



Scottish Sea Farms takes charge of sector's first electric boat

Scottish Sea Farms has taken delivery of a hybrid power workboat, the first vessel of its kind to be used in Scotland's aquaculture sector and a step towards greater sustainability in salmon farming.

The 15m catamaran, Laurence Knight, was commissioned by Mull-based boat operator Inverlussa Marine Services from Norwegian yard Moen Marin and goes into service soon on Scotland's west coast.

The boat, which will run primarily on its batteries, marks a 'massive milestone' in both carbon reduction and cost savings, said Inverlussa Managing Director Ben Wilson.

'There are similar hybrid vessels in Norway and we thought it was the right time to introduce this technology to our Scottish customers, who are committed to lowering their environmental impact,' he said.

The boat can perform on-farm duties for five to six hours without recharging its batteries from either of the two generators on board.

This means the generators do not need to be running when the boat is tied up alongside a pen, assisting with a harvest or a net installation, for instance.

And with no demand for an overnight generator, noise will be reduced, as well as diesel fuel consumption and the vessel's carbon footprint.

The batteries, with a total capacity of 244kW hours, can drive cranes and all

other energy requirements, including steaming back and forth from the shore. As soon as they need recharging, the generators kick in automatically, and they can also be recharged from shore power.

For Scottish Sea Farms, the vessel will help achieve CO2 savings of around 234 tonnes a year, as well as potentially cut fuel costs by up to 50 per cent, said Regional Production Manager for the Mainland Innes Weir.

Both Scottish Sea Farms and Inverlussa have been in discussions since spring with Scale AQ, owner of Moen Marin which is a pioneer of hybrid vessels for aquaculture.

'We had an almost identical hired service vessel, also built by Moen, with non-hybrid power, for the last 12 months so we will be able to make a direct comparison,' said Weir.

'More importantly, this will give us a really good understanding of what the realities are of using an electrically powered boat for heavy duty work.

'If the generator is only on for four to six hours a day, that is at least half the time we would normally have it running.

'This boat will provide us with not just a lot of information but confidence

in the future of hybrid technology across the business.'

A hybrid power trial currently running on the feed barge at Spelve on Mull has 'opened the door', said Weir, saving around 83 tonnes of CO2 a year at its peak and showing how the technology can work. But the new workboat goes further.

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'The system we have at Spelve is to pick up anything other than feeding fish. As soon as we need to feed, we turn the generator on.

'If we can operate a hybrid system that is completely electric, with generators just used for recharging batteries, we can roll it out across our estate, on the barges and other energy rich areas we want to hybridise.'

With the new boat, data can be collected from the batteries for analysis back on shore. The technology allows Scottish Sea Farms and Inverlussa to manage every individual cell within the battery pack to get the most efficient use out of it.

Scottish Sea Farms will also take delivery of a newly built hybrid barge in November with very similar hybrid technology to the Laurence Knight, modelled to allow some feeding while using battery power, further reducing CO2, fuel and noise.

The batteries in both barge and vessel have a typical life expectancy of 16 years and are also 100 per cent recyclable. And in another clever eco-friendly measure, the water used to cool the batteries in the vessel is recycled to help heat the four cabins.

Laurence Knight brings Inverlussa's fleet up to 17 vessels, and five new jobs have been created to crew the boat in shift patterns.

Wilson said the workboat was more expensive than a conventional vessel and both Inverlussa and Scottish Sea Farms will be watching it carefully to measure its performance.

'I think this type of vessel is going to become more common in the Scottish salmon farming sector as producers look for greener solutions,' he said. 'It's an exciting project and we're looking forward to getting it going.'



Ben Wilson



Innes Weir

Full steam ahead for super seaworthy Kallista Helen



Photo: Gordon Siegel Photography

Scotland's first purpose-built treatment vessel is due to start work for Scottish Sea Farms this month having completed trials in Shetland.

The £6m Kallista Helen, designed by Macduff Ship Design for Mull-based Inverlussa Marine Services, is equipped with a £2.5m next-generation Thermolicer engineered by ScaleAQ in Norway in partnership with ScaleAQ UK and constructed in Scotland.

The 26m vessel, built with a focus on improved fish health and welfare, was inspected during the commissioning stage by the RSPCA.

'This is the first vessel where we've built the boat to suit the system rather than building the system to suit the boat,' said Shetland Area Support Manager Robbie Coutts.

'From start to finish, we've had total input - led by Scottish Sea Farms Engineering & Project Manager for Shetland Keith Fraser - on where everything should be and we're feeling the benefits of it now.'

Those benefits include a shelterdeck which not only protects the equipment but offers greater seaworthiness and crew safety.

'This means we can be where we want to be and implement sea lice control earlier,' said Coutts. 'We're coming into the time of year when it becomes very tricky to plan anything because of the weather but with this boat we can close the doors on the shelterdeck and clean the machine on our way to the next job.'

The extra deck space also makes the Kallista Helen self-sufficient, able to carry out pen-side tasks with her own cranes rather than depending on other workboats.

