



## Speech delivered by SAGB to the Parliamentary event in Palace of Westminster on 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026

My Lords, Honourable Members, ladies and gentlemen.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today, thank you for coming, it is a pleasure to see so many here.

First, I must thank Caroline Voaden, MP for South Devon and Chair of the APPG for shellfish aquaculture for sponsoring today's auspicious event

For those who don't know me, I am David Jarrad, CEO of the Shellfish Association of Great Britain and secretariat to our APPG – we are here to discuss shellfish aquaculture—an industry that sits at the intersection of food security, environmental stewardship, coastal resilience, and regional economic development—and to explain why thoughtful policy and support is both timely and necessary.

When we speak about the future in the United Kingdom, we often speak of energy security, food security, rural prosperity, and environmental stewardship as though they are separate ambitions.

But just sometimes, one opportunity advances them all at once.

Shellfish aquaculture is one of those rare opportunities.

Around the coast of the UK — we are blessed with some of the most productive coastal waters worldwide. We are an island nation, and the marine environment is our inheritance.

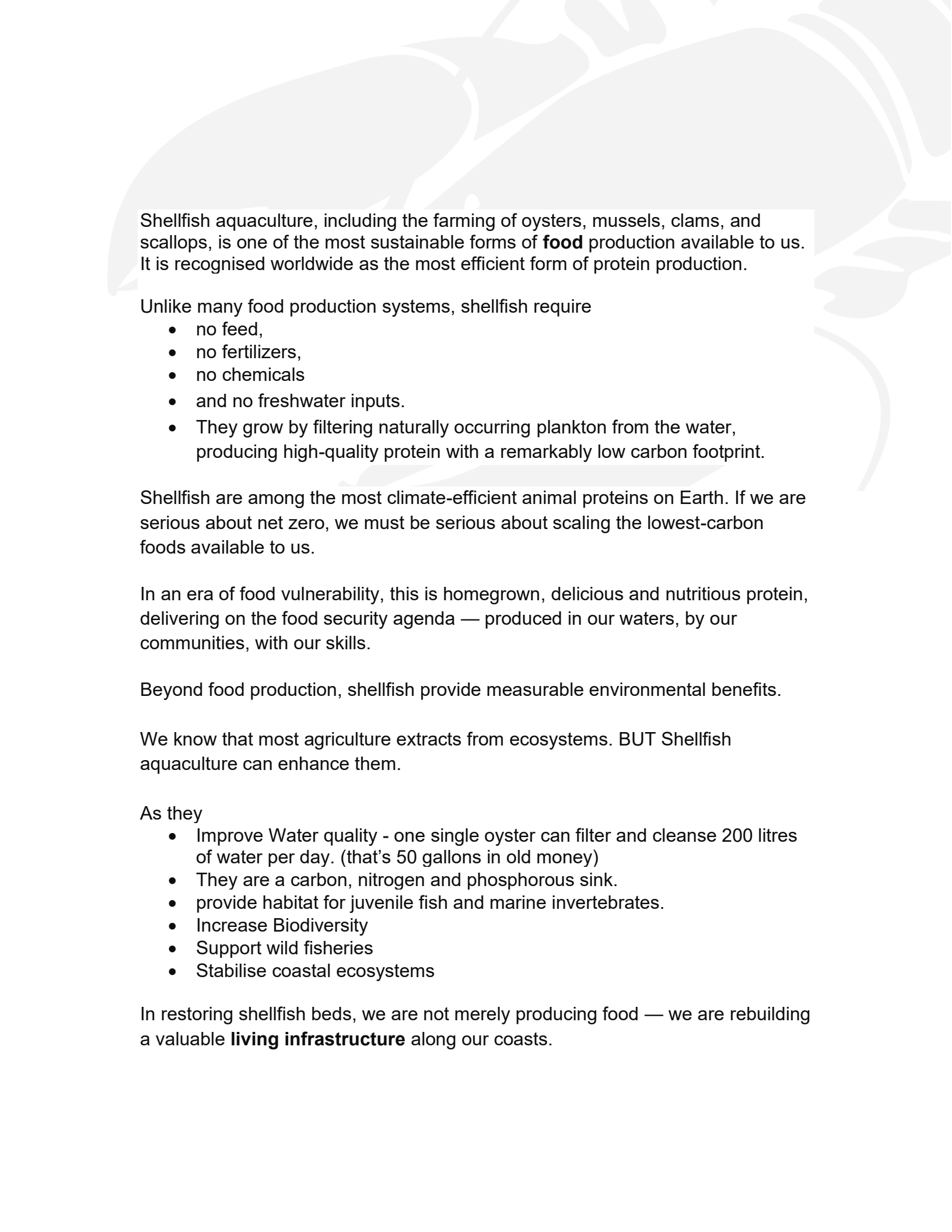
And shellfish farming allows us to turn that inheritance into prosperity without compromising principles.

