

2nd April, 2013.

David Stewart, MSP,
Convener,
Public Petitions Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh,
EH99 1SP.

Dear Mr Stewart

Petition Number 1459

I have received copies of all the responses sent to your committee in relation to the above Petition. Before responding to those replies, I would like to furnish the following information about myself. This is to give the Committee background on me in light of insinuations made in one or more of the submissions to your Committee.

I was born in Buckie and brought up in the villages of Kingston then Garmouth until I left school aged 16 years. Kingston Beach was the playground for me and all my school friends as well as my parents. As with most of my generation, my family could not afford the luxury of paying for me to go to University, hence the reason I left school aged 16 years and joined the then Stirling and Clackmannan Police Force. I resigned from that force in October, 1977. The one thing I did learn while in the police force was to investigate complicated matters objectively and produce written reports that could stand up to scrutiny in the Scottish legal system. From 1977 I was employed by a number of animal health and veterinary products company before setting up my own business in 1991. From 1979 until 2009 I acted as a part time private investigator compiling

statements and reports for lawyers and QC's in both criminal and civil matters. For 15 years I was an Honorary Inspector of Fisheries for the Forth District Salmon Fishery Board. Part of that work was monitoring river flows, flood damage and sediment movement in the Forth Estuary. I was also responsible for compiling reports for the relevant Procurator Fiscals to take Court proceedings against offenders.

Since 1985 I have been involved in supplying the offshore aquaculture industry with fish health products. That has involved me physically working on sea cages in all weathers in Europe and North America. I have worked on just about every sea cage site in Scotland in all weathers and seasons. I have travelled to other parts of the World in that capacity and understand from purely personal experience the power of the sea and the currents that guide it. Those currents are produced by both tide and wind backed by ocean currents.

I have been co-author and/or joint researcher in many technical and academic aquaculture projects in various academic and research centres around the World (Australia, Canada and Malta but to name a few countries). I am currently a member of a Canadian Federal Government Working Party on a marine issue and am a past member of a Scottish Office Working Party on the construction of salmon nets. I was a constituency researcher for a former Member of the Scottish Parliament and because of that became heavily involved in investigative work for a number of charitable organisations.

Currently I am a member of Innes Community Council within whose area the largest area of Kingston Beach sits. I am facilitator of a sub group set up by ICC to coordinate the information gathering and submissions of the villagers of Kingston and Lower Garmouth over this issue. I am a member of Garmouth and Kingston Amenities Association, within whose area Kingston Beach is and I am a committee member of the Spey Mouth Angling Association who lease salmon fishings from the Crown Estate, both off the beach and the lower stretch of the River Spey. I was a founder member and Trustee of the Forth Fishery Conservation Trust, a body set up initially to stop salmon poaching on the Forth Estuary but later became more environmentally active and through that saw many changes in fishery and habitat management as well as legislation. I would therefore argue that despite not having letters behind my name, I have the intelligence, coupled with practical and professional experience to be able to understand complex documents and situations and be able to identify and report on any serious issue and that includes coastal erosion.

Although I lived out of the village for a number of years I was a very regular visitor. I rarely missed a visit home without going “down the beach”. Over the past 18 months I have been following the erosion of Kingston Beach on almost daily visits. There are land marks along the beach where one can measure the movement of the shingle beach. I take photographs of the beach area, sometimes as often as four times a week just to have a permanent record of the daily changes that are occurring. A resident of the village has access to an aircraft and from time to time he takes aerial photographs. These are used to monitor changes in the coastline. We have obtained some aerial photographs going back to 1941 and now know where we can get more from over the years.

I may not have the paper qualifications of some, but personal knowledge and common sense does work in the real world. By being able to measure reductions in the shingle beach, one (using paper and pencil) can calculate the volume of shingle/gravel that has been washed away over the years and from that calculate the tonnage. By regularly walking the length of the Kingston Beach I and others have instant knowledge of the movement of the beach, something that the various agencies either don't do and/or understand. In her presentation to your Committee, Mary Scanlon, MSP, explained that she had walked a small part of the beach and had seen the fragility of it. Why can't highly paid and supposedly educated agency employees not see and understand the seriousness of the situation?

Reply to the various responses

Marine Scotland

They seem to have little or no interest other than when a planning application as such is lodged with them. One would have thought that as they are supposedly looking after the marine environment, they would have important data such as sea currents, geography of the sea bed and other such important data. Such information and data would presumably help other agencies such as SNH model scenarios accurately rather than by theory.

