

Photo: Sorley Maclachlan, Husbandry, Spelve



Hybrid powered feed barge generates 'fantastic' results

In what's thought to be a first for the sector, Scottish Sea Farms is piloting a bespoke hybrid power system aboard one of its feed barges, dramatically reducing fuel consumption, carbon emissions and operating costs.

The initiative, at the company's Spelve farm on Mull, is part of Scottish Sea Farms' drive to make its activities more sustainable and contribute to the Scottish Government's ambition to be net zero by 2045.

The results, after just four months, have been 'fantastic', achieving cost savings as well as environmental benefits, according to Spelve Farm Manager Alan Tangny.

'We used to be filling our diesel tank at least once a week and now we're probably getting four times longer between fills,' he said.

Designed, built and monitored by Aqua Power Technologies, the hybrid concept has been shown to offset 32,408kg in carbon since the pilot began in September. That is comparable to the weight of a standard fuel tanker of 32,000 litres.

Contained within a 2m long cabinet, the hybrid system includes 24 batteries and a control panel. It works alongside the conventional diesel generator, intelligently monitoring the power demand and seamlessly switching between generator power and battery power.

At times of greater demand, during feeding for example, power is handed back to the diesel generator which simultaneously charges the hybrid's batteries.

During lower demand, the hybrid takes over, remaining on 24/7 to power comparatively low loads such as environmental logging systems and lights.

The technology, said Aqua Power founder Sam Etherington, has been in existence for 20 years and is typically used in cars, underground trains and off-grid homes.

But it had not been deployed on a salmon farm until he approached Scottish Sea Farms with his novel adaptation for the sector.

After Spelve was identified as a suitable site for the trial, Etherington's team installed monitoring equipment for two weeks to gather data on power profiles and trends at the farm.

The information was then analysed to understand the carbon and diesel offsets achievable by integrating a hybrid, before a bespoke specification was proposed for Spelve.



Alan Tangny



Sam Etherington

'The hybrid system can be remotely configured farm by farm, according to power needs, to yield the highest savings,' said Etherington. 'At Spelve, it's currently configured to take over with anything less than 10kW, which covers everything except the feed blowers.'

'The peak feeding times are between 10.30am and 2.30pm so all those other hours before and after, the hybrid maintains power to the farm, enabling savings to be made.'

The total annual carbon offset is estimated at 79,400kg, and the annual net saving in diesel costs, based on today's price, is calculated at around £18,000.

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Aqua Power Technologies has an online data platform, AquaStat Internet of Things (IoT), that allows farmers to log on and track real time information, including the amount of carbon and diesel offset and the return on investment.

Spelve is also trialling LED lights on its pens in place of traditional metal halide lamps. These, said Tangny, are much lighter, brighter and use less power.

‘These are only 100W lights yet they produce more luminance than the 400W metal halide lights. They require a lot less power so the diesel saving has been phenomenal, especially combined with the hybrid as well.

‘We would have had the generator running 24 hours a day to power the lights but these LEDs run off the battery pack, no problem.

‘We have observed no difference in fish behaviour, growth or maturation using LED lights instead of metal halide lamps. We can still maintain high levels of fish welfare whilst reducing our carbon footprint and saving money at the same time.’

The real-time monitoring platform has offered an insight into the farm’s power use profile and given the company scope to manage that even better, said Scottish Sea Farms Environment Manager Sheena Gallie.

‘This level of monitoring of our power use is something we wouldn’t have had otherwise. Aside from the direct benefits, there are a lot of other things we can learn.

‘Off the back of the success of the Spelve system, we will be looking to work with Aqua Power Technologies to identify other farms where energy use profiles would indicate its suitability. There is a clear opportunity for the company to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and, in doing so, significantly reduce carbon emissions.’



LED lighting at Spelve, Mull

Renewed Shetland focus sees early success

Photo: Gordon Siegel Photography



Scottish Sea Farms has embarked on a £2 million investment programme on Shetland to help the region’s farms deliver their full potential.

As part of the planned works, five feed barges are being upgraded at Macduff Shipyards, at a total cost of £750,000.

New pens and moorings worth £675,000 will be installed at Bellister farm to bring it into line with recent refurbishments across the rest of the Shetland estate.

