

# The Source

December 2020

News from around **Scottish Sea Farms** and the sector

## SPECIAL END OF YEAR EDITION



## Milestone for Barcaldine as first RAS fish harvested

**The first smolts reared at Scottish Sea Farms' all-new salmon hatchery have now been harvested and delivered to customers around the world.**

The fish were amongst the first to be RAS-grown at the new £58m Barcaldine Hatchery on the shores of Loch Creran near Oban before being transferred to Scottish Sea Farms' Loch Nevis C farm for on-growing.

It's the latest milestone in Scottish Sea Farms' ongoing drive to increase fish welfare and survival – starting with giving its salmon the very best of growing conditions.

Scottish Sea Farms' Freshwater Manager, Pål Tangvik, said: 'Thanks to its state-of-the-art recirculating aquaculture system – or RAS for short – we now have much greater control over the key growth factors of water quality, oxygen levels, temperature, light and speed of flow.

'This creates a more stable environment compared to conventional flow-through hatcheries which, due to the fact they draw in freshwater from rivers or lochs, can be subject to changes in weather.

'We're also able to keep each generation of fish completely separate and bio-secure, meaning we can maintain peak health throughout the freshwater cycle.

'Combine this with our hugely talented fish husbandry and technical teams, and what we're seeing is bigger, healthier

smolts which not only require less time at sea but are better able to withstand the natural challenges of the marine environment.'

Testament to this, the smolts put to sea at Loch Nevis C had an average weight of 178g – more than double the average weight Scottish Sea Farms would expect to produce using traditional methods – and required two months less at sea to reach market size.

Tangvik added: 'To have been a part of bringing Barcaldine Hatchery into being is one of the single most exciting things I have done in my career. From long-held ambition to operational reality, the facility has had the backing

of the Board, the Managing Director and the wider team from day one. Everyone supported us, everyone has played a part – and now everyone can take real pride from the benefits we're delivering in terms of fish health and welfare.'

Whilst fish welfare and survival are at the heart of Barcaldine Hatchery, so too is the need to farm as sustainably as possible. Of the 5,200m<sup>3</sup> of freshwater required per day, up to 99 per cent is recirculated, equating to a saving of over 20 times the freshwater consumption of conventional methods.

**Continued on page 2...**



### INSIDE

**Orkney's Hunda goes live**

**Wanted: Youth Council volunteers**

**All change: Tavish Scott**

**Make 2021 your best career year**

**Self-care during Covid**

**It's good to talk**

...Continued from page 1.

This water is cleaned every 30 minutes via a complex system of filters and UV light (no chemicals) and maintained at a constant temperature via a combination of heat pumps and heat exchangers. These use less energy than traditional kerosene boilers or electric chillers and have the added capacity to recover heat from waste-water for re-use.

Meanwhile, a biomass system run on locally sourced wood chip provides heating and hot water throughout the rest of the facility.

Said Scottish Sea Farms Managing Director Jim Gallagher: 'When it came to transforming our freshwater farming, it seemed only natural that we do so in the greenest way possible: from reducing our use of fossil fuels or finite resources such as freshwater, to provision for our own hydro scheme.

'Through the technologies available to us, we're also able to capture any waste material from the growing cycle. This is then removed by Invergordon-based waste management company Rock Highland who re-circulate it as nutrient-rich agricultural fertiliser to aid crop development.

'It's all part and parcel of our commitment to responsible, sustainable food production: the multi-million investment in Barcaldine; the hugely talented team of freshwater and marine farmers who care for our fish; our award-winning processing, sales and logistics experts; and all those who support them. All of whom are integral to ensuring we continue supplying premium quality salmon, grown with care, to customers around the world.'

While many of those customers have already been enjoying the first Barcaldine-reared salmon, the farm team at Loch Nevis C has marked another important milestone of their own with the retiral of long-standing farm manager Jim Jarvie.

**Read more about Jim Jarvie's retirement on page 7.**



Pål Tangvik, Jim Gallagher and Noelia Rodriguez

# New Covid app to help keep key workers and communities safe

**Scottish Sea Farms' Covid questionnaire is now available as an app, thanks to a collaboration between the company's IT and Health & Safety teams.**



Since March, the Covid questionnaire has played an instrumental role in protecting key workers and, in turn, their families and communities.

