WHAM](#) but the information failed to include any reports of "explosive" gases or any public warning to stay away from the area.

Bakkafrøst also failed to include Highland Council's Harbour Authority in their update prompting this [email dated 9 August 2022](#):

It's disappointing to note you have not included the Harbour Authority in your communications or consulted with us on the proposed exclusion zone.

Please provide us with a copy of your NoM and advise what impacts your works will have on other operations in the harbour.

Best Regards

[redacted]
[redacted]
Highland Council
Harbours HQ

When [Bakkafrost emailed stakeholders late on Friday afternoon on 12 August 2022](#) they now included Highland Council's Harbour Authority as well as Fire Scotland:

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Sent: 12 August 2022 16:34
To: AHS@sepa.org.uk; [redacted]@crownstatescotland.com; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@briggsmarine.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; Dundee fire serviceHQ <N.DundeeControl@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_CounterPollution@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@nlb.org.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; navigation@nlb.org.uk; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted]@nlb.org.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] ([redacted])[redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; zone36@hmcg.gov.uk
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Subject: Notification on Barge at portree

All

Following from my previous email, from our ongoing correspondence with you, we have been carrying out lifting and fish feed removal works on the sunken feed barge at Portree

We have had a dive team onsite today to carry out some works to prepare for the venting of the barge; sample readings were taken by our specialist contractor during this operation, which have registered high levels of H2S within one of the sealed silos (55,000 ppm) and low levels on the site (2 ppm), due to the small amount being released at present. The team are working on a solution to introduce an inert gas during the venting portion of the operation to reduce risk. We are working to carry out this operation out as soon as possible given this latest information.

Given the nature and the scale of works needing to be undertaken to prepare for the recovery operation, we will put an exclusion zone in place and a Notice to Mariners will be issued advising of this, we hope to have this updated today with assistance from the Harbour Master. Additional monitoring can only be carried out while the dive vessel is onsite, and our contractor and specialist advisers are expecting to update on readings and technical advice daily

We will provide a further update once the venting works by our contractor and specialist advisors is ready to begin.

The significance of Bakkafrost's reference to Hydrogen Sulphide levels at 55,000 ppm was not lost on an unnamed official at the MCA (their name is redacted along with all other names) who [emailed Bakkafrost after a phone call on Friday evening \(12 August 2022\)](#):

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>
Sent: 12 August 2022 19:18
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Cc: HQ_SOSRep <HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>
Subject: RE: Notification on Barge at portree

Hi [redacted],

Thank you for the email and your time on the phone this evening.

As discussed, I just wanted to check with you that the local emergency services, namely fire and rescue for their HAZMAT expertise, and the local authority are actually aware of this newly identified issue, and they understand what it means. Whilst these email updates are valuable and helpful, unless you have a positive response back, its not possible to confirm who has read (and understood) them, and what action has been taken to mitigate any risks. If you could attempt to speak to the local representatives (fire and authority) to ensure they are in receipt of this information and understand it, that would be appreciated.

You mentioned there is a local footpath not too far from site, which could be impacted, but was unsure what measures the Local Authority had put in place to deal with this. You also mentioned that cruise liners do transit near the area (although not expected until late next week), but you advised the HM is aware of this and will give notice to any cruise liners coming in to give the area a wide berth.

If you are unable to contact anyone directly, please let me know and I'll try and help you out.

Please don't hesitate to give me a call over the weekend if you need anything.

Kind Regards,

[redacted]

By lunchtime on Saturday 13 August 2022, [Bakkafrost claimed in an email](#) to have phoned up “a few numbers” to confirm that people “understood the implications of the notification on Friday” (i.e. that “explosive” levels of Hydrogen Sulphide had been detected):

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Sent: 13 August 2022 13:05
To: [redacted] (Performance and Resources) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Performance and Resources) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Councillor) <[redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk>; Dundee fire serviceHQ <N.DundeeControl@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Planning and Environment) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Councillor) <[redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; navigation@nlb.org.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@gov.scot; [redacted] (Councillor) <[redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Performance and Resources) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Policy and Reform) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; zone36@hmcg.gov.uk; Emergency Planning <Emergency.Planning@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Subject: FW: Notification on Barge at portree
Importance: High

All,

I have tried to call a few numbers today to speak to people regarding our notification on Friday at the bottom of this email, I have not managed to get through to the right people or no answer from the phone lines. I will try to get in touch on Monday. In the meantime can you confirm that you have read and fully understood the implications of the notification on Friday by replying to this email. Please feel free to get in touch as always.

I have tried to contact the council resilience team unsuccessfully, but found n email address which I have included on this email

Bakkafrost's claim to have made "a few" phone calls smells decidedly fishy and certainly represents a negligent response to the public risks of explosion – something [picked up on early on Monday morning \(15 August 2022\) in an email from the Harbour Authority:](#)

From: [redacted] (Performance and Resources) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: 15 August 2022 08:20
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] (Performance and Resources) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Performance and Resources) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Councillor) <[redacted].clr@highland.gov.uk>; Dundee fire serviceHQ <N.DundeeControl@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Planning and Environment) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Councillor) <[redacted].clr@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; navigation@nlb.org.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] ([redacted])[redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] (Councillor) <[redacted].clr@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Policy and Reform) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; zone36@hmcg.gov.uk; Emergency Planning <Emergency.Planning@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Subject: RE: Notification on Barge at portree

Good morning [redacted]

Both [redacted] and myself have been available all weekend and have no missed calls?

We have read your latest NoM and as Harbour Authority have a number of concerns about public and maritime safety.

In the first instance, please provide us with:

- Your risk assessment so that we may understand the nature of the hazard and the subsequent risks, fire, explosion, toxicity, etc
- The control measures to be out into place to ensure no vessels wander inadvertently in to the exclusion zone. guard boat, lights, etc.
- The impacts risks this may pose to pedestrians on the nearby coastal path and the control measures proposed to protect them.

