

Dear Sir

Following your articles regarding the closure of the Faroese white fishing grounds, I write, as a director of the Kinlochbervie Community Company, to bring to your attention the serious effect this will have on Kinlochbervie.

Kinlochbervie is described in our 2011 Growth Plan as “... a small fishing village located in the far north-west of Scotland ...”. In the Plan, Kinlochbervie is part of the ‘Growth at the Edge’ initiative and the importance of fishing is highlighted by a picture of the latest addition to the Kinlochbervie fleet entering the harbour.

In the mid-1980s, Kinlochbervie was the third largest white fishing port in Scotland, but recent years have seen a decline in west coast fishing. Today, this means in our community that the primary school roll has fallen from 57 to 19. Our local high school has also dropped from 100+ pupils to 65 today. In the last two years, nearly all the babies born in our community are from families connected to the fishing industry. The projected demographics for the future are dire.

Our community is very dependent on the boats you outlined in your articles. We have never before had problems with access to the Faroese waters and the problems your article outlined would be a death blow to the future of Kinlochbervie. If our population, especially the young, falls any further, the viability of our schools, health centre, etc will inevitably be called into question and closures and cutbacks will follow.

You can throw all the money you want into community facilities, football pitches, whatever, but if there aren't enough young people even to make up a team of 11, what is the point? We need the employment that the fishing provides, with a high value product which will not be killed by huge transport costs.

Kinlochbervie is very remote and the population is only just viable. We are some three miles off the main coastal road, so we miss 95% of the passing west coast tourist trade. Fishing is an international trade and, locally, we have always had good links with the Faroes, from the visiting boats of today to the whalers of yesteryear who used to shelter in the loch on their way round Cape Wrath, the ‘turning point’.

Interestingly, the Faroe Islands are an autonomous country within the kingdom of Denmark and, surely, our SNP government has some common ground with them? The Faroe Islands’ fibre-optic cable is linked to and used by the Shetland Isles and goes from there to its final landfall in Banff and Buchan. There is likely to be the need for more economic co-operation in the future, with the development of the substantial Scottish and Faroese oil and gas interests in the waters to the north of us.

Surely fewer than 10 white fish boats can be kept working somehow?

Yours faithfully

DAVID FORBES