Scottish Sea Farms Health & Safety Manager Gerry McCormick explained: 'As both farmers and food producers, many of our staff can only carry out their critical roles in the workplace and we have worked hard to ensure that it's safe for them to do so.

'This includes ensuring that they themselves are free of the virus prior to starting their shift and coming into contact with colleagues – something we are able to determine with the help of our Covid questionnaire.'

Originally, employees were asked to complete the questionnaire on a weekly basis, but with the number of new coronavirus cases in Scotland, the rest

of the UK and around the world on the rise again, the decision was taken to make it a daily requirement – sparking the idea for an app to cut down on the paperwork involved.

Scottish Sea Farms' Head of IT, David Anderson, said: 'By creating an app that can be downloaded onto people's phones, employees can now complete the questionnaire before they leave home. If their answers indicate they are free from the virus, they can go to work where they will be temperature tested on arrival. Should they have any areas of concern, however, they must remain at home and the company will receive an instant notification.'

To ensure that every employee finds the new app as easy to use as the next, it's available in English, Polish and Hungarian. All data captured is stored for 21 days then deleted.

## Young people: your company needs you



**Scottish Sea Farms is looking for volunteers for a new Young People's Council, to represent the voice of the next generation and help shape the company's future.**

Nearly a third of the workforce is 28 or under and their views are important in developing business strategy and recruiting talent, said Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw, who is driving the initiative.

'In order to grow, we need people with a variety of skills and we don't always hear the young person's vision of what we could do differently.

'The Young People's Council would be a great way for us to understand how we attract that generation and how we retain and develop them.

'It will be an opportunity a couple of times a year to sit with members of the management team and discuss the business, its future and our plans. We

would also look for them to be mentors and role models for other young people in our business.'

The meetings will be a 'safe space', said Bryant-Shaw, where younger staff can tell management exactly what it's like to work at Scottish Sea Farms, what would make it better, what appealed to them in the first place, and what's keeping them there.

'They have to be 28 and under and we want to hear from employees from every area of the business,' she said.

**Interested in volunteering for the Young People's Council? Simply email Tracy. Bryant-Shaw@scottishseafarms.com with a few words on why you'd like to be involved.**





# Brand new Hunda goes with the Flow

**Orkney's latest farm at Hunda in Scapa Flow went live on November 6, triumphing over Covid delays that had presented unique challenges.**

The farm had been due to open in the summer but while components for all the pens and mooring equipment arrived from Norwegian supplier Scale AQ before the lockdown in March, the net factory in India shut down.

With the smolts ready to be transferred from Barcaldine in July, Northern Isles Regional Manager Richard Darbyshire had to find temporary accommodation for the young fish to begin their marine cycle.

Fortunately, nearby Westerbister was recently fallowed and had enough space to house the Hunda smolts, which weighed an average of 150g.

This gave them a 'fantastic head start' before they were moved to Hunda, at around one kilo, and the fish are now performing very well, said Darbyshire.

With consent to grow up to 1,677 tonnes of salmon, the farm has seen a £3.2m investment in infrastructure, with a new barge and a new boat, plus the creation of six full-time jobs.

Headed by Farm Manager Martin Mladenov, who was previously a trainee manager in Shetland, Hunda is the tenth farm in the company's Orkney region and boasts top of the range technology.

The 12 x 100m diameter pens are fitted with Sapphire SealPro netting with Ultracore bases, to guard against seal predation.

Darbyshire said the high specification netting marked a major outlay but was a price worth paying.

'We have a duty of care to our fish and these new, more robust netting systems are the single most effective tool we have to keep salmon and seals safely separate.'

Hunda is serviced by a 17m workboat, built by Northwind Engineering of Kishorn, while feed is distributed from a 200-tonne Scale AQ steel barge that is positioned in the centre of the grid.

'It's a clever design,' said Mladenov, 'with the feed pipes laid out straight to prevent them bending in rough weather. When I saw it, I thought 'of course!'.