We look forward to hearing from you shortly.

Best Regards

[redacted]
[redacted]
Highland Council
Harbours HQ



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

When "explosive" gases were found at 55,000 ppm under a salmon farm off Portree, Bakkafrost emailed late on a Friday afternoon & then "tried to call a few numbers" on Saturday. "Both [redacted] & myself have been available all weekend & have no missed calls?" said [@MCA_media](#)



The Highland Council and 6 others

11:12 AM · Nov 17, 2022 · Twitter Web App

All

Please see attached RAMS from Briggs on the Venting and also the RA from [redacted] our expert. For discussion tomorrow.

This document is a risk assessment based on assumptions (pressure, volume, ect, ect) and weather forecast

Calculation model used : ALOHA

This document can only be used as a guideline and all data used is subject to (unforeseen) changes

The events mentioned in de RA 1 until 4 you will find back on the calculation sheet and drawing numbered M1, M1A, M2 ect ect

The worst case scenario is shown in the drawings NNE, SSE and ENE

Best regards / Vinarliga

[redacted]

Since the Scottish Government has thus far denied access to the RAMS [Risk Assessment Method Statement] from Briggs Marine ([citing ongoing legal action between Bakkafrost and Briggs Marine as the reason for non-disclosure](#)), \$camon \$cotland can only guess at the ‘explosive’ contents. However a [report on gas purging by Marine Masters in the Netherlands – circulated to stakeholders on 6 September 2022 \(disclosed by SEPA via FOI on 4 November 2022\)](#) at least provides details on the explosive levels of Hydrogen Sulphide.

Hoses, pumps, and two IBCs were supplied to allow the relief of the unknown pressure within the silos as there was concern over the possibility of an uncontrolled release of the pent up gases and oils or structural harm to the barge as cracks were identified by the emission of the gases. During the relief of the gas and oils from the silos it became apparent that the gases were toxic in composition with Hydrogen Sulphide (H₂S) and Methane (CH₄) detected.

During diving operations, a gas sample was collected directly from the sunken barge itself, and analysed by a Marine Chemist which provided the results of the presence of H₂S in concentrations of 55,000 ppm which puts the gas into explosive range but only when oxygen is introduced as levels in the silos for O₂ are very low at 2.4% volume.

Actual readings from silo test below -

O2	:2,4 %vol
CO	:1580 PPM
H2S	:5,5 % vol (55000 PPM)
LEL	: 100 % (not accurate O2 <8 % vol)
VOC	: 231 PPM (PID)

Please note the lower explosion limit of H₂S is 4,3 % vol

The RA [Risk Assessment] from Bakkafrost’s ‘expert’ (assumed to be the ‘Consulting Marine Chemist’ in the Netherlands [not named in Bakkafrost’s email of 16 August 2022](#)) was strangely not disclosed by the Scottish Government via FOI on 11 November 2022 but \$camon \$cotland received a copy this week from [Highland Councilor John Finlayson](#). \$camon \$cotland [published the explosive report dated 16 August 2022 earlier this week \(16 November 2022\)](#).



Don Staniford
@TheGAAlA

Burning Question: A Risk Assessment by HAZMAT emergency responders Vanderpers highlighted a 'High' risk of exposure to the public from toxic Hydrogen Sulphide gas & 'Low' risk of "exposure to explosion" in Portree consultingmarinechemist.nl
Why the f*** was there no public warning?



The Highland Council and 9 others
6:05 AM · Nov 16, 2022 · Twitter Web App

An ever-growing list of stakeholders was [briefed by Bakkafrost on 24 August 2022](#) – the same day that [‘The World’ cruise liner passed close to the “explosive” exclusion zone and anchored off Portree:](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>
Sent: 24 August 2022 09:11
To: AHS@sepa.org.uk; [redacted]@crownstatescotland.com; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; Dundee fire serviceHQ <N.DundeeControl@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_CounterPollution@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted]@briggsenvironmental.com; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@nlb.org.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; navigation@nlb.org.uk; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted]@nlb.org.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted].cllr@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; zone36@hmcg.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@consultingmarinechemist.nl>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@briggsmarine.com>; [redacted]@scotland.pnn.police.uk; [redacted]@scotland.pnn.police.uk; [redacted]@nhs.scot; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted]@scotland.police.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@scotland.police.uk>; [redacted] (Property and Facilities Management) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Planning and Environment) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; HIGHLAND, Hpt (NHS HIGHLAND) <hpt.highland@nhs.scot>; [redacted] (Environmental and Amenity Services) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted], [redacted] <[redacted]@scotland.police.uk>; [redacted] (Environmental and Amenity Services) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Resilience) <[redacted]@sepa.org.uk>; [redacted] (Environmental and Amenity Services) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; MS SpillResponse <MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] (NHS Highland) <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted] (Policy and Reform)

On [25 August 2022](#), [Marine Scotland](#) [[name redacted](#)] reported to an unnamed [Scottish Government official](#) [[name redacted](#)] that Portree High School would be used as a ‘rest centre’ should the gas come ashore with Highland Council offices used as an ‘emergency response centre’. “Public health will advise that people close windows and doors as well to protect themselves should the gas reach shore,” stated Marine Scotland:

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 25 August 2022 13:56
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: Portree Barge gas venting plan update

Good afternoon [redacted],

[redacted]

I just wanted to give you a quick update in regards to the Portree Barge gas venting following the call this afternoon.