Crown Estates

As expected, The Crown Estate does not accept any legal responsibility for preventing/repairing coastal erosion where it owns the foreshore. What their reply does not state is if they are referring to ownership above or below high water mark of the foreshore. Crown Estates claim ownership of the sea bed, therefore where does that ownership stop? At low or high tide mark on the coast? If Crown Estates only own 50% of the foreshore who owns the remainder and what have those land owners done to prevent/manage coastal erosion?

The comment that they, the Crown Estates, have spent money with the Local Authority on maintenance of the River Spey is propaganda on their behalf. Crown Estates own the River Spey where the work was done. The work done so far has been ineffective and will, in the long run, actually cause more problems than solved. Failure by the Crown Estates to maintain the course of the River Spey at Garmouth has seen over 25 acres of other people's property/land washed away in the past 4 years. By his own admission the Crown Estates Agent for that area confirmed to me in a recent conversation that the money spent as quoted would have been far better spent about ¼ mile upstream from where it was and that a far better long term outcome would have resulted.

The failure of the Crown Estates to manage the Lower Section of the River Spey since 1982, is blamed by many agencies for the current situation on Kingston Beach. By failing to maintain their section of the River Spey, gravel and shingle is settling out upstream of the mouth of the River Spey and not being washed out to sea where it may be washed ashore to maintain the beach. However, to date we have been unable to find any report that would confirm that theory. Personal observations of the Kingston Beach by locals has failed to notice any gravel having been washed up on to the beach in the past 60 years or so, therefore this theory appears to be no more than that – academic theory. Others with a scientific qualification and marine engineering background are of the opinion that the gravel from the River Spey is being pushed out along the sea bed forming a delta type gravel fan. That in turn is shallowing the inshore waters causing more problems for the area.

As the Crown Estates owns the sea bed around Scotland, does its estate increase in size by claiming new sea bed caused by coastal erosion? Does the Crown Estate gain by the effect of coastal erosion therefore the reason it does not stop or control coastal erosion?

Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Their role is confusing. Their staff tell us that their area of jurisdiction stops at the high water mark. Their role is to look at matters of flooding and prevention. In some areas Spring Tides and sea surges will cause localised flooding. Such flooding is restricted to at most 13 times a year (each lunar month). In many areas where property is under threat from erosion, the actual land does not flood. Therefore technically the areas of flooding and erosion are not connected.

As they say in their report they have a legal responsibility to assess and monitor flood risk issues but nothing to do with coastal erosion. Where planning is being considered for any coastal engineering, they have a duty to look at water quality. As they have no responsibility below high water, one assumes that such monitoring/reporting will be in respect of the water environment above that mark and that Marine Scotland take over the responsibility for the marine environment.

The key point is that other than being a consultee on water quality, SEPA have no legal responsibility for preventing or acting on coastal erosion. Their work in drawing up maps of areas of possible flooding including areas at risk of coastal erosion are an academic study that will not from their own remit, stop or reduce coastal erosion. With no remit over the marine environment, their role as a consultee in coastal erosion can only be very limited and at best time consuming for the process.

In relation to point 2.3 in their submission, I believe my comments were directed at SNH, although some of SEPA on line documentation suggests that they do not sanction removal of bank vegetation in freshwater situations.

Their comment in 2.4 is not relevant as it relates to work done upstream of the mouth of the River Spey and has no bearing on coastal erosion.

Any work done as per comment 2.5 will not assist or speed up coastal erosion prevention work. It would be appreciated if they could explain to the wider public why that project will actually aid planning and prevent coastal flooding.

Using the words coastal erosion and flooding in the same sentence is confusing as the two terms are entirely different. Coastal erosion can and does happen without flooding. Erosion is simply where the sea washes away the foreshore and any construction that happens to sit there. In some situations the foreshore is so high that even in storms and high tides, water does not cross over and flood the area. Coastal flooding happens over low lying land close to and/or below high water and/or storm levels.

Moray Council response

The Council confirms that there are regulator powers under the Coast Protection Act, 1949 for local authorities to carry out coastal protection work but this is not an obligatory power. They further state that it is the landowners responsibility to prevent coastal erosion. However as we now know, Crown Estates disagree with assumption, therefore we have stalemate. Responsibility does not mean statutory requirement, therefore this is a get out clause. Future legislation requires to put a regulatory requirement to do work to prevent coastal erosion and/or flooding caused by the sea. In many cases where coastal erosion occurs, Crown Estate land is eroded and it is then private householders who face the bill which would probably cause bankruptcy. In many places where coastal erosion is taking place, and the high water mark moves inland, does the Crown Estate ownership of the sea bed follow the high water mark, effectively claiming title to the property that founders by the incoming sea?

