



## Major milestone as zero antibiotics target is reached

**Scottish Sea Farms reached a fish health milestone last year, with no antibiotics used in any of its farming operations, whether freshwater or marine.**

Although antibiotic use has been decreasing at freshwater sites, and phased out in sea pens since 2012, this is the first time zero use has been recorded by the company.

The sector leading success has been achieved through a combination of improved husbandry practices and the production of more robust smolts at Scottish Sea Farms' £58 million Barcaldine hatchery.

Ronnie Soutar, Head of Veterinary Services at Scottish Sea Farms, said he was 'very proud we've got to this stage'.

'It is important on a global scale that antibiotic use is minimised and only used when absolutely essential, in recognition of concerns over antimicrobial resistance,' he added.

'Scottish salmon farming generally has a very low use of antibiotics compared with other livestock sectors and Scottish Sea Farms has consistently had antibiotic usage well below the sector's target.'

RUMA (Responsible Use of Medicines in Agriculture Alliance) set a goal in 2016

of 5mg antibiotic active substance per kg of salmon produced. This compares to a target of 25mg/kg for poultry meat (broilers) and 99mg/kg for pigs.

In the four years between 2015 and 2018 inclusive, Scottish Sea Farms averaged 3.6 mg/kg but in 2019 this dropped to 0.25 mg/kg (5% of the sector target) and in 2020 the company used no antibiotics at all.

Scottish Sea Farms had no use of antibiotics on any of its marine farms within the target period (2016 onwards) and, in fact, has had no use of antibiotics in marine farms since a single treatment on one farm in 2012.

Soutar said it is now the company's default position to have zero antibiotic use throughout production.

'Our use in the freshwater phase of production has been because infections can occur before fish are big enough to be vaccinated.

'However, new husbandry protocols and major investment in biosecure

facilities is making such infections increasingly rare.'

Out of a total 13.5 million smolts grown at the RAS (recirculating aquaculture system) hatchery at Barcaldine, about 1.5 million were then reared in open freshwater systems, before transfer to marine pens.

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To protect very young fish from potential bacterial diseases carried by wild fish, they may be dip vaccinated when around 2 to 5 grams. All fish are injection vaccinated for longer lasting immunity when they are between 30 to 60 grams.

Scottish Sea Farms has adopted a holistic approach to fish health and welfare, with vets involved in farm management, and this has helped to bring down antibiotic use to zero, said Soutar.

'But there is no room for complacency. There is an element of luck because there is always a possibility, whether you're farming plants or animals, of emerging diseases that appear and cause problems.

'We will consider antibiotic use if, in specific circumstances, veterinary advice is that it is essential for the protection of fish welfare.

'The important thing is to bring the lessons we've learned, from dealing with furunculosis particularly, to new bacterial diseases. And the main thing is getting vaccines; the last year has really confirmed our long-held belief that vaccines are the answer.'

### Key elements of the strategy to eliminate antibiotic use include:

**Biosecurity** measures to avoid the introduction of bacterial pathogens

**Stock** selected for resistance to disease and robustness from leading genetics providers

**Hygiene** including daily removal of dead or moribund fish to minimise infection

**Vaccination** against known bacterial threats wherever possible and appropriate

**Stress** reduction to maximise fish welfare and avoid immune compromises

**Nutrition** to boost fish robustness and ability to fight infection

# Diverting fish waste into valuable by-products

An innovative new system is being installed in Orkney that will add value to a previously disposable product.

Typically, fallen stock that cannot be processed for consumption is incinerated, but now Scottish Sea Farms is taking delivery of a bespoke ensiler that will enable fish waste to be repurposed for potential use in the production of carbon neutral fuels, organic fertilisers, crop growth stimulants and green energy feedstocks.

The ensiler has been supplied by Pelagia, which produces fishmeal and oil from pelagic fisheries, and has more recently moved into the salmon market, upgrading waste into usable materials.

To this end, Pelagia has modified an existing facility on Bressay in Shetland, designed specifically to repurpose category two material from fish farms.