The key updates are as follows:

- Earliest timeframe for reducing gas on site is next Monday (29 August 22) as this is the earliest a vessel can arrive at site in order for nitrogen to be provided. May be worth briefing [redacted] on this incident as he is on rota next week.
- No change to barge condition and no increase in gas being released but gas bubbles still coming up to the surface.
- No change to alarms
- Site patrols – all going well. The use of guard vessels is working well.
- Dives – the dives have started on site to begin laying down hoses to remove gas from barge.
- Clearance for nitrogen to be used on vessel causing delays. MCA to be contacted for update on this.
- Water sampling. One sample was taken yesterday and another one is due to be taken today.
- Next meeting: Monday approx at 3pm but no confirmation has been sent.

There were some discussions in terms of worst case scenario. Should the barge explode mitigations are in place to protect public health. Rest centre for those inside sectors that could be impacted should the gas come to shore will be set up at Portree High school. The council offices would be used for emergency response centre. Public health will advise that people close windows and doors as well to protect themselves should the gas reach shore. There was no mention of potential environmental impacts for this scenario.

I think that covers the key updates.

Many thanks

[redacted]

[redacted]
[redacted]

Marine Scotland - [redacted]



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

"Should the barge explode mitigations are in place to protect public health" wrote [@marinescotland](#) in August with Portree High School named as a rest centre "should the gas come to shore" & [@HighlandCouncil](#) as an 'emergency response centre' [@fire_scot](#) [@ScotlandSalmon](#) [@_KateForbes](#)



Portree High School and 9 others

7:00 AM · Nov 14, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Despite the risk of exposure to Hydrogen Sulphide gas and the risk of explosion, the authorities still did not issue a public health warning or issue a public warning to shipping (Scamon Scotland have emailed 'The World' cruise liner, the Portree Moorings Association and the Portree Harbour Master to ask for copies of any warnings issued at all). [The Isle of Skye Pipe Band visited 'The World' – moored within sniffing distance of the salmon farm – on 24 August 2022:](#)

 **Isle of Skye Pipe Band** added 16 new photos to the album: **The world.** August 24 · 🌐

The [Isle of Skye Pipe Band](#) this evening had the honour of playing for the residents aboard The World. What an amazing experience for us all, luxury beyond belief and 5* service all around. Kathleen even serenaded the residents on the piano.

We all tried to stow away but were unfortunately kicked off!!

Images of the outside of the ship by Murdo Bain



 **Don Staniford**
@TheGAAIA

How many miles is the safety exclusion area around Bakkafrost Scotland's Portree salmon farm? When cruise ships such as 'The World' visit Skye how far away from toxic Scottish salmon do they steer? @MCA_media @H_S_E @scotgov #Toxic #Scottish #Salmon tinyurl.com/3dpm8x8t



 VisitScotland and 3 others

9:44 AM · Aug 30, 2022 · Twitter Web App

 **Don Staniford**
@TheGAAIA

Is this the sun setting on the booming tourist industry on the Isle of Skye? An exclusion zone - due to dangerous toxic gasses - around the salmon farm off Portree is not good for business! @KateForbes @Ianblackford_MP @SkyeforAll @VisitScotland @VisitScotNews @MairiGougeon



 WHFP and 4 others

10:05 AM · Aug 30, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Life in Portree continued as normal as tourists poured into town and children played in the harbour and walked along the coastal path blissfully unaware of the explosion risk – with the [RNLI in Portree going ahead with a family fun day on 27 August 2022 featuring Stormy](#):

 **RNLI Portree**
August 27 · 🌐



Portree Lifeboat Open Day

Portree Lifeboat Station
Saturday 27 August 2022
2pm - 6pm

Come and join us, as we open our doors after 3 long years, for our annual Open Day!

Plenty of fun for all the family, come and grab one of our burgers, whilst browsing our stalls and have a look in our Trent Class Lifeboat! With friends coming too from our Emergency Service family, and Kyle Lifeboat will be coming over too! You never know, Stormy himself may make an appearance!!



Lifeboat Fundraisers (Skye and Raasay)
August 27 · 🌐

At last its here!! Time for Lifeboat Open Day after a long 3 year gap. Come along for a day of family fun at Portree Pier. Lots of fun things to do and some great stalls will be there from 2pm - 6 pm. Isle of Skye Pipe Band will be marching from Portree Square down to the Pier around 2pm. Come along and meet Stormy Stan.

👍 27 1 Share

As tourists looked on laughing (still not notified of the explosion risk) [lifeboats entertained in Portree harbour](#):

 **RNLI Portree**
August 30 · 🌐

What a great video sent to us from June and Craig jackson!!!
Nothing beats a bit of power!
Thanks
IB



The authorities decided that ‘the show must go on’ (still with radio silence on the public risks).

 RNLi Portree
August 25 · 🌐

If you have missed the show, why not catch up & use the Radio Skye Listen again feature on their website.