Hunda Farm Manager Martin Mladenov

'Another advantage is that the barge is much closer to the pens so you can see the whole farm more easily.'

Hunda has not only overcome the obstacles of the pandemic, but its team, recruited in January from diverse backgrounds, were mostly aquaculture rookies.

But Mladenov wouldn't have it any other way: 'Everyone learns the same things at the same time and that has really bonded us together. If I had to choose again, I'd still go with the same team.'

## Caption competition

**Fancy winning £100 M&S vouchers ahead of Christmas?**

Send us your suggested caption for this photo of Scottish Sea Farms' Head of Fish Health, Ralph Bickerdike, in conversation with Peter Coull, Senior Manager for our Loch Nevis farms.

Submit your caption by emailing [thesource@scottishseafarms.com](mailto:thesource@scottishseafarms.com) before 4pm Friday 11 December 2020. The winning caption will be picked by Regional Manager for Mainland Marine, Innes Weir, who sent in the photo.







# Salmon's new champion plans to change the rules

**Tavish Scott, chief executive of the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation, is optimistic that the regulatory regime for aquaculture will be reformed next year, enabling the sector to grow.**

Salmon farmers in Scotland currently have to apply for four different permissions, through four different government bodies.

'There is no single point of contact, no starting point, everyone has a role but no one has a leadership role,' said Scott, talking to The Source in the SSPO's offices in Edinburgh.

'We need to achieve that regulatory reform because it costs our members more to do business here than it does in Norway or the Faroes or Canada.'

The former politician, who was a one-time leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats and the MSP for Shetland for 20 years until stepping down last year, took up his job at the SSPO in November.

His political experience may turn out to be the perfect training as he guides the salmon sector through the next chapter in its development.

'I'm going to stand up for the people who work in this sector, whether they be MDs or those out on the pens every day,' he said.

Salmon farmers have been pushing for a regulatory overhaul for years, but Scott believes there is now a 'perfect storm', in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic and ahead of next year's climate change conference, COP26, in Glasgow.

'We have a super opportunity to make sure ministers have a clear blueprint that is consistent with their own requirements to get the economy moving again on the back of Covid, and to achieve environmental standards in relation to climate change.

'I'd like to think we'd not only see the beginnings of a different system, but the regulators that are our colleagues now would be working in a different way next year, in a streamlined way where they make determinations in a coordinated fashion.'

He said it was up to ministers to decide which body would take the lead, but he is reassured by their support.

'The sector has a very good relationship with government. When we're asking for better regulation and not less regulation, it's going to be difficult for anyone to oppose that. That gives me confidence.'

Scott was catapulted rather than eased into his new job. Almost on day one, he spearheaded the launch of the SSPO's ambitious Sustainability Charter. He then appeared before MSPs on the Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) committee, highlighting farmers' achievements in the two years since the parliamentary inquiry into the sector.

While he was encouraged by the engagement from MSPs on the REC committee, Scott intends to further educate politicians in 2021.

Covid permitting, the SSPO is planning to invite ministers, MSPs and senior civil servants out to salmon farms and also to meet suppliers, following May's Holyrood elections.

'I think the supply chain is the unsung story about how big this sector is - 3,600 businesses, at a conservative estimate, where we spend £600m-£700m per annum,' said Scott.

'I want to make sure we have a much more informed political debate based on giving members of the Scottish parliament the best possible opportunity to learn about our sector and therefore understand it.'

## Sustainability Charter a step forward

**The SSPO has published a new Sustainability Charter that it hopes will set the course for salmon farming in Scotland for decades to come.**

The charter details 41 separate actions the sector will take to fulfil five pledges on animal welfare, minimising environmental impact, full traceability of fish, employment practices and relations with local communities.

Included in the charter is a commitment to exploring the potential of new technologies to capture fish waste from marine farms.