### Repurposing category two material

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Processing Donald Buchanan explained: 'There are three categories of material: category one which is stock with a notifiable disease and has to be destroyed and incinerated with no further use; category two which is general mortalities; and category three which is the viscera from healthy fish going through processing.

'Over recent years, category three viscera has become a valuable product in its own right. Being a healthy source of omega-3, the by-products are refined and utilised in pet food, shrimp feed, and speciality pig and poultry feed additives.

'Now, we're looking to make better use of our category two material, while at the same time dispose of it in a more sustainable way.'



Will Scott



Donald Buchanan

### New mobile ensiler

The mobile ensiler to be stationed in Orkney will be fed by all the nine farms in the region, and will preserve fish waste before it is transported to Pelagia's Bressay plant for further processing.

Within the ensiler, a macerator can process more than one tonne of fish an hour, compared to one tonne every 24 hours with a diesel incinerator.

The quicker the fish are ensiled, the better the quality of the waste and the more scope there will be for Pelagia to develop innovative products.

### Operational efficiencies

Area Support Manager for Orkney Will Scott said the system will also make mortality management easier and more efficient, bringing it into line with Shetland where farms are already supplying the Pelagia plant.

'We've been looking at more sustainable ways of dealing with, and drawing value from, waste for some years. The potential new avenues this opens up are promising and it marks a sea change in the sustainability of our operations.'

Once ensiled, tonnages can be bulked up to reduce transport costs and there is also a storage option to avoid shipping small amounts of waste to Shetland, helping save on transport emissions too.

Commenting on the collaboration, Pelagia's Chief Operations Officer (Feed) UK and Ireland, Frank Trearty, said: 'Processing of category two mortality by-products is a new area for Pelagia Bressay. The production process is highly technical and strictly regulated, and we have taken great care to put systems in place to ensure compliance and operate to the highest of standards. We look forward to working with Scottish Sea Farms and the farmed salmon sector in providing a sustainable solution for this type of material.'



# Sustainable growth is mission possible

**Scottish Sea Farms' new sustainability champion, Anne Anderson, has two main responsibilities: to help minimise the company's environmental impact and drive growth.**

These twin goals may not at first seem complementary but Anderson said they go hand in hand in salmon farming and one cannot be achieved without the other.

'We can't grow as a company if we are not operating sustainably, and we can't improve sustainability, which requires investment, unless the business is going forward,' she told The Source shortly after taking up her new role.

## Shaping a cohesive strategy

As Head of Sustainability and Development, Anderson will coordinate the various sustainability workstreams at Scottish Sea Farms into one cohesive strategy.

Anderson is ideally placed to fulfil such an ambitious remit, having joined Scottish Sea Farms from the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO), where she led the creation of its Sustainability Charter.

She believes the sector was 'brave' to commit itself to such a progressive blueprint, and she now relishes the opportunity to help producers implement the policy.

'We needed to set out a vision of what farming in Scotland could look like in the future – and encourage government to provide the regulatory environment to enable that to happen. Now, I want to help deliver the vision.

'That includes looking at ourselves through the same lenses as our most damning critics, calling out the misinformation that exists but also honestly and bravely addressing the key challenges in order to effectively and consistently deliver sustainable practices.'

## Zest for change

Anderson, who was with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) for more than 20 years before joining the SSPO in 2018, said she had long admired Scottish Sea Farms' zest for change.

'You can see the company's drive for sustainability in the decisions it has made; for example, the movement out of the fresh loch environment and into the RAS hatchery at Barcaldine.

'And every time I visited the South Shian processing facility as a trade body representative, there was always another innovation. The chance of success is high when you have this kind of team.'

Anderson's first priority is to produce a plan showing where and how the business can grow sustainably.

'The sector is not making any secret of its desire to grow – and nor is the United Nations, which said that aquaculture needs to grow to feed the expanding global population,' she said.

## New ways of working

Farming in different areas will have different challenges and therefore different solutions, she added, and her strategic assessment will consider how best to develop new ways of working that support growing the business.