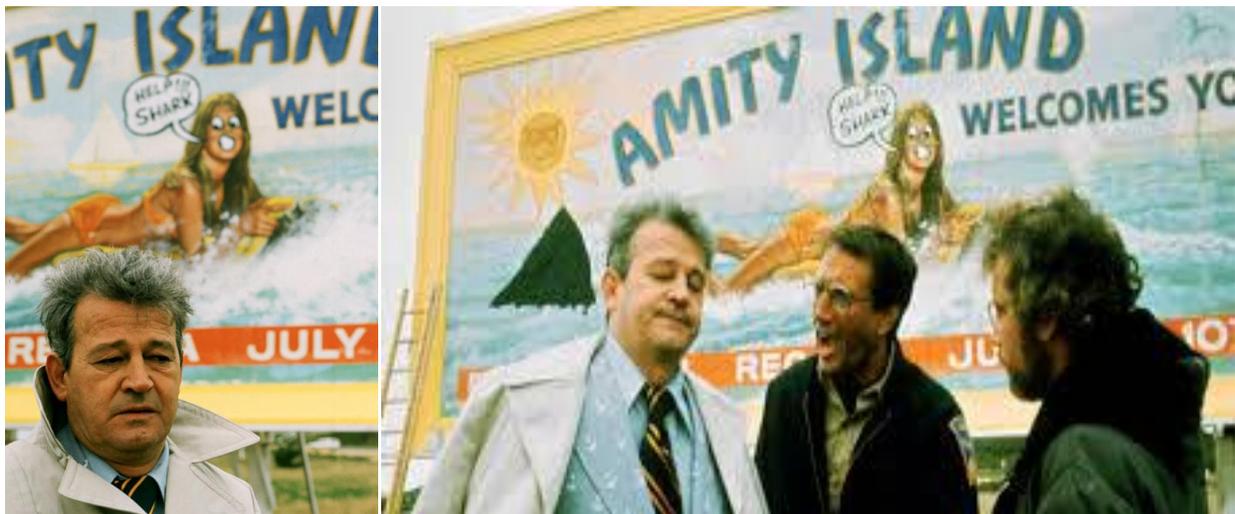


Radio Skye
August 25 · 🌐

Radio Skye went down to Portree Harbour on Saturday for the [RNLi Portree Lifeboat Open Day](#) and what fantastic day it was too. Lots of fun for all the family and a great way to raise much needed funds for this vital service. We got a chat with [Lifeboat Fundraisers \(Skye and Raassy\)](#) David Beaton plus HM Coastguards and the Mountain Rescue. Tune in to the Breakfast Show this morning from 7.30am.

The Monday Breakfast Show is kindly sponsored by [MGL Contractors Kyleakin](#).

Absolutely no need to worry the tourists at the height on August bank holiday weekend!





Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

...

Why was the public not warned about "explosive" toxic gases leaking off Skye? Surely tourists in Portree, walkers along the coastal path near the salmon farm, kayakers, swimmers & divers should have been warned? @_KateForbes @Ianblackford_MP @scotgov @HighlandCouncil @fire_scot

...no need to worry the tourists at the height on August bank holiday weekend!



Maritime and Coastguard Agency and 9 others



Don Staniford @TheGAAIA · Nov 14

"Should the barge explode mitigations are in place to protect public health" wrote @marinescotland in August with Portree High School named as a rest centre "should the gas come to shore" & @HighlandCouncil as an 'emergency response centre' @fire_scot @ScotlandSalmon @_KateForbes pic.twitter.com /hzAmECN4bx

7:08 AM · Nov 14, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Alarmed at the lack of public disclosure, a [whistleblower from Portree contacted \\$camon \\$cotland on 28 August 2022:](#)

Date: Sun, Aug 28, 2022 at 7:57 PM
Subject: Portree salmon farm
To: <salmonfarmingkills@gmail.com>

Hi

I recently came back to my home town of Portree for a visit, and found out the problems that have been going on at the Scottish Salmon Company (now Bakkafröst). Their feed barge sank end of last year with over 400t of feed on board and I believe the deck was also full of tubs filled with mortalities.

This barge has laid on the seabed since then and a few weeks ago a team of divers have come to the site to start the process of raising the barge, however this was stopped for over a week as there was found to be very high levels of toxic gasses emerging from the barge and the old feed, this has led to an exclusion zone being put in place around the farm because of the dangers of these gasses and there is a 24hr guard by a boat.

I am not sure if you are aware of this that has been happening and all the risks that is happening to the environment, its just another of a long list of how salmon farms are damaging the environment.

It was Scamon Scotland – not Highland Council, Fire Scotland, NHS Scotland, Police Scotland or the Scottish Government – who publicized the public health dangers early on 30 August 2022 (later corroborated by another whistleblower) via: [“Toxic Gasses Spew From The Scottish Salmon Company \(Bakkafrost Scotland\) Off Portree”](#).



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

...

Breaking News: potentially lethal toxic gasses leaking from a sunken feed barge at Bakkafrost salmon farm off Portree suspend salvage operation with 24 hour guard & exclusion zone @briggsmarine
Why has the public not been informed of the risks?
[@ScottishEPA](#) [@MairiMcAllan](#) [@H_S_E](#)



Mairi Gougeon and 9 others

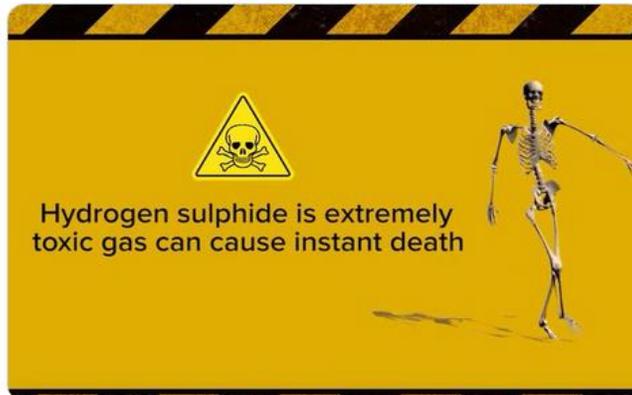
7:28 AM · Aug 30, 2022 · Twitter Web App



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

...

WARNING: Dangerous Scottish Salmon - toxic gases containing Hydrogen Sulphide - known as 'swamp gas' - are spewing from Bakkafrost Scotland's salmon farm off Portree tinyurl.com/3dpm8x8t
Avoid Toxic Scottish Salmon! [@ScotlandSalmon](#)
[@_KateForbes](#) [@Ianblackford_MP](#) [@ScottishEPA](#)



WHFP and 9 others

10:59 AM · Aug 30, 2022 · Twitter Web App

By late morning on 30 August 2022, [BBC News was tracking the story and had contacted the Scottish Government for public comment:](#)

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 30 August 2022 11:28
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] ([redacted]) <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; MS SpillResponse <MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; Communications Net Zero & Rural Affairs <CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: Media query - Portree fishfarm - BBC

Hi all,

We've received a query from BBC Scotland about an exclusion zone near Portree – see below.