And the workboat Scapa Lass is currently undergoing a £415,000 refit, also at Macduff, ahead of its repurposing as a treatment support vessel.

The investment, mostly with Scottish suppliers, follows a management restructuring in Shetland last year that saw Richard Darbyshire appointed Northern Isles Regional Manager with responsibility for both Shetland and Orkney.

Further appointments included Robbie Coutts and Will Scott to the new roles of Area Manager for Shetland and Orkney respectively, along with several internal promotions at farm manager level.

Darbyshire, who alternates his working weeks between Shetland and Orkney, said there was now a more local focus which had already brought dividends.

‘Robbie is my eyes and ears in Shetland whilst I’m in Orkney and has the job of visiting the farms and supporting and mentoring farm managers.

‘Decisions are being made quicker so we get resources when they are needed. As a result, sea lice numbers at the end of week 50 were half the levels of the corresponding week in 2019. And the fish were significantly bigger than the previous generation at the same stage two years ago.

‘This is to everyone’s immense credit, given that the year was difficult due to Covid-19 restrictions. But we can’t be complacent and have ambitious targets to reach on fish survival and size in 2021.’

Coutts said despite the coronavirus measures, communications have in fact improved across the region.

‘With Teams, everybody can dial into the weekly meetings with farm managers and vets and there is no need to cancel them if someone can’t be there physically, as before. Covid has forced us down this road but it has become a huge advantage.

‘Everybody has bought into it and it’s good for all farms to know what each other is doing.’

The real test of the reorganisation on Shetland, however, will come at the end of the summer.

‘That will be a full year since the new management structure came in and the results will be based 100 per cent on our decisions,’ said Coutts.

In addition to the £2 million investment programme underway, all of the company’s Shetland marine farms now have SealPro anti-predator netting fitted along with sinker tubes to ensure nets are correctly tensioned, safeguarding stocks from growing seal populations.

Said Darbyshire: ‘With the bigger smolts we’re getting from Barcaldine, plus the investment in new infrastructure, and the training and development packages we have in place, I’d like to think that the future will be even better.’



Scottish Sea Farms Area Manager for Shetland Robbie Coutts

Farmers' nature notes recorded for the nation

Photo: Martyn Lennie, Farm Manager, Puldrite & Shapinsay

Scottish Sea Farms' marine teams have been tasked with logging wildlife sightings on an app in a new company trial that aims to make nature data more accessible.

Three farms are participating in the pilot, in which monthly paper records will be replaced with the app-based system.

The information can be collected quickly on a phone or laptop, acquiring automatic coordinates from GPS signals for location.

It will then be sent to the Biological Record Centre, a major component of the National Biodiversity Network. This means that the data can be used by conservationists, scientists and NGOs.

Driving the initiative is Anna Price, from Scottish Sea Farms' quality control team, who will be checking in monthly with the farms participating in the trial: Loch Nevis A, Bloody Bay and Creran.

Their feedback will help inform any changes that need to be made, such as providing training in identifying less common species, before the app is rolled out across all farms.

'The app is straightforward and anyone on the farm can use it,' said Price. 'Any species can be recorded, from orcas to otters, and sea gulls to sea eagles, and photographs or videos can also be uploaded.'

'I really want to get as many people as possible engaged with it because these observations are a valuable resource for the public and the wider science community.'

Andy Gourlay, Quality and Systems Manager, said that whilst existing wildlife logs comply with customer and regulatory requirements, moving to an app would bring a number of additional benefits.

'At the moment, there's a big difference between one farm and another in what is recorded but the app will make it easier to get a consistent picture across all the farms. We could also use the data on our own website to produce a map of wildlife sightings.'

'Anna sees day in day out when she's auditing the sites how we're recording wildlife and she came up with a better way of doing it. It's great when you've got someone with a passion like Anna helping you to lead something like this.'

The trial, which began on January 15, will last for three months.

Working towards a sustainable future



A new sustainability working group is to be created within Scottish Sea Farms, pulling together various different workstreams with a common purpose.

Still at the fledgling stage, the aim of the group will be to engage with every department in the company with the overall goal of improving sustainability across the board.