'The very definition of sustainability is being able to continue to farm in future decades and we have live and kicking examples of that in places like Dunstaffnage, farming in one location for decades and continuing to provide livelihoods and careers.'

## Aeration trial to help tackle gill health challenge

**A new aeration system capable of boosting water quality in salmon pens is to be trialled at Loch Spelve on Mull.**

Aeration – pumping air into pens to boost water movement and, in turn, water quality – is one of several approaches used by farmers when rising levels of potentially harmful plankton levels are detected.

Traditional aeration systems use high pressure compressors, technology that has had mixed results with some pens receiving a bigger boost than others.

The new system, the Flowpressor™, manufactured by Canadian company Poseidon Ocean Systems and supplied locally by Trimara, has been custom engineered to upwell deeper sourced water with expected lower phytoplankton and higher ambient oxygen.

Innes Weir, Scottish Sea Farms Regional Production Manager for Mainland, said: 'The Flowpressor™ effectively draws 'clean' water from the depth of the pen – in other words, well away the planktonic surface layers – and distributes it upwards, improving the water quality of the whole pen.

'Remotely controlled, it can run 24/7 for routine water quality management then be moved to protection mode as required, using 50 per cent less diesel than traditional systems.'

The Spelve trial, due to start in mid-May, will see six of the farm's 12 pens connected to the Flowpressor™ and the remaining six pens served by a standard compressor.

'We want to observe the difference in growth, feed rate and survival,' said Weir.

'Crucially, we will also be able to gauge what the system achieves in mitigating the impacts of a low oxygen period or algal bloom on fish welfare.'



Innes Weir



# Regulatory reform pledge ‘must be put into action’

**An SNP manifesto pledge to create Norwegian style regulatory reform for Scotland’s salmon sector must be met by efficient delivery, said the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO).**

If re-elected on May 6, the SNP said it will replace the current four-stage permitting process for new farms and establish a single determining authority modelled on the system in Norway.

Tavish Scott, Chief Executive of the SSPO, said the sector had long been arguing for a more streamlined regulatory system and he hoped this would end the delays and bureaucratic confusion.

‘What we want to see is better regulation, not less regulation. Everything is now in the commitment, and what is crucially important is the signal this sends to the civil service and to the agencies of government as to what an incoming government would do,’ he told The Source.

‘I still hope manifestos mean something in politics and therefore they are put into action,’ added Scott, who was an

MSP for 20 years and former leader of the Scottish Liberal Democrats.

He said the SNP government had recognised the economic benefits salmon farming brought to Scotland’s remote communities, and Rural Economy Minister Fergus Ewing had been ‘a solid advocate’ for the sector.

‘He has been very alive to our requests for a better system of regulation in Scotland, no matter what happens in other international countries – with whom we compete after all. That has been very important in the consideration that his party has now given to this subject.’

The SSPO has sent out briefings to all candidates in the constituencies and regions where salmon farmers operate, including Orkney, Shetland, Argyll and Bute, Skye, Lochaber and Badenoch,

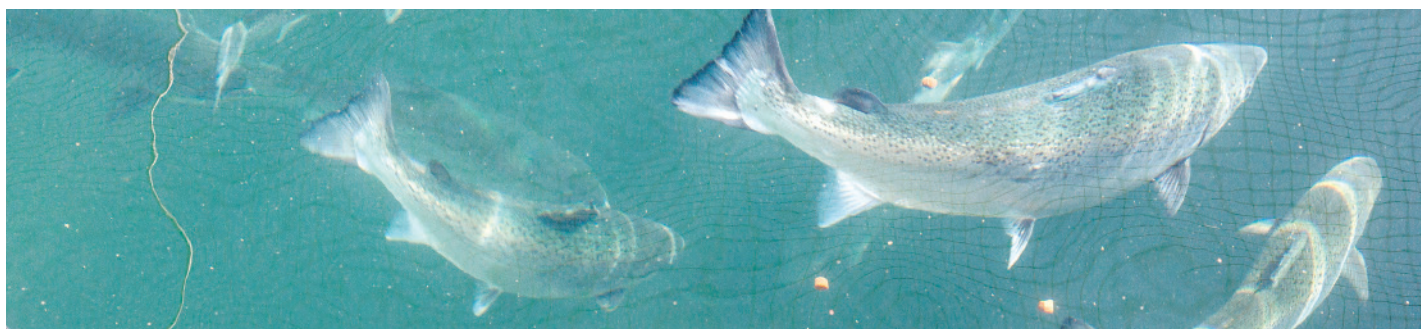
the Western Isles, and Caithness, Sutherland and Ross.