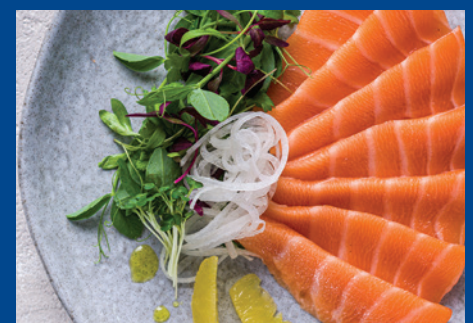
'Crucially, it is a vision that has been created with the young people in

our sector, those who will be there to drive the sector forward when its current leaders have long since retired,' said the SSPO.

'Our vision builds on the strong productivity of our sector and links our aim of supporting local communities with our desire to provide fulfilling rewarding careers for our people.

'It brings together our commitments to the environment with the best standards of fish welfare to produce nutritious, locally sourced seafood.'

SSPO chief executive Tavish Scott said: 'We have a very good story to tell on the environment. We're



recognising our environmental impact and how we're going to minimise it as part of a worldwide campaign to tackle climate change - that is a step forward for the sector.'

# Two years of progress

**Scottish salmon farmers have worked hard to meet the 65 recommendations of a parliamentary inquiry into the sector, a Holyrood committee heard this month.**



Meeting MSPs on the Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) committee to review progress, farming representatives spelt out their achievements since the inquiry issued its report in November 2018.

The committee had called for urgent action to improve and enhance the regulation of the sector but rejected demands by critics for a moratorium on expansion.

Tavish Scott, chief executive of the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO), told the cross-party REC members: 'Across fish health and welfare, the environment,

transparency and data, and wild fish interactions we have gone further than you asked and rightly so.'

The SSPO has produced a document detailing the measures it has implemented to address the issues raised during the REC inquiry.

These include investment in land-based recirculating aquaculture systems (RAS) to boost smolt production; introducing specialist HDPE netting across most farms to keep out seals; the development of vaccines and automated vaccination technology to fight disease; and reducing annual average sea lice counts.

The committee, chaired by Highlands and Islands MSP Edward Mountain (Con), also heard from Anne Anderson, the SSPO's sustainability director, and Ben Hadfield, chief operating officer for salmon farmer Mowi in Scotland, Ireland and the Faroes, along with representatives from Marine Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and Highland Council's planning authority.

**You can read 'Scottish salmon: an update to the RECC – our actions, investment and impact' at: [https://www.scottishsalmon.co.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/SSPO\\_PDF\\_BetterFutureForUsAll.pdf](https://www.scottishsalmon.co.uk/sites/default/files/2020-11/SSPO_PDF_BetterFutureForUsAll.pdf)**

## Making Modern Apprenticeships more accessible

**Argyll College UHI has added to its team with a part-time SVQ/MA Assessor for Aquaculture, meaning it is now able to offer Modern Apprenticeships at Levels 2 and 3.**

The move is designed to help meet sector appetite for skills-based qualifications, with Scottish Sea Farms being the first of the country's salmon farmers to enrol employees.

Scottish Sea Farms' Head of HR, Tracy Bryant-Shaw, explained: 'Already, more than 85 of our employees have undertaken an Apprenticeship, either via the NAFC Marine Centre UHI in Shetland or Inverness College UHI, and we have a further 30 employees on the waiting list. Now, thanks to Argyll College UHI, many of those will be able to get started.'

The development is just one of a series of skills initiatives that Scottish Sea Farms and Argyll College UHI have been collaborating on over the last 18 months.

Also in the pipeline is a new schools



programme with Oban and Tobermory High Schools aimed at raising awareness of salmon farming as a career choice.

In addition, the College is planning a new dedicated Marine Industry Training Centre.

Argyll College UHI's Head of Curriculum, Don Mitchell, is currently seconded to the role of Project Manager for the new Centre. 'Our strategic direction is to support the maritime and aquaculture sectors across Argyll and beyond,' said Mitchell. 'Our planned new Marine Industry Training Centre at Dunstaffnage in Oban will allow us to offer a whole range of training geared specifically for these sectors.'

## Head vet puts marine tourism students in the picture



Scottish Sea Farms Head Vet Ronnie Soutar

**Students enrolled on the Marine and Coastal Tourism degree course at the University of the Highland and Islands were recently given an hour-long talk on salmon farming by Scottish Sea Farms Head Vet Ronnie Soutar.**

The students then had a chance to question the distinguished vet, who is also chair of the Scottish SPCA and a former president of the Fish Veterinary Society.