Spearheaded by Anna Price, an initial meeting took place on 18 January, with Quality and Systems Manager Andy Gourlay, UK Sales Manager Rory Conn, and Head of IT David Anderson.

'There is a lot we are already doing as a business that could come under the sustainability umbrella, but we could be doing so much more if we approached it in a more targeted way,' said Price.

Taking as a starting point the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation Sustainability Charter, launched at the end of last year, Price considered what progress could be achieved towards each of its five pledges: animal welfare, environmental impact, traceability, people development and community benefit.

'We want to involve like-minded people, from the environment experts to the farm managers who will be the early adopters testing novel ideas,' Price added.

Anyone interested in joining the Sustainability Working Group should contact Anna Price.

Sensor project seeks to save on freshwater usage

A new water metering project is underway at Scottish Sea Farms' processing facility at South Shian, aimed at reducing freshwater usage by as much as 15 per cent annually.

The project, which is a collaboration between the company's processing and IT teams, will see wireless sensor technology installed at key points throughout the facility to accurately measure the volume of water being used.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Processing Donald Buchanan said: 'We're always seeking new ways to use the natural resources available to us in the most responsible way. The first step to achieving it is knowing what we're using, where and when, in order that we can identify where efficiencies could be made.'

'We're always seeking new ways to use the natural resources available to us in the most responsible way.'

The project looks set to be the first of many, with the company's IT and business intelligence team building the capabilities in-house.

Scottish Sea Farms IT Operations and Infrastructure Leader Colin Kupris said: 'The same underlying technology and cloud system can be adapted to gather and share real-time data from all manner of existing company systems: everything from utilities usage to weather conditions, rainfall, wave height and tidal flow.'

'The potential to achieve even greater efficiencies across our day-to-day operations is vast.'



Scottish Sea Farms Head of Processing Donald Buchanan

Hope for salmon sales in Brexit border chaos

Scottish seafood businesses continue to face challenges as they navigate the post-Brexit border chaos, more than a month after the transition period ended on December 31.

The salmon sector is estimated to have lost £3 million in the first week of January alone, from cancelled orders, discounted fish and the extra staffing costs incurred by new paperwork.

The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) said at the end of January that the situation was improving but serious issues remained, mostly linked to the huge amounts of red tape required to export seafood to the EU.

Now a government-led taskforce has been set up, with experts from Scotland and the UK joining forces to iron out obstacles.

‘Our customers in Europe need to know they can rely on Scottish salmon, the UK’s biggest food export, arriving on time,’ said Tavish Scott, SSPO chief executive.

To find out how Scottish Sea Farms’ sales team has been coping with the disruption, The Source spoke to Head of Markets Celine Kimpflin.

She described the first week of the year as an ‘utter disaster’, created by circumstances outside the company’s control.

‘We prepared throughout 2020 and thought of everything: from people, to finance, to logistics, to sales. We put a lot of effort into programming the changes into our systems and automated almost everything.

‘We knew it was going to be difficult but we didn’t expect it to be this difficult. I don’t think as a country we were that well prepared in terms of bureaucracy.’

Kimpflin said health certificates which should take half an hour to process took 10 hours, as government agencies at DFDS, the main transport hub at Larkhall, checked every box in a lorry.

The hold-up was worse for small operators and trucks combining multiple consignments, but the delays had a knock-on effect on salmon growers, who then faced further bottlenecks at the Channel ports.

‘There have been so many examples of trucks being stopped at the border in Dover, partly because the codes on the UK and French sides were incompatible to begin with,’ said Kimpflin.

‘But sometimes we don’t know what causes delays. Customs officers disappear with the paperwork and

don’t come back so the lorry driver has no idea why he’s been stopped.’

Scottish Sea Farms exports around 200 tonnes of salmon to the EU a week, but this has been reduced by as much as half at the moment.



Scottish Sea Farms
Head of Markets
Celine Kimpflin

While Kimpflin welcomes the government’s taskforce, she suggests an even better solution would be to invite EU officials to Scotland and show them how the salmon sector operates.

‘We need to have a dialogue, work out how we can make the export process more streamlined and give them confidence to import our product.

‘At the end of the day though, we have good relationships with our customers built up over the years and it is not the company they have a problem with. That gives me real hope.’