Where there are communities of private houses under threat, co-operation and co-ordination to justify and organise such protection work is almost impossible. Insurance does not cover damage cause by coastal erosion. Modern planning processes do not allow construction on areas that may be subject to coastal erosion or flooding. However, the areas of coastal erosion are older settlements where, when they were built over 100 years ago, the threat of erosion was not there. In many cases these settlements are conservation and historical areas, areas that have been and should be protected as part of the natural and native history. Many areas subject to or under threat of coastal erosion are listed as SSSI's, conservation areas or some other restriction put on them. Therefore planning consent is unlikely to be granted anyway, thus compounding the losses to private property owners.

The Community still maintains that the Moray Council has stonewalled the residents. Most information coming back to the community is through Moray Council Councillors. No concrete information other than we are “looking at it” or “it will cost millions to do a survey” comes from the Authority. Contact is made but no hard information comes back stating what is being done or can be done. Everything is negative. Officials do supply the community with aerial photographs of the River Spey and mouth once a month. No formal discussions take place between Moray Council, Innes Community Council or the Garmouth and Kingston Amenities Association. Moray Council officials attended a public meeting in 2010 organised by our MP and MSP. An official attended a walk on the beach with other agency employees, members of the community and the local elected members on 20th October, 2012 as well as the meeting that same night at which the council contracted “expert” gave a presentation. Council officials attended a site visit by the Moray Council Economic, Development and Infrastructure Services Committee to Kingston Beach in January, 2013. All other “visits” have been officials out gathering information or looking at the beach. Casual discussions have taken place with members of the community who were about but never ever have the Moray Council officials came up and said that they had a concrete plan of action. The Moray Council has never called a public meeting in its own right to consult with the communities or to give precise information on the options open to them. The current policy as stated at the meeting of 22nd October, 2013, and mentioned in Council Chambers is to sit back, do nothing and wait.

Reference is made to my comments about the number of “consultees” for every application/decision. Details of “consultees” was given to me by the Council Flood Alleviation Consultancy Manager in an exchange of emails between him and me. See attached document and read in reverse order of messages. In their comments of response, the Council list the Moray Firth partnership as a consultee. Moray Firth partnership is a registered charity and operates out of the headquarters of SNH. The Vice Convener is an employee of SNH. By its own admission Moray Firth Partnership is not a statutory consultee, has absolutely no powers nor qualified staff to give any input. All they do is collect data on applications for any development work in and around the shores of the Moray Firth. The Community is not happy with the answers from Moray Council as no answers have been forth coming. Every time the Community give a prediction of what the sea could do, the officials denied that anything would happen. So far the community has been proved correct every time and the Council has not. An example of the officials paying lip service is a proposal put to the Moray Council to upgrade a private road to allow egress from the village at the

time of flooding. Despite officials having been told on numerous occasions that part of the proposed route flooded during high tides, they took no heed of that information until a Councillor was passed information during the discussion in Council Chamber on funding for the project.

As I said in my presentation on 22nd January, 2013, the Council answer is always to have another study done when the pressure is on to do something at Kingston. The general consensus in the community is that the Council has no experience in coastal erosion, is tied in to the flood alleviation schemes in Elgin and Forres therefore does not have nor want to spend the money on protecting Kingston Village and Lower Garmouth.

The Council constantly refers to the need for studies and computer modeling. So many studies have been done over the years that the Council should have the necessary data. It now seems that every consultation on any engineering project requires studies to gather information to run computer models. It is a pity that the environment and the sea do not operate on the same program. At the meeting in 2010, a then Director of the Council said a study would cost at least £4 million pounds. Armour rock delivered to Kingston beach costs approximately £66 per cubic metre. No physical surveying of the seabed has been commissioned since 2010 and nobody knows of such work having been done for over 30 years. The only monitoring done by Moray Council over in the past 3 years is GSP measurements (every 3 months) off the shingle beach head over a 700 metre stretch of the high water mark. The situation at Kingston is not new. It was known about in the early 2000's yet no studies have been commissioned (if they had the Council would have told the public during the heated public meetings) to ascertain the shape and movements of the sea bed materials, the current flows. Computer studies need data. To get data physical studies need to be done. Before any of that can be done the procurement procedures need to be used and that could take anything up to 6 to 9 months. Therefore Moray Council is making decisions without knowing anything about the environment around the eroding beaches. Even if the Council said they would do remedial work, that would require to be costed and competed for under the procurement system. That can be delayed and the system used to slow down movement meaning the work will be delayed if ever done.