'I was very clear I thought fish farming was a good thing but I wanted to give them as much information and as little bias as possible,' said Soutar.

The virtual lecture and Q&A session were initiated by course leader Eilidh Ormiston. The students were due to go on a field trip, postponed because of Covid, where they would see salmon pens and Scottish Sea Farms' new Barcaldine RAS hatchery.

Ormiston wanted to give them some background. 'They had various ideas but no real knowledge about fish farming,' she said.

She got in touch with Soutar and they decided he would give a talk on how aquaculture fits into the world, then specifically on how salmon farming works.

'I think it's given a much more informed base for the students to work on,' said Ormiston. 'If they're going to go out as marine leaders, they should have an understanding of all aspects of the marine environment.'

Soutar agrees: 'The more we are open and show people what we do, the better it is. Any time I have hosted people on farm visits they invariably go away with a more positive attitude.'



# People on the move

**Recent months have seen several colleagues appointed to new roles, along with the arrival of three new (or familiar) faces.**

On Shetland, the restructuring of our marine farming continues with John Henderson progressing from Trainee Farm Manager to Farm Manager at Cliftsound, and long-standing Vidlin Farm Manager James MacDonald taking on the additional responsibility of Swarta and Bellister, supported by Tom Izdebski, David Bisset and Michael Ruddick.

On Orkney, Amanda Smith has bid a fond farewell to her Eday farm colleagues, but not for long. She'll be seeing them regularly, along with our other Orkney farm teams, as she steps into the role of Fish Health Manager for the region.

On Scottish mainland, Shona Anderson-Geddes has taken up the all-new role of Health & Safety Coordinator for the region; a role that will see her help and support our mainland marine farms in remaining fully compliant.

Moving into Anderson-Geddes's former role of Aquaculture Technical Coordinator & Internal Auditor is Anna Price. Price initially joined Scottish Sea Farms as maternity cover within the Quality team and quickly proved herself to be too good to let go.

Meanwhile in Stirling, the Sales team has welcomed back Morna Marr – a familiar face at Scottish Sea Farms for more than eight years, from 2007-2015, before going on to broaden her sector experience. Now Morna returns in the new role of Commercial Manager, helping secure the best possible prices for our increased volumes in 2021 and beyond.

Also joining our Stirling-based team are new faces Thomas White as Payroll Administrator within HR and Tracey McFall as Purchase Ledger within Finance.



Morna Marr



Thomas White



Tracey McFall



## Making 2021 your best career year yet

**With the end of the year approaching, now is the natural time to start thinking about what you want to achieve in 2021 – and what additional skills and training you might need to make it happen.**

**There are lots of ways in which the HR team can help:**

**Q. 'I'm interested in becoming a farm manager – how do I gain the necessary skills?'**

A. Many of our farm managers have worked their way up through the different roles set out in our Marine Learning Journey which centres around on-the-job training. Others have also undertaken a Modern Apprenticeship in Aquaculture, which is available in a range of levels to suit your experience.

**Q. 'Are Modern Apprenticeships only available to farm teams?'**

A. No – there are Modern Apprenticeships in Marine Engineering and Boat-building & Repair, as well as all sorts of other relevant subjects: from Business Administration and Management, to IT, Digital Applications and Customer Sales.

**Q. 'Is there any help for those transitioning to a supervisory or managerial role?'**

A. We can offer a range of short courses to equip you with the skills you need, whether that's support with prioritising tasks and managing your time effectively, tips and advice on how to communicate with your team or help with budgeting and financials. Simply tell us what would be of most benefit to you.

**Q. 'My role is quite specialist. What if the right course doesn't exist yet?'**

A. One-to-one coaching can be a great alternative with scope to tailor the training and development to your exact needs and timescales.

**Q. 'I have big ambitions to reach senior management level.'**

A. There are several schemes that could help you get there, run by the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre. The first is their Leadership Development Programme which combines personal development workshops, one-to-one coaching sessions and special projects to help shape confident, capable commercially aware future leaders.