Vets drive sustainability in farming



The incidence of disease and mortality in livestock farming is key to sustainability, according to Scottish Sea Farms Head of Veterinary Services Ronnie Soutar.

Addressing the webinar ‘Sustainability in Veterinary Practice and Beyond’, organised by Vet Sustain for the Society of Practising Veterinary Surgeons and the Veterinary Management Group, Soutar offered a fish vet’s perspective on sustainable aquaculture.

‘Vets’ role in driving sustainability is very important,’ he said. ‘We look after the fish and that looks after the environment as healthy fish grow more efficiently and with less use of resources.’

He listed veterinary sustainability goals as: a good life for animals; diverse and abundant wildlife; net zero warming; a no-waste society; and enough clean water for all.

The day-long conference, which covered the whole range of veterinary practice from cats and dogs to horses

and farm animals, also heard about reductions in medicine use and better use of anti-parasite treatments.

Fish farmers, said Soutar, are leading rather than following: ‘As a sector, we are generally ahead of the field in the moves we’ve taken towards non-medicinal control and treatment.’

This includes a greater level of transparency in comparison with other livestock sectors, as highlighted by comments from another speaker, Lord Sandy Trees. He said in discussion of the Agriculture Bill, which became the Agriculture Act 2020, mortality data was ‘really difficult’ to get.

Lord Trees did reveal that mortality in lambs was between 10 and 30 per cent; 11-15 per cent in piglets; between five and seven per cent in adult sheep; and three to six per cent in calves in the first three months after birth.

Farmers explore all options to protect fish

The first quarter of 2021 brings two key changes to the methods available to Scotland's salmon farmers to protect their fish from seal predation.

As of 31 January, due to the removal of an exemption under licence, it is now illegal for farmers to carry out last resort seal shootings under the Animals and Wildlife (Scotland) Act 2020.

Separate to this, beyond March, the use of acoustic deterrent devices (ADDs) – considered by many farmers to be vital in protecting fish from Scotland's growing seal population – will only be permitted if a European Protected Species (EPS) licence has been applied for and granted.

This follows the decision by Marine Scotland to adopt the position that ADD use could be considered an offence under EPS legislation due to the potential for whales, dolphins and

porpoises to be disturbed by the sound emitted by the devices to deter seals.

Anne Anderson, Sustainability Director at the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation, said: 'The exact criteria by which Marine Scotland will determine whether a device and/or location is licence-able has not yet been made clear.'

'Similarly, guidance on what farmers should do in the event a seal becomes trapped in a pen has still to be given. Yet there is a provision under the Marine Act and in animal welfare legislation to despatch a seal if the animal is in distress.'

While the sector pushes for clarity, those seeking to upgrade farm infrastructure to help keep seals away from their fish should expect some greater flexibility, with new planning rules expected to come into effect on 1 April.

'Subject to qualifying criteria and of course significant investment, this will allow some farms to consolidate into a smaller number of larger pens, which



SSPO Sustainability Director Anne Anderson

would be equipped with HDPE nets, sinker tubes and optimal tensioning as currently,' said Anderson.

'The bigger the pen, the greater the opportunity for fish to shoal nearer the middle and out of harm's way closer to the net.'

Predation by seals continues to have a significant impact on fish welfare. From May 2019 to May 2020 more than half a million Scottish farmed salmon died as a result of seal attacks, with many more adversely affected by the stress of predation.

Top tips to stay cyber safe



The recent cyber attacks on the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Norwegian supplier AKVA serve as stark reminders of the crucial importance of IT security at both professional and personal level.

'The impact of such attacks can range from inconvenience to something fairly catastrophic', said Scottish Sea Farms Head of IT David Anderson.

'Cyber criminals can seize confidential information and release it online if a ransom is not met, as happened at SEPA, as well as create havoc with day-to-day business operations.'