The Council's comments page two, first full paragraph do not stack up to reality. New mouths to the River Spey have been cut on numerous occasions since the 1890's. It is only in recent years that the erosion from Kingston Beach has been so noticeable. Their statement about coastal

sediment movement is not as seen by the naked eye. Most movement is west to east seen by the deposits of gravel east of Kingston, the sea currents listed by Marine Scotland coupled with prevailing wind directions and known local currents within the Spey Bay push material generally eastwards and we believe out to sea.. To the best of our knowledge no studies of the sea bed and currents have been carried out in the Spey Bay area and in particular off the beach at Kingston for almost 30 years. Comments and predictions are being given with no evidence of the reality of the situation.

The community completely refutes the evidence of the “expert” that part of Kingston Beach immediately behind the houses most under threat is not disappearing. On 15th December, 2012, the force of the sea reduced the height of the shingle beach by almost three metres and pushed the high water mark and beach head over 35 metres inland. Some of the gravel was dragged out to sea while the bank was pushed into and across the lagoon that protected Kingston. (see attached diagram)



Kingston Beach 5th October, 2010. Notice shape of the lagoon and its width.



Photograph taken from the same position during the storm of 15th December, 2012.



This photograph was taken on 29th March, 2013, looking across to the spot where the two previous

photographs were taken. On 14th December, 2012, the grey pole in this photograph was situated one metre from the high water line of the lagoon between it and the houses. The gravel was piled higher than it and it had been in that position for a number of years. The pole now sits less than 2 metres from the high water mark on the sea side of the spit. Gentle movement of the sea over the past few months has pushed loose gravel up and around the pole. To the right of the pole and over a distance of a few hundred yards, the sea now regularly breaks over the top of the shingle bank and runs into the lagoon pushing gravel ahead of it. In the eyes of the community, the gravel bank has moved and no longer offers a protection to the village.

The following photograph looks eastwards along the lagoon that lies between Kingston and the shingle beach. It was taken at half tide on 29th March, 2013. The top of the shingle bank is approximately two feet above the high water mark on a medium tide with no swell or storm condition. On a regular basis the sea breaks over the shingle and runs into the lagoon. The object protruding from the water is an upturned concrete pillbox that fell into the lagoon when Moray Council refused to intervene in 1960/61 when the River Spey forced its way through the lagoon. Two houses situated behind and slightly to the left of the house in the picture fell into the River Spey at that time. The banking and land on the right of the lagoon are all imported materials, namely black powdery earth. Wind action in the lagoon causes it to wash out never mind what will happen when the shingle bank finally gives way.



Mary Scanlon's presentation was generally correct in what she said she had seen. There may have been confusion over the fact that she brought into the discussion costs for a project 1 1/2 miles in land on the River Spey. I believe she quoted the gross sum for some or all flood alleviation schemes started in Moray over the past 4 or 5 years.

Where an authority has an area that is under threat of flooding and erosion, one would think that a register of all such areas would be kept in order that annual checks could be done to see if indeed there is any erosion and to what extent. The fact that SEPA with the aid of other authorities are drawing up flood maps of Scotland shows the merit in keeping such records. The community believes that Moray Council by not keeping such records, especially areas where they have carried out such work in the past is a neglect of duty and care to the community. Accurate record keeping allows any organisation to have accurate data should the need arise in the future to carry out remedial or preventive works.

David Mackay's statement is correct (page 3, top line). The "expert" made the prediction at a meeting of the community addressed by him in October, 2012. I was there. At that same meeting the "expert" said that the beach was safe and that nothing should be done by the Council. When pushed by a member of the community he said that protection could be considered for along the south (village) side of the lagoon. The "expert" walked the washed out beach on 18th December, 2012, before addressing the Economic, Development and Infrastructure Services Committee of Moray Council. He said that he saw no significant change in the shingle bank and his advice was the same. He said that his report drawn up before the 15th December, 2012, storm should stand as was and that in his opinion nothing had changed because of the storm.

As far as can be ascertained any past coastal protection work done in Moayshire was done pre the formation of the Moray Council as it is now i.e it was done by Grampian Regional Council. The Council states that it believes that it complies with current responsibilities. These are obviously seriously flawed as they give no protection to communities under threat. It has been mooted that the Council and possibly the Scottish Government are failing in their responsibilities under the Human Rights Directive, Articles 1, 8 and 14.