Looking to get back to them by 5pm.

Here's the BBC's media query ([disclosed via FOI by the Scottish Government on 11 November 2022](#)) which appears to have come from [BBC journalist Iain Macinnes](#):

As discussed, we are running a story this morning about an exclusion zone in place off Portree Harbour. I just wondered if Marine Scotland are aware of this, and if they are investigating? Any information you can provide would be appreciated.

Story :

Its emerged that an exclusion zone is in place near Portree Harbour amid concerns that dangerous gases are being emitted from a sunken barge. The vessel was being used by a fish-farming company and people are being urged not to go within five hundred meters of the barge. Iain Macinnes has more.

The barge, which was being used by Bakkafrøst Scotland - formerly known as the Scottish Salmon company - sunk on the outskirts of Portree harbour - while loaded with salmon feed. The company are organising a salvage operation which includes the precaution of an exclusion zone to protect vessels and the public. There is said to be a slight risk of toxic and explosive gases being emitted from the decomposing cargo in the barge - in dangerous quantities. Highland Council say that monitoring of gases will continue as the salvage operation progresses - and that the exclusion zone will stay in place in the area.

Highland Council statement :

A Highland Council spokesperson said: "There is currently an exclusion zone in place in an area of Portree Harbour in connection with a salvage operation on a sunken salmon feed barge belonging to the Scottish Salmon Company. The owners of the barge are organising a salvage operation that includes the precaution of an exclusion zone to protect vessels and the public from the slight risk of toxic and explosive gases being emitted from the decomposing cargo in the barge in dangerous quantities. As the salvage operation progresses, monitoring of the atmosphere for gases in and around the exclusion zone will continue."

The statement above from Highland Council – which is not available publicly online – included reference to “explosive gases” emitted from the barge “in dangerous quantities”. When [BBC News published a story later on 30 August 2022](#) there was no reference to “explosive” or “dangerous” and Highland Council’s “explosive” statement had been replaced by a statement

from Police Scotland which referred to a “safe conclusion” even though “explosive” levels of toxic gases still represented a real public risk and would not be vented for another two weeks:

'Safe conclusion'

Insp Ross McCartney, of Police Scotland, said: "We are aware of a leak of gas from a sunken vessel off Portree Harbour.

"Multi-agency discussions have taken place and plans are ongoing to safely recover the vessel."

Bakkafrost said as part of the salvage operation gas would be vented to reduce any potential risk.

It said: "All relevant authorities are being kept informed of progress on the recovery operation and we will continue to work together with experts to ensure a safe conclusion to the operation.

"Bakkafrost is fully committed to ensuring public safety in relation to all of its operations, vessels and equipment and we are addressing the removal of any gas as a priority."

Scottish government designate Marine Scotland said it was liaising with police, Highland Council, NatureScot and the coastguard.

A spokesman said: ""An exclusion zone is in place to protect the public from any potential health risk and Marine Scotland officials will continue to liaise with partner organisations to help ensure risks to both the public and the environment are identified and addressed."



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

Censored by the BBC: How "explosive" news on the dangers of toxic gases leaking at a salmon farm off the Isle of Skye was doused down by the \$almafia
[@BBCScotlandNews](#) [@BBCScotHighland](#)
[@BBCHighlands](#) [@BBCIainMac](#) [@PoliceScotland](#)
[@HighlandCouncil](#) [@scotgov](#) [@ScotlandSalmon](#)
[@fire_scot](#)

Censored by the BBC

It emerged that an exclusion zone is in place near Portree Harbour amid concerns that dangerous gases are being emitted from a sunken barge. The vessel was being used by a fish-farming company and people are being urged not to go within five hundred meters of the barge. Ian Macdonald has more.

The barge, which was being used by Bakkafrost Scotland - formerly known as the Scottish Salmon Company - sunk on the outskirts of Portree Harbour - while loaded with salmon feed. The company are organising a salvage operation which includes the precaution of an exclusion zone to protect vessels and the public. There is said to be a slight risk of toxic and explosive gases being emitted from the decomposing cargo in the barge - in dangerous quantities. Highland Council say that monitoring of gases will continue as the salvage operation progresses - and that the exclusion zone will stay in place in the area.

Highland Council statement :

Highland Council spokesperson said: "There is currently an exclusion zone in the area of Portree Harbour in connection with a salvage operation on a sunken salmon feed barge belonging to the Scottish Salmon Company. The owners of the barge are undertaking a salvage operation that includes the precaution of an exclusion zone to protect the public."

Bakkafrost said it was working on salvaging the barge safely.

'Safe conclusion'

Insp Ross McCartney, of Police Scotland, said "We are aware of a leak of gas from a sunken vessel off Portree Harbour.

"Multi-agency discussions have taken place and plans are ongoing to safely recover the vessel."

Bakkafrost said as part of the salvage operation gas would be vented to reduce any potential risk.

It said: "All relevant authorities are being kept informed of progress on the recovery operation and we will continue to work together with experts to ensure a safe conclusion to the operation."

"Bakkafrost is fully committed to ensuring public safety in relation to all of its operations, vessels and equipment and we are addressing the removal of any gas as a priority."