The documents detail the value of salmon farming to the economy in each area, as well as the number of jobs and local businesses it supports.

Scott said the SSPO intends to conduct visits not just to fish farms but also to companies in the supply chain, once the election is over.

‘We’re planning a heavy series of engagements with all the political parties, and indeed all the new MSPs who are elected, particularly in the Highlands and islands,’ he said.

‘But I’m determined that will be much wider than the traditional fish farming areas of Scotland. There are more than 3,000 businesses of all sizes in every constituency in Scotland who are part of the supply chain for the sector.’



## Testing the water with genetic monitoring tool

**A novel water sampling project is underway, aimed at monitoring and mitigating threats to fish health.**

The three-year PhD study, conducted by the University of Glasgow in partnership with Scottish Sea Farms and Mowi Scotland, with funding from the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre and BBSRC, is developing environmental DNA (eDNA) technology to help detect the presence of potential health challenges, including harmful phytoplankton and zooplankton.

All organisms shed DNA and the research involves testing this material,

obtained from small volumes of seawater collected from around salmon farms. Samples are sent to Glasgow every week to be eDNA analysed in a sequencing machine.

Pilot data has already demonstrated the sensitivity and specificity of the eDNA technology. The purpose of the PhD is to validate the existing proof-of-concept in a field setting and benchmark it alongside traditional methods, the goal being to produce a low-cost, quantitative eDNA monitoring tool for biological threats to farmed salmon.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Fish Health and Welfare Ralph Bickerdike explained: ‘Currently, we take daily water samples from each of our farms, which the

farm team then examine under a microscope.

‘The eDNA approach is potentially more accurate and less time consuming, with samples sent to a local hub and results returned promptly.

‘If successful, it could serve as an early warning system for a broader range of harmful organisms, allowing farmers to act even more swiftly and effectively if we see changes in the environment.’

Water monitoring by Scottish Sea Farms – first at Fiunary and now at Spelve, both on Mull – will continue until the autumn.



# Scottish farmers move to weekly sea lice reporting

**Scottish salmon farmers have begun reporting weekly sea lice counts, one of the few salmon producing nations in the world to supply such data.**

Previously, the Scottish sector had been voluntarily reporting the average number of adult female sea lice per fish per farm to the Fish Health Inspectorate on a monthly basis, with the data made publicly available on the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation's website.

The recent move to mandatory weekly lice reporting was announced by Rural Economy Minister Fergus Ewing in December, and follows a recommendation from the Scottish Parliament's Rural Economy and Connectivity (REC) committee, which conducted an inquiry into the sector in 2018.

It's hoped that the new weekly system of reporting will provide a comprehensive

picture of sea lice trends, aided by an interactive map depicting every salmon farm and representing world leading transparency.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Fish Health and Welfare Ralph Bickerdike said: 'Salmon farmers have been reporting monthly averages for a few years now and sharing sea lice data with neighbouring producers in farm management areas for many more years.'

'Now, we will report the information eight days in arrears of the counting, the latest in a series of steps towards even greater openness, demonstrating just how committed we are as a sector to farming both responsibly and sustainably.'

## Student vets offered work placements in novel scheme

**Aquaculture placements are to be offered to veterinary students in a new scheme, believed to be the first of its kind in Scotland.**

While work experience in other animal sectors is commonplace for future vets, there has been no structured Extra Mural Studies (EMS) provision on fish farms.

