

'Effective action' needed, says CNN

A coastal network group says the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO) 'is aiming to improve its public image with clever PR', as members declined an invitation to a workshop hosted by the organisation.

In light of intense media inquiries, public scrutiny and critical cross-party reports from the Scottish Parliament on the environmental impact and management of the salmon farming industry, SSPO invited industry figures and NGOs, including the Coastal Communities Network (CCN), to a workshop in

Edinburgh on January 23 to create a 'blueprint' for the industry's sustainable future.

The 11 community organisations of the CCN aquaculture sub-group consulted and agreed to write to the SSPO, declining its invitation.

The industry wants to double its size by 2030 and since the Scottish Parliamentary Inquiry of 2018, an additional 76,000 tonnes of farmed fish biomass has either been consented or is in the pipeline for consideration.

CCN believes this ignores the recommendation of that inquiry's report by the Rural

Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC) that 'if the industry is to grow, the 'status quo' in terms of regulation and enforcement is not acceptable. [The RECC] is of the view that urgent and meaningful action needs to be taken to address regulatory deficiencies as well as fish health and environmental issues before the industry can expand'.

A CNN representative said: 'Moving to closed-containment salmon farming would largely separate farmed fish from the open sea.

'This would prevent many of

the industry's worst impacts by capturing waste for recycling and preventing sea lice from harming wild salmon.

'Farms like this are commercially viable, yet there is no effective action by the industry or the Scottish Government to change the direction in Scotland and ensure a swift transition toward closed-containment.'

John Aitchison of Friends of the Sound of Jura, one of the community organisations of the CNN, said: 'Many jobs in our coastal communities depend on the health of the sea, and so does much of Scotland's iconic wildlife, but open-cage fish farming is damaging that health, as well as spoiling the international reputation of 'Brand Scotland's' vital food and drink sector.

'We invite Julia Hesketh-Laird, chief executive of SSPO, to come to talk to us about how fish farming should clean up its act, by using closed-containment.'

CNN says it will continue to attend meetings with

the Scottish Government and industry regulators to campaign for a shift towards

a sustainable future for finfish farming and for the marine environment in Scotland.