Mairi Gougeon and 9 others

12:56 PM · Nov 17, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Even the watered down version of the BBC News story was enough to prompt “a number of enquiries from concerned Portree residents” which Highland Council’s ‘Resilience Officer’ (Corporate Communications) [sought help on 1 September 2022 from other government agencies to downplay via a ‘message of reassurance’](#):

From: [redacted] (Corporate Communications) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Sent: 01 September 2022 12:54
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@scottishsalmon.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@scotland.police.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] ([redacted])[redacted] <[redacted][redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted]@sepa.org.uk
Cc: [redacted] (Corporate Communications) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>
Subject: Portree Barge Incident - message of reassurance

Hi,

Since the BBC published [this](#), Highland Council has received a number of enquiries from concerned Portree residents. It’s been suggested that a short ‘message of reassurance’ issued via Highland Council’s social media ahead of tomorrow’s meeting might allay some of these concerns. Suggested wording is below. I’d be very grateful if you could confirm if your agency is comfortable with this approach, or provide any feedback to the contrary.

“Regular multi-agency meetings, involving Police Scotland, the Coastguard, Marine Scotland, SEPA, The Highland Council, NHS Highland and Scottish Salmon, are taking place to progress the recovery of the sunken salmon feed barge and its cargo off Portree Harbour. The situation is being monitored and there is not considered to be any risk to the public as a result of the low levels of hydrogen sulphide detected. Monitoring equipment remains in place and further updates will follow as the incident is brought to a safe conclusion.”

The Scottish Government was [only too happy to oblige with a ‘message of reassurance’](#):

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 01 September 2022 14:16
To: [redacted] (Corporate Communications) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; MS SpillResponse <MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Portree Barge Incident - message of reassurance

Hi [redacted],

I can confirm we’re happy to proceed.

Thanks,
[redacted]

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Sent: 01 September 2022 14:13
To: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>;
Communications Net Zero & Rural Affairs
<CommunicationsNetZero&RuralAffairs@gov.scot>; [redacted]
<[redacted]@gov.scot>; MS SpillResponse <MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot>;
[redacted] ([redacted])[redacted] <[redacted][redacted]@gov.scot>
Subject: RE: Portree Barge Incident - message of reassurance

Yes, that seems reasonable, thanks

So instead of issuing a public warning re. “explosive” gases, [Highland Council issued a ‘message of reassurance’ on 2 September 2022](#) which was also [Tweeted](#).



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

...

When @HighlandCouncil was told on 12 August that "explosive" levels of toxic Hydrogen Sulphide gas at 55,000 ppm were found off Portree they failed to warn the public. Yet after an alarming BBC News story they issued a "message of reassurance" on 2 Sept tinyurl.com/nw7t9wh2

The Highland Council

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Statement on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Resilience Partnership – Portree barge incident

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A spokesperson for the agencies involved in the recovery of a sunken barge at Portree said: "Regular multi-agency meetings involving, the Coastguard, Marine Scotland, SEPA, The Highland Council, NHS Highland, Police Scotland and Bakkafrost (Scottish Salmon), are taking place to progress the recovery of the sunken salmon feed barge and its cargo off Portree Harbour.

Due to the decomposition of the fish feed within the sunken barge, small amounts of hydrogen sulphide gas have been released from the barge. The situation is being monitored and there is not considered to be any risk to the public as a result of the low levels of hydrogen sulphide detected. Monitoring equipment remains in place and further updates will follow as the incident is brought to a safe conclusion."

2 Sep 2022

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BBC Highlands and 5 others

The Highland Council @HighlandCouncil · Sep 2
Statement on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Resilience Partnership – Portree barge incident - ow.ly/9se950KyQZL

Yet for another two weeks until the feed barge was ‘successfully’ and ‘safely’ vented, the “explosive” gases continued to build up and the public risk of exposure remained high.

Document 63, Portree Barge Gas Venting Update from Bakkafrost, 15 09 2022

From: [redacted] <[redacted]@bakkafrost.com>

Sent: 15 September 2022 14:40

To: AHSH@sepa.org.uk; [redacted]@crownstatescotland.com; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@bakkafrost.com>; Dundee fire serviceHQ <N.DundeeControl@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_CounterPollution@mcga.gov.uk; HQ_SOSRep@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@nlb.org.uk>; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; navigation@nlb.org.uk; [redacted]@mcga.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@bakkafrost.com>; [redacted]@nlb.org.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] ([redacted])[redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; zone36@hmcg.gov.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@consultingmarinechemist.nl>; [redacted] <[redacted]@bakkafrost.com>; [redacted]@scotland.pnn.police.uk; [redacted]@scotland.pnn.police.uk; [redacted]@nhs.scot; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted]@highland.gov.uk; [redacted]@scotland.police.uk; [redacted] <[redacted]@scotland.police.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Property and Facilities

Management) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Planning and Environment) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@marinemasters.nl>; [redacted]@firescotland.gov.uk; [redacted].Smith@mcga.gov.uk; Murdo.Macaulay@mcga.gov.uk
Cc: [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; HIGHLAND, Hpt (NHS HIGHLAND) <hpt.highland@nhs.scot>; [redacted] (Environmental and Amenity Services) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted], [redacted] <[redacted]@scotland.police.uk>; [redacted] (Environmental and Amenity Services) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (Resilience) <[redacted]@sepa.org.uk>; [redacted] (Environmental and Amenity Services) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; MS SpillResponse <MS.SpillResponse@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] (NHS Highland) <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted] (Policy and Reform) <[redacted]@highland.gov.uk>; [redacted] (NHS Highland) <[redacted]@nhs.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>; [redacted] <[redacted]@crownstatescotland.com>; [redacted] [redacted] <[redacted]@crownstatescotland.com>; [redacted] <[redacted]@gov.scot>; [redacted] <[redacted]@mcga.gov.uk>

Subject: Portree Barge Gas Venting plan .update

All

Please see below statement from Bakkafrost Scotland.

A Bakkafrost Scotland spokesperson said:

"Bakkafrost Scotland can confirm the successful and safe completion of the initial recovery stage of venting gas from the submerged feeding barge at the Portree farm site, which was damaged during Storm 'Arwen' in November 2021.