Under an FOI request, Moray Council stated it had spent over £15 million pounds over a six year period on consultancy fees for flood alleviation. A fraction of that could have been spent to protect Kingston Beach. Kingston is a Community of over 100 houses. Best minimum estimate of the gross values of the properties within that community is £12 million pounds. No cost is added for public utilities. If nothing is done to protect Kingston Village, the houses will have negative equity and the village will require to be evacuated. The social upheaval that will cause as well as the cost to the public purse will be far in advance of the cost of some form of coastal protection. If no work is done to provide some form of coastal protection at Kingston the sea will move inland threatening properties worth over £1 million in Lower Garmouth. As well as that, the sea will be a threat to the sewage treatment works in Garmouth. The top of that facility currently sits about 18” above high tide mark, a mark that currently laps about 3 feet from it. Should that be damaged, it will cost the public purse in excess of £12 million pounds to replace. These facts and figures are all ignored by Moray Council.

Innes Community Council has offered to give presentations to the Economic, Development and Infrastructure Services Committee. The Chair has ignored the request and failed to answer the letters. Through our local Councillors it has been suggest that “it is not protocol for a Committee to listen to others”. An invitation to the Convener of Moray Council to visit the Kingston Beach was refused on the grounds that “it would compromise MY position”. A letter to the Leader of the Administration was acknowledged but the invitation ignored. No wonder the community feels that the Council is ignoring us and we are being “stonewalled”.

Scottish National Heritage

The author of the SNH response is, from her background placed by her on the business web site “Linkedin”, an academic in an administrative role with no civil and/or marine engineering skills or background.. The document is a wish list policy document and much or most of it does not have any real bearing or hope for Kingston Beach. The statement on policy on coastal erosion concludes with “enable Scotland’s coastlines to evolve naturally with minimal human intervention”. It further lists advice which may well apply to new and modern developments but nowhere does it recognise the threat to old established communities. The Chairman of SNH has in correspondence with me state clearly that SNH has no statutory powers and is an agency that offers

advice when asked. From the communities experience that “advice” is always based on the advisors personal beliefs rather than scientifically proven evidence. SNH have no moral or financial responsibility for the “advice” they give out.

The comments in 1 b are for Government to decide, not an agency. Again by the comments the author is failing to recognise the special cases involving old existing communities that have been seriously affected and threatened by recent climate change and rising sea levels.. Failure by her to recognise this and allow coastal erosion to occur unchecked fails to accept the major social impact of having to re house and look after a large number of households, the financial loss and subsequent stress and burdens caused by that loss, even before the loss of public utilities is concerned. The local authority has a legal responsibility to house people made homeless. At Kingston there are over 100 houses and more than 200 residents.

In 1 c and d, appears as theory with no hard data to back the claims. One would have assumed that such an organisation would have data on all beach fortification work so that it could collect data for calculating benefits/effects when it came to other areas that may require similar types of protection.

In E the author states that they “are not aware of any locations where increased near shore sedimentation has damaged marine habitats”. That does not mean that our observations or questions are wrong. As an environmental agency the community assumed that SNH carried out such studies in various areas or would have the capacity to carry out such studies. Fish stocks in the Moray Firth have collapsed in the past few decades, a fact confirmed by the virtual closing of the traditional fishing fleet. If SNH had been listening to the community in recent years they would have seen the shrinking of the depth of gravel/shingle on Kingston Beach. Calculation of the loss of gravel is simple. Multiply the length of the beach by the width and depth of missing gravel/shingle to give the volume which is then multiplied by the specific gravity of the stone. If SNH accessed old aerial photographs and matched them against Google maps they could see and calculate the amount of missing gravel. Members of the community with no formal education are able to calculate these figures by mental arithmetic, so why can't academics with the role to gain such information?



The above photograph was taken on behalf of SNH or Scottish Wildlife Trust circa 2005. The following photograph was taken for Moray Council on 4th November, 2012. The changes to Kingston Beach are very clear.





This photograph was taken in January, 2012. Even in this picture the changes to the mouth of the River Spey and the beach at Kingston compared to the previous ones are clear.



This photograph was taken the day after the storm of 15th December, 2012. The change caused by the storm is very clear. The gravel bank separating the lagoon from the sea was less than 18” high. To the right of the lagoon one can see the sea is breaking over the shingle bank into the lagoon behind. This photograph shows how the storm reduced the width of the lagoon between Kingston and the sea. The width of the lagoon continues to narrow because of sea action.