The second is their Aquaculture Innovators of the Future programme. It consists of three two-day residential workshops, during which participants work to solve a real aquaculture business challenge.

There's also an online Innovation Programme which is designed to provide those working within the sector with a practical toolset for creating and implementing innovation in the new, post-Covid environment.

**Interested? Why not ask to be connected with someone from Scottish Sea Farms or across the sector who has previously participated in one of the programmes.**

**For more information of any of the above training opportunities, speak to your line manager or contact the HR team directly at [hr@scottishseafarms.com](mailto:hr@scottishseafarms.com)**

# 'I would rather people came to me than sat worrying'

**The Covid pandemic remains at the top of the national health agenda and restrictions make it harder to see GPs, but there is still help at hand in the form of Diane Dixon, Scottish Sea Farms' occupational health nurse.**



Occupational health nurse Diane Dixon and rescue pooch Ellie.

Dixon is a familiar face at Scottish Sea Farms, having worked for the company for over 13 years. But perhaps less well known is the wide range of ways in which she can help.

'In these hugely uncertain and stressful times, it's more important than ever that we make sure we're looking after our health and wellbeing,' said Dixon.

'If I can catch problems before people go off sick, that prevents conditions worsening. Or if someone is off on long-term sick leave or newly diagnosed, I can point them in the right direction or even if they just want to chat, I'm here.'

Dixon puts great faith in the 'talking cure', but when she began working at Scottish Sea Farms, she found the then predominantly male workforce reticent about discussing health problems.

'Admitting something was troubling them didn't necessarily come naturally; there was a tendency to soldier on. But I think I've built up a lot of trust now and people feel they can call me.'

Dixon's career has taken her from Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, where she worked as a theatre nurse, to the Australian outback, before she returned to Scotland to focus on occupational health, a job she loves.

'I can do a whole week in the office and the next week, in non-Covid times, I'll be travelling north enjoying stunning scenery or on a boat out on a loch, it's brilliant.'

The duties of occupational health (which is a confidential service) typically include company medicals, blood pressure checks, blood tests, weight, eyesight, and hearing checks and general health enquiries.

Dixon also runs weight loss clubs ('most popular in January or just before medicals', she said) and smoking cessation clinics.

Covid has meant she can't currently carry out lung function tests because they are aerosol producing, but Dixon stresses that she is still offering most routine services.

'Even though we're operating under restrictions, with some people working from home, there is always help available.'

Getting a GP's appointment can still be difficult and Dixon encourages people to approach her, whether about physical or mental health concerns.

'The whole country has seen more people suffering with anxiety.

## Diane's tips for staying well

- Get out and get some exercise, get moving and get your serotonin levels up, even for just 10 minutes a day
- Keep communicating, don't bottle things up
- Connect more, on Zoom, on FaceTime or just the phone, speak to people
- Don't watch the news 24 hours a day
- Be aware of fake news and make sure the information you're getting is legitimate - check it with a professional (like Diane) if you're not sure
- Don't self-diagnose
- And last but not least, if your glasses steam up while wearing a mask wash them in fairy liquid and then buff them up.

'People tended to drink more during lockdown or not do as much exercise because they were worried about going outside. They put on weight, then they started to feel rubbish about themselves.

'These problems haven't gone away. If there is no light at the end of the tunnel, people might think, what is the point. If anyone within Scottish Sea Farms is feeling this way, I would rather they came to me than sat worrying at home.'

## New chapters beckon for recent retirees

**Autumn saw the retirement of two of Scottish Sea Farms' long serving farm managers, Jim Jarvie at Loch Nevis C and John MacLeod of Lismore North.**

Jarvie worked at Scottish Sea Farms for nearly 20 years after starting out at Joseph Johnston, later bought out by Loch Duart.

He came up through the ranks, from husbandry to senior husbandry and then farm manager, always at Loch Nevis which is home to three farms.

In that time, he has seen many changes, including ever increasing pen sizes and bigger smolts 'The Barcaldine smolts are the best we've had,' he said. 'That can only bode well for Scottish Sea Farms,

getting them as big as we can before they're put out to sea for on-growing.'