"Throughout the recovery process we have been working closely with the relevant authorities including SEPA, Marine Coast Guards and Fire Brigade, alongside other experts, and we are now progressing to the next stage of the operation which will include lifting the barge.

"An exclusion zone was in place as a precaution throughout the venting operation and a 'Notice to Mariners' was issued on 5 August to ensure all affected were advised of the incident.

"The relevant authorities are being kept informed of progress and we will work with the recovery experts to ensure a safe conclusion to the operation.

"Bakkafrost Scotland is fully committed to ensuring public safety in relation to all of its operations, vessels and equipment."

Suffice to say that \$camon \$cotland believes a forensic examination of the [documents released thus far via FOI](#) can but only conclude that government agencies were complicit in a cover-up.



\$camon Scotland is sick to the stomach of government agencies cravenly kowtowing to the salmon farming industry. When will the Scottish Government stop protecting the \$almafia and start protecting public health, tourism and the marine environment?



The lethal nature of salmon farming – and feed barges in particular – is a real and present danger.



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

The Times on @MowiScotlandLtd being sued by the widow of worker Clive Hendry who was killed at a salmon farm in Loch Alsh (Mowi were found negligent by a damning @maibgovuk report) @thetimes tinyurl.com/famv6tc @ScottishHazards @MCA_media @H_S_E @KateForbes @ScotlandSalmon



Ian Blackford and 8 others

1:25 PM · Nov 23, 2021 · Twitter Web App

In conclusion, \$camon \$cotland urges Scottish Ministers to investigate this issue with a view to sanctioning Bakkafrost for failing to defuse the problem and government officials for failing to alert the general public to the risks of exposure to Hydrogen Sulphide gas and risks of explosion.



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

When "explosive" Hydrogen Sulphide gases at 55,000 ppm were detected in August off Portree the authorities planned for a 'worst case scenario' & emergency response due to explosion risk. Yet they failed to issue a public warning! @fire_scot @PoliceScotland @NHSScotland @scotgov



The Highland Council and 9 others

12:09 PM · Nov 14, 2022 · Twitter Web App

This issue is clearly a public interest matter. The Times [reported yesterday \(17 November 2022\)](#):

Secret plans to evacuate island homes over toxic gas

Marc Horne

Thursday November 17 2022,
12.01am, The Times



A fish feed vessel that sank off Portree last year began leaking gas and government documents reveal fears of an explosion
ALAMY

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Secret plans were drawn up for residents to be evacuated from one of Scotland's most popular tourist destinations amid fears that a sunken barge could explode and spew toxic gases towards the shore, it has emerged.

A vessel used by Bakkafrost, a Faroe Islands fish farming company, sank off Portree, the largest town on the Isle of Skye, last November, leading to the creation of a 500-metre maritime exclusion zone. Leaking hydrogen sulphide bubbled to the surface from the wreck, emitting a stench like rotten eggs and raising wider concerns.

Scottish government correspondence shows there were fears of an explosion and a "catastrophic" release of gas. Internal documents seen by The Times confirm that emergency plans were lined up.



"Should the barge explode, mitigations are in place to protect public health," one states. "A rest centre for those inside sectors that could be impacted should the gas come to shore will be set up at Portree High School. Council offices would be used for emergency response centres.

"Public health will advise that people close windows and doors to protect themselves should the gas reach shore."

Another document raises concern about the potential environmental impact. “Preliminary diving work started in July 2022 where bubbles were observed,” it states. “It became apparent that the gases were toxic, in composition with hydrogen sulphide and methane. Air gas monitors have been placed in ten locations surrounding the site and are remotely monitored 24 hours a day to allow for early warning of any large release.” An email from August 29, released after a freedom of information request, states: “It is worth reiterating that the incident is located within a European site designated for the protection of harbour porpoise.”

Every year more than 600,000 tourists visit Skye and its attractions such as Portree Harbour, the Fairy Pools and Claigan Coral Beach.

The documents were obtained by Don Staniford, an environmental and anti-fish farming campaigner. “Despite known safety concerns and discussions of emergency responses no public warnings were issued,” he said. “Life in Portree continued as normal as tourists poured into town and children played in the harbour and walked along the coastal path, blissfully unaware of the explosion risk.”

Radio Skye [reported yesterday \(17 November 2022\)](#):



17 November 2022

NEWS// FOI requests reveal worst case scenario planning for Portree fish farm Hydrogen Sulphide leak.

Recent Freedom of Information requests have revealed high risk concerns and plans surrounding the sunken feed barge at the Portree fish farm, which has been leaking Hydrogen Sulphide thanks to the deterioration of the remaining onboard cargo.

Documents requested from the Scottish Government by aquaculture campaigner and protestor Don Staniford shows communication between organisations such as the Scottish Government, Portree fish farm operator Bakkafrost, HM Coastguard, Highland Council and SEPA.

An exclusion zone was put in place around the fish farm, but concerns have been raised that cruise ships, local vessels and kayakers in particular have still been able to pass in close range of the site, where the potentially dangerous gas has been surfacing.

A Risk Assessment dated 16th August shows a “high risk” level of “exposure to H₂S (Hydrogen Sulphide) above the TLV (threshold legal limit) for any member of the public” in a downwind scenario, if the barge and internal silos were to simultaneously collapse, resulting in a 100% uncontrolled gas release.

The Scottish Government also stated that they would issue a public health warning in the event of the gas reaching the shore, which would ask residents to keep all doors and windows closed. Portree High School was named as a rest centre in the response plans should the condition of the barge deteriorate further or if the gas reached the shore, with the Highland Council offices being named as an Emergency Response Centre.

Don Staniford said:

“Documents disclosed by the Scottish Government via FOI on Friday 11th November expose the explosive problem caused by a sunken feed barge off Portree on the Isle of Skye.