Stay cyber safe, follow this checklist of Dos and Don'ts:

DO

- ✓ **Do use different passwords for different accounts**
Even better, try using passphrases
- ✓ **Do check the email sender is who they say they are**
Hover over links, don't just click links or open attachments
- ✓ **Do secure physical access to IT outside of working hours**
Lock offices, shore bases and barges
- ✓ **Do carry out the online IT security training available**
Contact your IT team for details
- ✓ **Do use multi-factor authentication**
Including on your personal email and online accounts too
- ✓ **Do watch out for text or phone scams**
Never give out your bank details

DON'T

- ✗ **Don't leave your devices unlocked**
Lock before you walk
- ✗ **Don't give out your company username or password**
Not even to trusted suppliers
- ✗ **Don't connect any devices to the company network that haven't been pre-approved**
Visitors should use the dedicated visitor network
- ✗ **Don't provide remote access to company systems**
This includes feed or camera systems
- ✗ **Don't download or run software on request**
Always, ALWAYS contact IT first for guidance.

And remember, if you suspect you may have fallen victim, contact your IT team immediately – the sooner you act the better.

For further information on staying cyber safe, visit the National Cyber Security Centre at <https://www.ncsc.gov.uk/guidance/suspicious-email-actions>

People on the move

The new year has begun with another raft of internal promotions for Scottish Sea Farms staff.



David Duffy David Lipcsey Liam Tulloch

On the mainland, long-serving Dunstaffnage Farm Manager David Duffy kicks off 2021 with an all-new role as Feed Performance Manager. Duffy has distinguished himself in his 25 years with the company, including winning first prize in the M&S Plan A 'Future of Farming' category (2010) and being named Crown Estate Farm Manager of the Year (2011).

Kindly stepping into Duffy's former shoes until a permanent successor is recruited is David MacMillan, Farm Manager of Lismore East.

In Shetland, Nathan Johnson is also starting the new year with a new position, transferring from Trainee Manager at Cliftsound to Thermolicer Supervisor, with effect from 15 January. Liam Tulloch, formerly Senior Husbandry, will take over from Johnson.

Meanwhile, Scalloway-based David Lipcsey's secondment from processing to IT has now been made permanent. Lipcsey, who pioneered a welfare-oriented fish counting app, will be much missed in processing but his talents are already making a positive difference in helping push forward a number of key projects for the company, said Head of IT David Anderson.

The HR team has introduced changes of its own, creating dedicated business support in three main areas, with one point of contact to advise on, and help with, all aspects of people development and management.

The three go-to leaders are:

- **Mainland and freshwater farming - Claire Scott**
- **Northern Isles and processing - Emma Leyden**
- **Management team and business support - Tracy Bryant-Shaw.**

The team will be further supported by Ethel Johnston and Clare Jordan.



Nathan Johnson Tracy, Emma & Claire



New schools course aims to engage next generation

Scottish Sea Farms is developing an aquaculture programme for schools, aimed at attracting youngsters to salmon farming as a career choice.

The new course, believed to be the first of its kind in Scotland, has been designed in conjunction with Argyll College UHI for secondary schools in local communities.

It will combine classroom teaching with practical elements, including tours of farms, as well as coaching students in life skills such as interview technique and filling in job applications.

The collaboration between Scottish Sea Farms and Argyll College is the latest in a series of initiatives that has also seen the introduction of Modern Apprenticeships in the region.

Running the schools scheme for Scottish Sea Farms is HR Co-ordinator Clare Jordan who said it will help plug the gap between education and work, as well as raise awareness of the many opportunities in the sector.

'Up to now, we haven't been able to take on young people until they have finished school and by then a lot of them have already decided what they're going to do, meaning it's too late to get them to consider an alternative career path,' she said.

'Through the schools programme, we're hoping to talk to them at an earlier stage in their decision-making and show them there are other possibilities right on their doorstep. Many don't know the sector exists or that it is such a big employer in the area.'

Brexit has been another driver behind the plan, with curbs on the free movement of people likely to have an impact on recruitment in rural locations.

'We want to tap into the potentially large home-grown talent pool,' added Jordan.

School pupils who opt to do the course, due to start in August, will gain National Progression Award units, plus

Royal Yachting Association power boat and first aid qualifications.

They will also be invited out to Scottish Sea Farms facilities to gain on-site work experience, Covid permitting.

The pandemic has forced changes in the lead-up to the programme launch.

Jordan said they had hoped to engage pupils before they committed to the course, but are now devising virtual visits and videos to show them what a farm looks like.

The initial cohort will be small, around nine school pupils, with interested candidates interviewed by Scottish Sea Farms prior to enrolment.