This will change this summer, said Scottish Sea Farms Head of Veterinary Services Ronnie Soutar who, alongside vet colleague Berta Rivera, Head of Fish Health and Welfare Ralph Bickerdike and Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw, has spearheaded a new scheme offering placements at farms around Scottish Sea Farms' estate for students at Edinburgh and Glasgow vet schools.

'Other animal sectors are well established within the veterinary curriculum and most students should have a very good idea what happens on a sheep farm or a dairy farm. But often they don't know as much about aquaculture,' said Soutar.

'By working for a few weeks on a farm with normal activity going on – including lice counts, gill scoring, and other health activities – they will be learning a lot.'

While students will be based at one farm, the scheme will seek to expose them to as much of the farming cycle as possible, from the hatchery to harvesting.

Said Soutar: 'The more you can get people on to farms and they can see what we're doing, the more you create understanding about the sector.'

Applications from students were received within days of the scheme being publicised, with one vet school representative describing this as 'a high value placement'. Following this year's trial, it is hoped to widen the opportunity to students at other UK vet schools.



**Ronnie Soutar**



## Sector ramps up 'safety at sea' messaging

**The Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation has launched a new campaign, urging other marine users to exercise safety around salmon farms.**

The campaign, which is being rolled out across social media and in print, seeks to raise awareness of the potential hazards on and under the water at working farms, appealing to commercial and recreational marine users alike to #RespectTheBuoys.

This messaging complements Scottish Sea Farms' own work to ensure the safety of other marine users, with the company's 2020 campaign, #KeepSafe #KeepOutsideTheBuoys, running again this year and new safety signage on all Scottish Sea Farms' barges.

Chairman of the Aquaculture Safety Group and Scottish Sea Farms Health & Safety Manager Gerry McCormick said: 'We already have special marks on-site, along with a navigational light on each barge, all of which will alert experienced mariners to give farms a wide berth.'

'The sector and company campaigns serve as further guidance, helping ensure marine users of all kinds and levels keep safe.'



# People on the move



Andrew Park



Steve Kolthammer



David Bisset



Allyn Drummond



Louis MacKinnon

In Orkney, Andrew Park has been promoted to Farm Manager at Lober Rock following the departure to new pastures of Hugh Mainland. Park's career at Scottish Sea Farms has been impressive, joining in 2018 as Trainee Husbandry at Shapinsay, and rising fast to Trainee Farm Manager there last June, before his new appointment, which he took up on April 5.

Also in Orkney, Steve Kolthammer has been appointed Engineering and Logistics Manager, another internal promotion. Kolthammer joined Scottish Sea Farms last October as Engineering Stores Coordinator and was then promoted to Marine Engineer in February, before securing his latest position.

In Shetland, David Bisset was appointed Farm Manager, from Trainee Farm Manager, at Bellister and Swarta, and Allyn Drummond was promoted to Senior Husbandry at Swarta.

Meanwhile, on the mainland, Louis MacKinnon was promoted to Senior Husbandry at Nevis B.

In other moves, Anna Price has moved into the newly created role of Aquaculture Technical Lead and will also take over as the Line Manager for the Aquaculture Technical Coordinators.

And, as featured on page 3, Anne Anderson joined Scottish Sea Farms on March 29 in another newly created role, Head of Sustainability and Development. She brings extensive sector experience from her previous job in the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation and, before that, at the Scottish Environment Protection Agency.



Anna Price



Anne Anderson



## Family-friendly policies offer greater support to mums and dads

**Scottish Sea Farms has enhanced both its maternity and paternity pay in the company's drive to create a more inclusive, family-friendly work culture.**

Until recently, only those employees with five or more years' service received enhanced maternity pay. Expectant and new mums with less than five years' service received statutory maternity pay, equating to six weeks at 90% of normal pay followed by the standard statutory payment for the remaining 33 weeks.