Scottish Sea Farms Senior Technician Colin MacDonald, one of the four-man crew, said the RSPCA inspector was interested in the fish welfare improvements on the Kallista Helen, such as the wider, 600mm diameter pipe, which is even gentler on the fish as well as facilitating throughputs of 120 tonnes an hour.

'This is the first vessel where we've built the boat to suit the system rather than building the system to suit the boat'



Scottish Sea Farms Area Manager for Shetland Robbie Coutts

The boat, which features bespoke stainless steel engineering work fitted by Ocean Kinetics of Lerwick, also boasts 'smart' power management, including a heat recovery system, which saves on energy and carbon emissions.

Energy app tracks each farm's carbon footprint



A new app that tracks greenhouse gas emissions aims to make life easier for farmers and also provide valuable insights into the company's carbon footprint.

Instead of entering monthly fuel usage on to an Excel spreadsheet, farms can now log their consumption via an app.

The data is then converted into the carbon footprint for each farm.

The app was created by the in-house IT team, led by Head of IT David Anderson, in collaboration with Anna Price, Scottish Sea Farms' Aquaculture Technical Lead.

'To comply with ISO standards and also for many of our customers' audits, there is a requirement to keep records of diesel, petrol and electricity usage,' said Price.

'We've kept those records for many years but haven't utilised the information. Consequently, we came up with the

concept of an app that could process and centralise this data.

'Now we can start to see what we are using individually on farms, by region or by year. Once a farm has harvested an entire crop, we can also work out our carbon footprint per tonne.'

Anderson said staff should find the app easy to use as it has a similar look and feel to the existing Scottish Sea Farms' coronavirus questionnaire.

'It is a tool on which you can build applications rapidly and is part of a wider suite of programmes that we're working on with Anna's team,' he said.

'The data captured as part of this process can link to other systems, some

still in development.

'At the moment, we're looking at fuel usage for generators, barges and boats, but once up and running we will expand it into second- and third-party data gathering, including from feed boats delivering feed to the farms and wellboats.'

Longer term, the app will help the company build a picture of which areas are doing better in terms of energy use and which ones are less efficient and may therefore be good candidates for hybrid battery schemes.

Said Price: 'It's all about driving continual improvement and working towards the sustainability goals that we have as a company and as a sector.'

Orkney vets help salmon farmer in fish health checks



Orkney vets Andy Cant and Leona Robertson are used to treating a wide variety of animals in their Kirkwall-based mixed practice, from pet cats and dogs to cattle, sheep and horses.

Now they have added fish to their veterinary repertoire in a unique partnership with Scottish Sea Farms.

Last month Cant and Robertson, both directors of Northvet, made the first of what will become routine visits to Scottish Sea Farms' Orkney locations, to carry out fish health check-ups.

All Scottish Sea Farms' fish are under the care of its veterinary services team, who are in regular contact with those looking after the fish on a daily basis and can remotely monitor fish via on-site cameras.

But there is no substitute for a farm visit, and the innovative collaboration between

the company and the local veterinary practice is now getting vets on to the firm's Orcadian farms without air miles and Covid complications.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Veterinary Services Ronnie Soutar said he had long wanted to integrate more with practices near the company's remote farms.

'It will be really good to have fresh veterinary eyes on the farms, especially with Andy and Leona bringing their wealth of experience from other livestock sectors,' he said.



Leona Robertson, Andy Cant and Ronnie Soutar

To prepare for their new role, the Northvet team took part in training sessions with Soutar, learning how a salmon farm operates, before more detailed instruction about potential diseases and the responses to them.

Ahead of the first visit, to Toyness in Scapa Flow, Cant said he was more excited than daunted about the new venture.

'As a business, we're keen to get involved in anything that is related to animal health and welfare. Hopefully, we will be able to bring something from our experience of extensive livestock farming.'

Robertson agreed that many of the principles of food animal production can be applied across species and to different systems.

'We are looking forward to working with Scottish Sea Farms in their aim of producing healthy, high quality fish,' she said.

Regulatory reform review underway

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Sustainability & Development Anne Anderson

Scotland's salmon farmers have been clear that regulatory reform of their sector should result in better regulation that streamlines development, not less regulation.

And in Professor Russel Griggs, the man appointed to lead the review, they believe they now have an expert who can drive forward the necessary changes.

Since taking up his post in August, Griggs has been on a fact-finding mission which included visiting Scottish Sea Farms' RAS hatchery at Barcaldine and Scallastle farm in the Sound of Mull.

Head of Sustainability & Development Anne Anderson, who hosted the tour along with Managing Director Jim Gallagher, said Professor Griggs understands both the regulatory process and business.

'We discussed the difference between the controls set on the Scottish sector versus those in place in Norway and elsewhere, including the distinct role of government in other producing nations to set policy and regulators to deliver that policy.'

What salmon companies want from the review is one consenting authority

to replace the current four different regulatory bodies, bringing Scotland into line with other salmon producing nations.

This is also the goal of Scotland's SNP government, which outlined plans in its election manifesto to introduce a single determining authority for new farm consents, modelled on the regulatory regime in Norway.