'This will help us determine who is genuinely interested,' said Jordan. 'We will treat their applications as professionally as we would if they were applying for a permanent role.'

The programme will be jointly funded by Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Sea Farms. It is being launched in Argyll and Bute region because the company has 13 marine farms in the area, as well as strong links and a shared vision with Argyll College, which is building a Marine Industry Training Centre in Dunstaffnage.

'If the pilot is a success it will be rolled out to other schools within our local communities, on the west coast and in Orkney and Shetland,' said Jordan, who is a former primary school teacher and believes that very young children, too, can engage with fish farming.

'They are the next generation and it's important for them to know that this is part of their local economy and their local environment. A lot of people are unfamiliar with the sector and the best way to crack that is through engagement and education.'

Come aboard the Young People's Council

When Ellen Welch read about the new Scottish Sea Farms Young People's Council in the last issue of The Source, she immediately knew it was for her.



'It's a fantastic idea,' said Welch, a fish health biologist working in a trainee husbandry role at Kishorn West. 'Speaking as a fish farmer and not just an employee, it's exactly what the sector as a whole, as well as the company, needs.'

Welch got in touch with Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw, who had appealed for youthful volunteers to join the scheme, which is aimed at anyone 28 and under.

Nearly a third of Scottish Sea Farms' workforce falls into that age group and their views are important in shaping the company's future, said Bryant-Shaw.

'We don't always hear the young person's vision of what we could

do differently,' she told The Source in December.

Welch, who gained a BSc in biology from Edinburgh Napier University before beginning her job last June, can't wait to meet other like-minded youngsters in the company.

'When I started, my farm was fallow so I worked in Kishorn North and South. There is about a 50/50 split between younger and older people working here. The wealth of knowledge is with the older guys, but it was fascinating hearing the different outlook of some of the younger people.

'There are all these contrasting ideologies about the way farms

should work and this is a great opportunity to bring these ideas to management.'

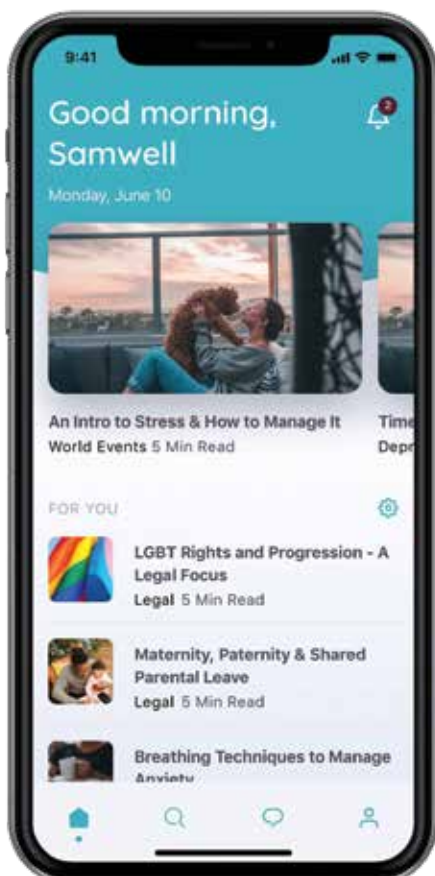
Welch, who first visited fish farms while helping out on her father's wrasse boat and whose brother Lewis also works at Kishorn West, said she is looking forward to mixing with young people from different farms.

And her advice to other would-be volunteers for the new council? 'Come aboard and try it!'

There are still places left. Interested? Email Tracy Bryant-Shaw with a few words on why you'd like to be involved.

Health at hand with wellbeing app

Scottish Sea Farms employees and their families can now access health and wellbeing advice at the tap of a finger with the launch of a new mobile app.



The My Healthy Advantage app, which was created by the team behind the Health Assured Employee Assistance website, is the latest in a series of health and wellbeing benefits provided by the company.

Designed to be of maximum benefit to as many employees as possible, the new app offers practical support and advice on a wide range of topics: from physical, mental and general wellbeing to family, legal and financial matters.

There's also help with specific issues such as coping with anxiety, stress or depression; quitting smoking; losing weight; or dealing with grief and bereavement.