John MacLeod started at Scottish Sea Farms in 1996, when the company was called Hydro Seafood, and initially worked in harvesting and processing at South Shian.

He moved to marine in 2000, joining Lismore North as a husbandryman, progressing to senior husbandryman then, in 2008, farm manager.

Jim, John - we wish you the happiest of retirements. You'll be missed.



John MacLeod



Jim Jarvie



## It's good to talk



Martyn's Monday Club founder Des MacMillan

**Martyn's Monday Club was already on the map in Oban but since the lockdown in March the charity has seen a surge in demand for its services.**

The club, whose mission is to prevent suicides by encouraging people to talk about mental health, was set up nearly two years ago in memory of a local man who took his life.

Founder Des MacMillan said that his vision to establish a peer to peer support group had become reality thanks to businesses like Scottish Sea Farms.

A donation last year of £5,000 paid for training in first aid and suicide intervention skills for 11 facilitators, with money left over to train more than 200 members of the public as volunteers.

And now the club has received a further £5,000 towards the cost of two full-time team coordinators.

'Scottish Sea Farms has supported us from day one and to get the funding

again is just phenomenal,' said MacMillan.

'The charity was initially just for men but in January last year we decided to provide support for women too and we've now introduced a youth club for 16 to 21-year-olds.

'We're also in the process of setting up a wellbeing hub in Oban High School, with older kids trained as facilitators.

'Most fundraising had to be cancelled this year but the community has pulled together to help out. Oban has sadly experienced five suicides this year that we know about and that has a massive effect on a small town.'

The club restarted face to face sessions in August, based in its new site in Breadalbane Street, and these have been a 'life saver' for some, said MacMillan.

'Sometimes when people come and talk to us, they don't need to go any further because they've offloaded their problems and been listened to. All we do is sit and talk.'

## Sonia lights up Scalloway

Christmas celebrations might be a bit more subdued everywhere this year but in Scalloway on Shetland one local charity is determined to brighten up the winter nights.

New Christmas lights will adorn the Scalloway Youth & Community Centre, thanks in part to a £2,360 donation from Scottish Sea Farms' Heart of the Community Trust.

The 'Make Scalloway Shine' project is led by Sonia Inkster, who was recently awarded a BEM (British Empire Medal) recognising her fundraising efforts.

'We had funding from Scottish Sea Farms for lights before, so we're very

lucky,' said Inkster, who will do the honours in the switching on ceremony this year.

The community centre, which caters for people of all ages, is now open again for children and young people but its more elderly members have not been able to get together since March.

They will miss their Christmas party in December but people are still being connected through online events such as Zoom exercise classes, said Inkster, who has been chairwoman of the centre since 2010.

'We spend a lot of time trying to build up the services and the community



Award-winning fundraiser Sonia Inkster (middle)

links and I think it's paying off because we have quite a bit of funding from local businesses like Scottish Sea Farms.'

## Sanday clubs together

Sanday may have a population of under 500 and be remote even by Orkney standards, but it certainly punches above its weight in the craft scene.

Now local crafters are to get a dedicated space to help keep Sanday's arts thriving. The Sanday Community Craft Club has secured a Heart of the



Sanday's Tracy Ranger

Community grant of £3,322; one of three initiatives on the island to benefit from the latest round of funding.

The money will be used to transform a backroom in the Bank House community craft hub into a showcase for the club's handmade goods as well as provide a base for craft workshops.

'Everything may have been shut this year but people are still making things. We're hoping we can open the new craft room next spring with a flourish,' said club founder Tracy Ranger.

Also receiving a Heart of the Community Trust grant is Sanday

Afternoon Club, which has been given £1,200 to continue its community work with elderly residents.

During Covid the club's weekly lunches and activities have had to be put on hold, but a team of volunteers has used the club's minibus to make sure people stay connected, delivering dinners, setting up quizzes and even a fortnightly newsletter.

Meanwhile, Sanday Community School also secured funding, with a £1,200 donation to buy waterproof clothing so pupils can continue outdoor learning through all seasons.

 **Scottish Sea Farms**  
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