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Shellfish aquaculture, including the farming of oysters, mussels, clams, and scallops, is one of the most sustainable forms of **food** production available to us. It is recognised worldwide as the most efficient form of protein production.

Unlike many food production systems, shellfish require

- no feed,
- no fertilizers,
- no chemicals
- and no freshwater inputs.
- They grow by filtering naturally occurring plankton from the water, producing high-quality protein with a remarkably low carbon footprint.

Shellfish are among the most climate-efficient animal proteins on Earth. If we are serious about net zero, we must be serious about scaling the lowest-carbon foods available to us.

In an era of food vulnerability, this is homegrown, delicious and nutritious protein, delivering on the food security agenda — produced in our waters, by our communities, with our skills.

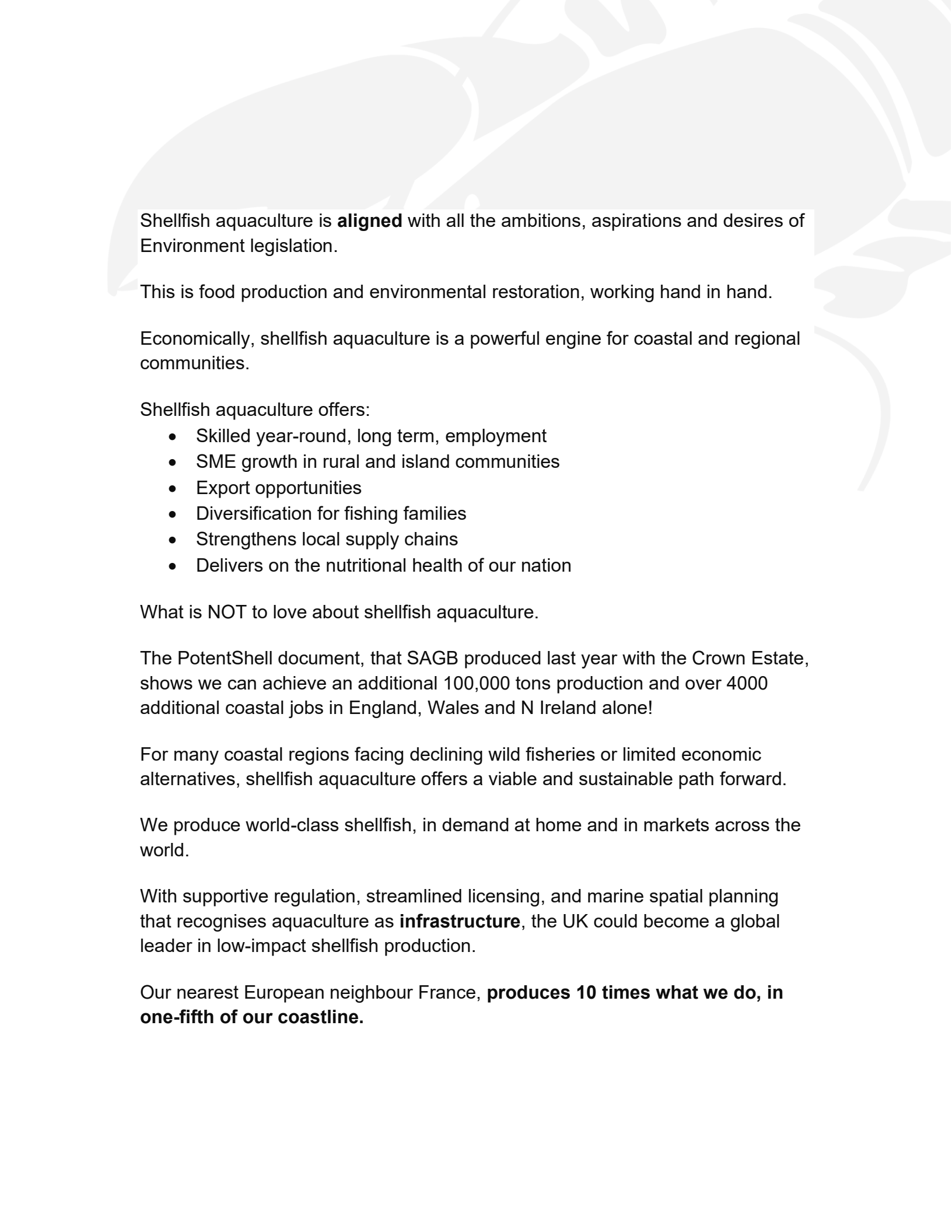
Beyond food production, shellfish provide measurable environmental benefits.