### Higher maternity pay

Under the new family-friendly policies, all working mums with one or more years' service with the company will now be entitled to:

- **12 weeks at 100%**
- **8 weeks at 90%**
- **8 weeks at 50%**
- **11 weeks at statutory maternity pay.**

### Enhanced paternity pay

Extra provision has also been made for new dads. Previously they were entitled to take one or two consecutive weeks' paternity leave at the statutory pay level of £151 per week.

As part of the company enhanced paternity policy, new dads with one or more years' service will now be entitled to two weeks' full pay.

### Shared parental leave

The option of shared parental leave will also be available, as before, but at the enhanced maternity pay rates for all those with one or more years' service.

Employees with less than one year's service will still receive support – maternity, paternity or shared parental leave – but at the default statutory level.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw said the new policies were specifically designed to better support working mums and also encourage more of the company's male employees to take paternity leave.

'The arrival of a new child is an incredibly special and important time for a family and we want to be as supportive as possible. The enhanced maternity package is designed to be more generous and available to more people.

'Meanwhile, by offering paternity leave at people's normal rate of pay, we're hoping to make it possible for more new dads to spend some time with their partner and newborn.'

First in line to benefit from the enhanced maternity and paternity package will be Summer Isles Farm Manager Sarah Last and senior husbandry colleague and fiancé Seumas Hitchings who are expecting their first child in September 2021.

Last said: 'Knowing that the company is choosing to support myself and others in our choice to start a family, at a level far above the normal government statutory rate, is incredible news. It's supporting those who support the business and will hopefully encourage more women into the sector too.'

Added Hitchings: 'I wasn't sure it was going to be viable for me to take two weeks paternity on statutory pay and was intending to take annual leave – and maybe just one week at that. So this is really great news for all future dads-to-be. Those early days for new families are so precious.'

# Work accolades give every employee a voice

**Sustained investment in jobs and training helped earn Scottish Sea Farms three prestigious Investors in People (IIP) accreditations in 2018.**

Now it's time to apply for re-accreditation and the company is hoping to match the achievement by retaining its IIP Platinum Award, plus its Investors in Young People Good Practice Award at Gold Level and the IIP Health and Wellbeing Good Practice Award.

As the only salmon farmer, and one of just 12 Scottish companies, to gain all three awards in the internationally recognised workplace accolades, Scottish Sea Farms is proud of its record in people-oriented initiatives.

Head of Human Resources Tracy Bryant-Shaw said: 'With each round of accreditation, awarded every three years, we've aimed higher and higher in the certification stakes.

'Since the last awards, Scottish Sea

Farms has introduced the Real Living Wage for all employees; we have driven down our excellent absenteeism rate from one per cent to a phenomenal half a per cent during the past year; and we have further improved healthcare support, with innovations such as our Healthy Advantage app for staff and their families.'

With a focus on helping communities retain their younger generations, Scottish Sea Farms has collaborated with Argyll College UHI to offer Modern Apprenticeships in Aquaculture for staff living locally.

And the company has established a Young Person's Council to gather and act on a more diverse range of views.

Winning IIP accreditation is a rigorous process that begins with two surveys,

due to be sent out in May. One covers health and wellbeing and the other Investors in People in general.

Bryant-Shaw said more than 80 per cent of staff took part in the surveys in 2018 and the company is hoping for even higher participation this time round.

Once these (anonymous) forms are completed, an IIP representative interviews selected employees to understand what it's like to work in Scottish Sea Farms.

'We would like every employee to have a voice,' said Bryant-Shaw. 'Anything we can do to improve as a business not only helps our current workforce, but also helps our future employees, and helps us become the employer of choice.'



## Ambassadors sign up to promote aquaculture



**When Scottish Sea Farms put out a call for STEM ambassadors to represent the company, the HR team hoped to get a handful of volunteers.**

But the response was so enthusiastic that 15 people have now been signed up, from all regions and all age groups.

HR Co-ordinator Clare Jordan, who is spearheading the project for Scottish Sea Farms, said that following an introductory talk online, many staff realised they didn't necessarily need to be scientists to take on the role.

'We have had interest from all regions, from the Northern Isles and mainland, and all departments, from freshwater and marine to engineering and quality,' she said.