“Bakkafrost decided to continue farming salmon at Portree (Torvaig). Food Standards Agency will be asked if they tested for toxic contaminants in the salmon farmed above a toxic gas leak.”

John Finlayson, one of the Highland Councillors for the Eilean a Cheò ward, said:

“I and fellow members are satisfied that this incident was appropriately managed by all the agencies and companies involved and there were and are mitigations in place to ensure there is no risk to the public.”

The fish feeding barge sank in November 2021 during adverse weather caused by Storm Arwen, and has yet to be salvaged from the seabed. Briggs Marine was awarded a contract to recover the barge and cargo, but a payment dispute led to operations coming to a halt and the two companies parting ways.

Diesel from the barge fuel tanks was successfully removed at the beginning of December 2021. There is thought to be approx 350 tonnes of fish feed remaining in the onboard silos.

Radio Skye has contacted Bakkafrost for comment, but has yet to receive a reply.

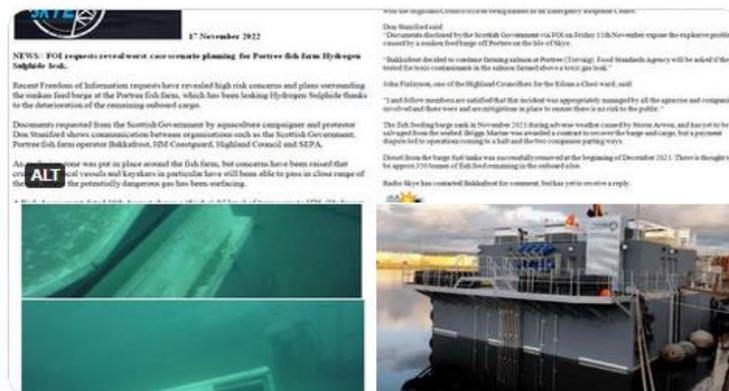


Photos from HM Coastguard as part of the FOI request documents of the barge on the seabed



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

"FOI requests reveal worst case scenario planning for Portree fish farm Hydrogen Sulphide leak" reported @radio_skye "Radio Skye has contacted Bakkafrost for comment, but has yet to receive a reply" radioskye.com @Folketrygdfoond @ScotlandSalmon @HighlandCouncil



Maritime and Coastguard Agency and 5 others

6:42 PM · Nov 17, 2022 · Twitter Web App

Scamon Scotland urges the Scottish Government to introduce recommendations and update the law with respect to the sinking of a feed barge; namely force salmon farming companies to:

- Immediately pump feed out of the barge to prevent the build-up of explosive gases
- Notify the public when feed barges sink
- Warn the public of risks of explosion and exposure of toxic gases

It beggars belief that Bakkafrost together with government agencies failed to alert the general public.



Please take steps to ensure such corporate negligence and government irresponsibility can never happen again. Taxpayers, tourists, residents, water-users, walkers, shellfish and the marine environment deserve better than a toxic salmon farming strangling the lifeblood out of the Scottish coasts.



Further information can be found via:

[Risk Assessment Highlighted 'High' Risk of Exposure to Public from Toxic Hydrogen Sulphide Gases - Why the f*ck was there no public warning?](#)

[Bakkafrost is Dead in Water in Scotland - "Explosive" FOI Disclosure Lifts Lid on Hazardous Scottish Salmon!](#)

[Document dump by Scottish Government following FOI review: floodgates opened on "explosive" salmon barge off Portree!](#)

["Explosive" FOI disclosure from SEPA on Toxic Gases Spewing from The Scottish Salmon Company \(Bakkafrost\) Off Portree!](#)

[Toxic Salmon Barge Salvaged This Month Off Portree \(as revealed by FOI disclosure by the Maritime & Coastguard Agency\)](#)



Don Staniford
@TheGAAIA

...

Whilst Grieg Seafood reported the NOK 10 million (£921K) financial fallout from a sunken feed barge off the Isle of Skye to shareholders & the Norwegian stock exchange, here's the public disclosure thus far by Bakkafrost @Folketrygdfond @osloboers @NFdep @ScotlandSalmon

Zero. — N. zero, nothing; naught, nought; cipher, none, nobody; not a soul; *àme qui vive*; absence &c. 187; unsubstantiality &c. 4. Adj. not -one, - any.



**Zip Zilch Nada Zero Nil
Sweet Fanny Adams Nought
Diddly-Squat Not an Iota**

Don Staniford @TheGAAIA · Nov 16

In Q1 2018, Grieg Seafood reported financial losses of NOK 10 million (£921,000) due to raising a sunken feed barge in Loch Dunvegan on the Isle of Skye @GriegShetland fishfarmingexpert.com/grieg-grieg-sh...
The feed barge sank in 2017 but was not raised until late 2021 fishfarmingexpert.com/feed-berge-gri...



Eòghann MacUalraig
@ewangkennedy

...

This story is HUGE! On 26 November 2021 a barge loaded with fish food for the caged salmon in Portree Bay sank. Instead of salvaging it the company left it on the seabed. Why? Well, perhaps since recovering it could have cost more than it was worth. So, keep calm and carry on?



Don Staniford @TheGAAIA · Nov 14

"Should the barge explode mitigations are in place to protect public health" wrote @marinescotland in August with Portree High School named as a rest centre "should the gas come to shore" & @HighlandCouncil as an 'emergency response centre' @fire_scot @ScotlandSalmon @_KateForbes pic.twitter.com/hzAmECN4bx

8:25 AM · Nov 14, 2022 · Twitter for iPad



Salmon Scotland
@SalmonScotland

...

Did @FSScot stop the sale of salmon from the site of the toxic gas leak?

@HighlandCouncil @foodgov @FoodUnwrappedTV
@foodanddrinksco



8:58 AM · Nov 16, 2022 · Twitter for iPhone