

Cornwall alarmed by seaweed farm plans close to Padstow coast

Steven Morris



A beach in the Camel estuary between Rock and Padstow, north Cornwall.
Photograph: Anthony Kay/Alamy

People who live, work and surf on one of Cornwall's most famous stretches of coastline have reacted with consternation to plans to create a large seaweed farm 600 metres from the shore.

Two companies, Biome Algae and Camel Fish, are applying to build the farm in a 1 sq km zoned-off area just off the north coast, not far from Padstow, known for being the home of the celebrity chef [Rick Stein's](#) seafood empire. It is

also close to Port Isaac, where [the comedy drama Doc Martin is filmed](#), and the [popular surfing beach](#) at Polzeath.

The plan is to farm up to 4,000 tonnes of seaweed between October and May off [Port Quin](#), to be used in animal feed, fertiliser and as an oil-free alternative in some textiles and plastics.

Residents were given an opportunity to grill the applicants about the plans on Tuesday evening but the meeting descended into farce as about 300 people tried to cram into a small village hall in St Minver with many shut outside and forced to listen through open windows.

The audience was given just 35 minutes to ask questions of the applicants, with most people clearly opposing the plan. Requests from the audience to extend the meeting were denied.

Among people's concerns was a lack of scientific evidence that Port Quin is a suitable location, worries about the impact on tourism and the area of outstanding natural beauty, and how local wildlife will be affected.

Earlier this year, a similar plan proposed by [Biome Algae at Gerrans Bay on Cornwall's south coast](#) was withdrawn due to local opposition.

Speaking after the meeting, Luke Bassett, a builder from Port Isaac, said: "I wasn't reassured at all by what I heard. I just think it's not appropriate. That area has an abundance of sea life – we get all sorts going through there.

“We go surfing and are concerned about it being detrimental to the swell. As somebody who grew up along this stretch of coastline, we were always in the water swimming and fishing and I want my children to be able to enjoy that too.”

Luke’s brother Jason Bassett added: “What if a big storm comes and rips the whole thing out? We support seaweed farming but there are plenty of other places which would make more sense to do this.”

Oliver Blount, who lives in Camelford, said: “There is nobody here who’s not willing to engage with something like farming seaweed. There is nobody here that doesn’t want it to work, but it’s a question of where. What we are all talking about, and what isn’t being properly addressed, is why Port Quin?”

The Save Port Quin Facebook group, set up to coordinate opposition to the plans, has more than 1,800 members. Michael Truelove, a member of the group, said: “In the last few years this specific area of our coastline has seen a positive surge in its abundant sealife. I have personally witnessed the presence of humpback whales, fin whales and minke whales, Risso’s dolphins, bottlenose dolphins, harbour porpoise and large family groups of common dolphins. Entanglement issues concern me deeply.”

Setting out the plans for Port Quin, Angela Mead from Biome Algae, said: “My heart and passion is looking at sustainability and climate. We are a small but experienced and passionate team and we all believe in what we do. We want to create opportunities for residents, we want to

attract and retain talent in this region through this type of work.”

People have until 14 March to represent their views to the Marine Management Organisation.