This support is delivered in a variety of ways, including:

- **Articles**
- **Videos and podcasts**
- **Mini health checks**
- **Mood tracker**
- **Four-week programmes**
- **Guest speakers sharing their experiences**
- **Live chat and counselling service.**

Scottish Sea Farms Head of HR and Business Support Tracy Bryant-Shaw

said: 'The live chat function is, for me, a key addition. Not everyone feels comfortable making a phone call about matters related to their wellbeing or life outside of work. However, with the live chat function they can still access qualified counsellors for help in all aspects of life.'

Indeed, the theme of personalised support is one that underpins the whole app.

'Users can tailor the content they most wish to learn about, input their personal metrics to set goals relevant to them or set up a group challenge via the leader board function - ideal for those missing out on team sports during Covid,' said Bryant-Shaw.

'There's also a whole host of discounts and incentives on offer, ranging from fitness equipment and activewear, to online classes and healthy eating.

'I'd urge everyone to take a few moments to download the app and see for themselves the sheer range of support available to them.'

My Healthy Advantage is available to download now from the App Store and Google Play, with the access code available from the HR team.

Summer Isles boat sails to builders' rescue



Summer Isles Farm Manager Sarah Last

A major construction project on the remote Summer Isles was able to remain on schedule thanks to a little help from Scottish Sea Farms' local team.

The Tanera Restoration Project, a five-year development that will turn a historic herring station and island cottages into a luxury resort, depends on building materials being shipped over from the mainland.

But with the island's boat out of the water for three months, the crew asked Summer Isles Farm Manager Sarah Last for help.

'Construction would effectively have stopped without a boat, and nobody would have been able to work because there were no materials being delivered,' said Last.

'Fortunately, the timing was right as our farm was being followed. We were able to help out two to three days a week by providing our workboat, with 28-tonne deck capacity, plus staff to

crew the boat, while the construction team took care of loading their materials on and off.'

There are up to 150 people employed on the construction, which will see the herring station, a listed building, restored as a hotel and venue for weddings.

'Many of the builders are locals from Ullapool and Achiltibuie and several worked on the fish farms so they know a lot of our own team,' said Last, who manages three farms in the Summer Isles.

'They've got their boat back now and we have to get our farm ready for our next generation of fish, which are due in the second week in April.'

To that end, the farm's barge and pens are undergoing a major upgrade, and, thanks to the relationship forged with the island's owners, Last has secured permission to install a wi-fi mast on Tanera enabling remote feeding.

Making connections with IT donation

Scottish Sea Farms has donated redundant IT server racks and wi-fi satellite dishes to help a local broadband network reach more households and businesses.

Barcaldine engineer Ewen Leslie handed over the gear to an old climbing friend who carries out technical installations for Locheilnet CIC, a broadband provider that serves the Lochaber region.

Leslie's own home in Fort William depends on Locheilnet superfast broadband and he said Scottish Sea Farms was delighted to support such a good cause.

'The broadband in the area has been very limited and in the more rural areas there was no network at all,' he said.

'Locheilnet put up satellites on the hills and then beamed the signal into houses. Several communities, and almost 500 businesses and households across rural Lochaber, have benefited as the network has grown.'

Now Locheilnet, which was set up in 2012, is hoping to expand further and enable even more subscribers to enjoy superfast connections.

'It has definitely been a lifesaver,' added Leslie. 'A lot of people in remote



Photo: Locheilnet.com

locations have had to work from home over the past year and that wouldn't have been possible without broadband.'

New Shuna shorebase takes shape

Work is almost complete on Scottish Sea Farms' replacement shorebase at Shuna, with continued provision of shower and toilet facilities for the guests of neighbouring Linnhe Marina.

The company's previous shorebase, which was destroyed in a fire in July 2020, has been replaced like for like

with office space, remote feeding capability and kitchen area for the farm team, along with shower and toilet facilities.

Scottish Sea Farms Engineering Manager for Mainland Marine Craig Cameron has been coordinating the project. 'Covid held us back a little timings-wise but the IT equipment is now being installed, then the shorebase will be fully operational,' said Cameron.

'As with the old shorebase, the cabin has been fitted with additional accessible shower and toilet facilities for the exclusive use of Linnhe Marina guests.'