The community find it strange that academic advisors do not seem to see what the general public can.

In 2 a and b, the advice to the community is that you can't interfere with nature! No scientific evidence has been produced to show why no action is best. The nonintervention policy is the major reason that Kingston village is under threat. If studies have been done, we assume that they are computer generated as nobody has been seen taking soundings or measurements of the sea bed and/or coast. No action has caused 6 million tonnes of gravel to disappear from Kingston Beach. That has moved across the sea bed and we, the local community can see with our own eyes the fact the sea is shallower now off Kingston than it has ever been. (You just have to watch the wave action on low tide to know the difference) Other changes in the environment are simple things. We rarely see seagulls and never ever see them feeding within half a mile of the coast. Dolphins stay off shore, no longer coming in close even on high tide. Seals that frequent the mouth of the River Spey daily are very rarely seen west of the River Spey mouth and when they do venture that far west they return eastwards within a short period of time. Kingston Beach was once a prolific sea angling place. In recent years catches of fish by sea anglers has collapsed to a few fish a year. Bait anglers now see that bait can remain in position on the sea bed for hours without even sea shrimp or crabs touching it. That is a vast change to decades back and to the layman all these signal a sterile area, a sterile area that coincides with erosion of the beach. The community sees it as academic theory against common knowledge and common sense.

2 c. The local community disagrees completely with this statement. We meet with SNH “advisors” from time to time because of the beach and the river. The community is always told what can't be done but never told why or what can be done to stop the erosion. As already stated we do not accept the report of the Moray Council “expert” as he has ignore the major changes over the years and in particular on the 15t December, 2012. It should be noted that the “expert” based his conclusions on historical data provided by Moray Council and in them he accepted that there

was a history of coastal erosion, hence his prediction that Kingston would disappear in 50 years. SNH are giving advice on theory. To the best of our knowledge they have never carried out modeling trials with hard data collected on site. Even their predictions on tidal races are different to the reality gained from reading admiralty charts and Marine Scotland charts. The response talks about further studies between now and 2015. Those studies should have been carried out years ago. By the time they are published, there is a high risk that Kingston Beach will not be there. In December, 2011 and January, 2012, the sea broke over the shingle bank on numerous occasions and ran into the lagoon. Both Moray Council and SNH were aware of that, a warning of what was to come. Neither would accept the possibility and both had and have no answer to the subsequent and serious damage and threat.

2 d The author is not aware of the contents of documents published on the SNH website. We disagree with the rest of her comments. She has not heard the statements from SNH “advisors”. SNH, as she says have no statutory powers but the reports and advice given by SNH “advisors” gives the impression that they do. For a weak authority trying to save money, such advice is used as a reason not to spend money.

The Lower Spey Forum was not a success, quite the opposite. Most members resigned within a short period of time. The one member who did strongly support the work mentioned in the response was a farmer who had lost over 15 acres of land at the site of the works through river erosion. That work was done on Crown Estates land, saving them money by the input of public funds. The works as previously stated have not been a success. They have changed the flow of the river in a bad way and come the next spate will cause far more damage to a large area of mature woodland. Again in that project local knowledge and advice was ignored by the academics.

I know understand that there are similar problems in north east Aberdeenshire as well as the east coast and west coasts of Scotland. The situation at Garmouth and Kingston is probably one of the worst examples of incompetency’s and neglect in coastal and river erosion management. It may be a nice theory that we should not interfere with mother nature, however when people’s lives and property are put at risk, surely protecting them should be the priority. Constantly generating “models” and theories based on computer models without real and raw data or the knowledge of the local population is expensive, time consuming and a get out for any agency, local authority and eventually the Scottish Government.

This week I had a chance meeting with Councillor Alan Wright, Leader of the Administration of Moray Council. I spoke to him about the continued erosion at Kingston Beach and that something needed to be done. I again asked him to come see for himself. In an a gruff and arrogant manner he said that not only had he been down but SNH had said that nothing needed done at Kingston, especially the use of rock armour and as such. nothing would be done. That is an example of SNH saying something where no local consultation or proper research has been done.

The community would hope that your committee does, as Mary Scanlon said, see merit in the contents of the Petition and asks for a review of procedures and protocols in dealing with major coastal erosion. In doing that, I would hope that evidence and experience would be drawn from local areas like ours. Maybe the Government should be taking a far closer look at the coastal defences and attitudes in Denmark and Holland. They have to operate under the same EU directives as us but manage their coastal defences far better.

Yours sincerely,

James A Mackie