'And we have people of all generations, from employees who have been in fish farming for years to those who are quite new to the sector.'

A nationwide initiative, the STEM scheme has three hubs in Scotland and has been working with Lantra, the land-based and environmental training organisation, to identify ambassadors in less familiar sectors, such as aquaculture.

The goal is to inspire young people to pursue STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects and careers, and ambassadors' tasks can range from giving talks in schools to online mentoring to hosting work experience.

'The STEM initiative lets us know who is most willing to represent the company and gives us a team who can help put education into context and encourage people into the sector,' said Jordan.

One of the first to join was Grant Masson (pictured left), from Shetland Engineering. He started working at Scottish Sea Farms last autumn following a career in the Merchant Navy, and a short spell as a virtual lecturer at the NAFC Marine Centre.

'If someone wants to know what the career options are in aquaculture beyond fish husbandry, I can tell them about marine engineering; there are a lot of little cogs that have to turn to make the big one turn and that's where I think I can fit in,' he said.



# Girls in league of their own with new football strips



Left to right: Shetland Girls FC Chairman and Coach Mark Hunter and players with Scottish Sea Farms Area Manager for Shetland Robbie Coutts, courtesy of Gordon Siegel Photography

**Shetland Girls Football Club has gone from strength to strength since it was set up four years ago, with member numbers soaring from just 18 in the early days to almost 100 today.**

Young female footballers from across the islands can join one of four groups, from the under 10s to the under 16s, and once Covid restrictions are fully lifted, the summer season will kick off.

The only problem, until recently, was that the girls had to wear hand-me-down football strips from the boys' club, even for matches.

With so many girls to kit out, Shetland Girls FC Chairman and Coach Mark Hunter decided to approach Scottish Sea Farms' Heart of the Community Fund for sponsorship. A donation of

£4,000 was made and the club was able to purchase 20 strips for each of the four age groups.

'Before, we had to beg or borrow old strips from the boys' teams,' said Hunter. 'The girls will be delighted to get out of those!'

'On behalf of the coaches, committee, parents and especially from all the girls, I'd like to thank Scottish Sea Farms for their extremely kind sponsorship.'

'It was such an amazing offer in such hard financial times for everyone and I'm really looking forward to seeing all the girls on the football pitch this summer looking the business in their new kit.'

The girls play indoors from October to April and then, when the weather improves, the outdoor season begins.

The lockdown has seen the closure of leisure facilities in Shetland and the teams have only recently started training again, said Hunter.

Traditionally, the under 14s and under 16s have competed against the Shetland boys' leagues but there are now enough girls to set up a separate league.

'It's completely different when they play against other girls, their confidence grows and it's like watching another team,' said Hunter, who hopes to be able to expand the club to even younger players in the future.

## Farm manager floats idea to keep swimmers safe



**Salmon farmers are accustomed to sharing the marine environment with other interests, recreational or commercial, and take the safety of all users very seriously.**

So, when Scottish Sea Farms' David MacMillan became aware of the increasing numbers of wild swimmers in the vicinity of the company's Dunstaffnage farm, he proposed donating floats to make them more visible.

The floats, which also act as buoyancy aids, will offer the swimmers greater protection, said MacMillan, who is on secondment at Dunstaffnage from Lismore East.

'Swimmers don't tend to swim around the pens where the water is tidal; we are more likely to encounter them when we're travelling to and from the farm by boat,' he said.

'More of a risk is wee Ganavan, where experienced swimmers go over to Maiden Island, a channel used by our boats and many other fishing and diving vessels.'

Scottish Sea Farms has purchased 50 tow floats from local company Outside Edge which will be stored in a 'kit library' in Oban, run by outdoor adventure group, Adventure Oban.

Swimming groups or individual swimmers can then access the floats for free.

But MacMillan, whose brother is a wild swimmer, said he has no intention of joining the swimming groups himself.

'The last thing I want to do after working out in the elements all day is to then go in the sea. I'm ready to get warm and dry!' he said.