We know that most agriculture extracts from ecosystems. BUT Shellfish aquaculture can enhance them.

As they

- Improve Water quality - one single oyster can filter and cleanse 200 litres of water per day. (that's 50 gallons in old money)
- They are a carbon, nitrogen and phosphorous sink.
- provide habitat for juvenile fish and marine invertebrates.
- Increase Biodiversity
- Support wild fisheries
- Stabilise coastal ecosystems

In restoring shellfish beds, we are not merely producing food — we are rebuilding a valuable **living infrastructure** along our coasts.



Shellfish aquaculture is **aligned** with all the ambitions, aspirations and desires of Environment legislation.

This is food production and environmental restoration, working hand in hand.

Economically, shellfish aquaculture is a powerful engine for coastal and regional communities.

Shellfish aquaculture offers:

- Skilled year-round, long term, employment
- SME growth in rural and island communities
- Export opportunities
- Diversification for fishing families
- Strengthens local supply chains
- Delivers on the nutritional health of our nation

What is NOT to love about shellfish aquaculture.

The PotentShell document, that SAGB produced last year with the Crown Estate, shows we can achieve an additional 100,000 tons production and over 4000 additional coastal jobs in England, Wales and N Ireland alone!

For many coastal regions facing declining wild fisheries or limited economic alternatives, shellfish aquaculture offers a viable and sustainable path forward.

We produce world-class shellfish, in demand at home and in markets across the world.

With supportive regulation, streamlined licensing, and marine spatial planning that recognises aquaculture as **infrastructure**, the UK could become a global leader in low-impact shellfish production.

Our nearest European neighbour France, **produces 10 times what we do, in one-fifth of our coastline.**



We can do better, we should do better as:

We have the science.  
We have the coastline.  
We have the heritage.  
We have the market  
We have the industrial desire

➤ **What we need is regulatory ambition**

No one would advocate growth without safeguards. Marine protection matters. -  
But policy coherence also matters.

Shellfish aquaculture has for too long been treated as an afterthought — caught between fisheries policy, environmental licensing, and planning frameworks. If we align departments behind a clear national strategy, we can:

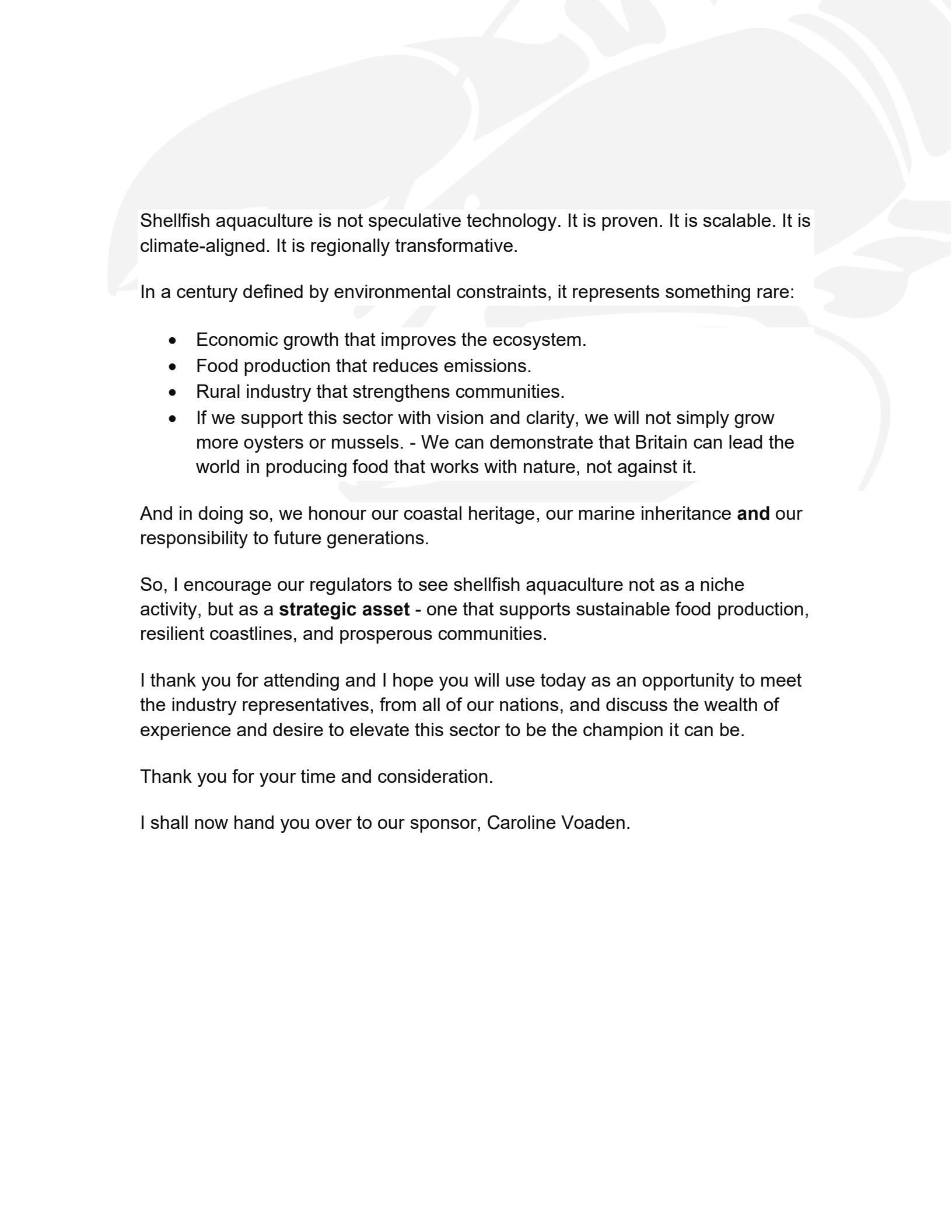
- Encourage responsible investment
- Protect ecosystems while enabling growth
- Provide certainty to coastal entrepreneurs
- Reduce consenting delays
- Grow the species best suited to our waters
- Develop a world beating industry

The question is not whether we can regulate responsibly. It is whether we can regulate intelligently. – *we are not at the moment*

Clear, science-based policies and coordinated governance are essential to allow this industry to grow responsibly while safeguarding environmental and community values.

Support for shellfish aquaculture is not about choosing industry over environment - it is about recognising an opportunity where economic growth, ecosystem health, and community well-being align.

With the right policy framework, we can ensure this sector continues to deliver public value for decades to come and deliver on the governments food security strategy



Shellfish aquaculture is not speculative technology. It is proven. It is scalable. It is climate-aligned. It is regionally transformative.

In a century defined by environmental constraints, it represents something rare:

- Economic growth that improves the ecosystem.
- Food production that reduces emissions.
- Rural industry that strengthens communities.
- If we support this sector with vision and clarity, we will not simply grow more oysters or mussels. - We can demonstrate that Britain can lead the world in producing food that works with nature, not against it.

And in doing so, we honour our coastal heritage, our marine inheritance **and** our responsibility to future generations.

So, I encourage our regulators to see shellfish aquaculture not as a niche activity, but as a **strategic asset** - one that supports sustainable food production, resilient coastlines, and prosperous communities.

I thank you for attending and I hope you will use today as an opportunity to meet the industry representatives, from all of our nations, and discuss the wealth of experience and desire to elevate this sector to be the champion it can be.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

I shall now hand you over to our sponsor, Caroline Voaden.