'Having everything coordinated and decided upon at the same time should remove duplication and contradiction in the planning process,' said Anderson.

'It's possible to use legislation that already exists with some revocations or additions, and importantly to provide those interested in the consenting process an opportunity to review and comment on all the information relating to a development available at the one time.'

Asked whether a new regulatory body could be created, Anderson said that what was important is that those tasked with delivering the consenting process

are people who take time to understand the sector, the science and the issues and who come to the table with potential solutions.

'What we have today is a fast changing and vastly innovative sector, and therefore a strong need for regulatory and government policy individuals to keep up to date with those changes and the opportunities they provide.'

'Having a strong, supportive and enabling regulatory framework that will hold us to account, but not hold us back, will benefit the sector and Scotland too.'

Also important is locating regulators in the places where salmon farming operates, said Anderson: 'To regulate most effectively, you can't do it from behind a computer; you need to be out and about, living and working within the areas where the sector operates.'

Griggs is expected to take his initial findings to Rural Development Secretary Mairi Gougeon this month before writing his report.

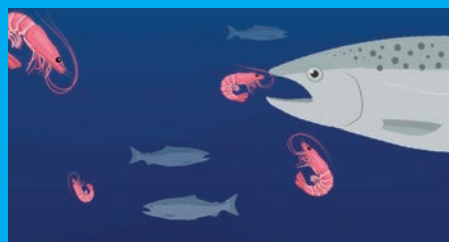
'Myth busting' films tell the salmon farming story

Most salmon farmers would be able to answer questions such as 'why are salmon pink', or 'what are cleaner fish', but explaining the sector in laymen's terms can sometimes be a challenge.

Now help is at hand with a series of 30-second animated films touching on the issues most often raised in discussions about salmon farming.

Produced by the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO), they are aimed at separating fact from fiction in a straightforward format.

The eight short animations will be free to download on social media channels and will be released in phases, with the first due out over the coming weeks.



The subjects covered include:

- Why is salmon pink?
- Why are salmon given antibiotics?
- What are typical stocking densities?
- What are sea lice and how do they affect salmon?
- What is the survival rate of Scottish salmon?
- What are cleaner fish?
- How do Scottish salmon farms keep fish safe from predators?
- What are salmon fed with?

Janice Macgregor, Head of Communications at the SSPO, described the film campaign as a 'myth busting' exercise.

'There is a lot of misinformation about salmon farming and the films are a way to counteract that and get across the message about what we do.'

'We have people who may have worked in the sector for a long time and have a wealth of knowledge in their heads, but distilling that into succinct soundbites that everybody can understand is difficult.'

'What these animations do is provide snippets of information about the sector. They are an easy-to-engage-with tool that we can use at schools and across social media and on our website.'

It's anticipated that all eight films, made in association with the creative agency Denver Marketing, will be available by the end of November.

Keeping Scottish salmon on the road



Photos courtesy of Morna Marr

With the haulage crisis continuing to engulf the UK, The Source checked in with logistics experts DFDS for an update on the mitigation measures helping keep Scottish salmon on the road.

The shortage of lorry drivers – now estimated at more than 100,000 nationwide by the Road Haulage Association – has seen panic buying in supermarkets and at petrol stations as supplies run low.

Mark Kelly, Logistics Division Operations Manager at DFDS in Larkhall, said Brexit and Covid combined had caused an exodus of European drivers, compounding a decade-long shortage in the haulage industry.

‘Everyone has been caught short because there was such a reliance on that Eastern European labour, not just for driving but for other logistics jobs like warehousing and in the production facilities,’ said Kelly.

DFDS, which handles most of Scotland’s

farmed salmon from its Lanarkshire hub, has its own full-time drivers as well as a fleet of more than 100 subcontractors.

One of the biggest challenges, said Kelly, has been holding on to these drivers as the market becomes increasingly competitive. The price of haulage has more than doubled.

‘The rates are now higher than they have ever been and they’re not going to go back down.’

DFDS leveraged its network in the UK and northern Europe to bring in an extra 10 vehicles a week on average to transport Scottish salmon to London (including Heathrow) and France.

The introduction of the ‘warehouse to wheels’ scheme in Larkhall, covered in the last issue of The Source, is also

proving a success with eight staff training to be HGV drivers and on the road in 12 months.

To ensure there is no interruption to Christmas supplies, DFDS has agreed to fund return flights to Poland for around 12 drivers with one Eastern European company still operating in the UK, on condition they continue deliveries until December 22.

‘At the moment, things are running very well...with the mitigations we have in place we’re in a very good position to be able to cope with an uptick in volume,’ said Kelly.

‘However, there will still be challenges ahead and we need to do our best to plan around those.’

Driving salmon’s green agenda from the sustainability hot seat

It is a year since the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation (SSPO) published its Sustainability Charter and it plans to mark the anniversary with a presentation at COP26 in Glasgow next month.

Spearheading the SSPO’s commitment to Scotland’s climate change agenda is Dr Lindsay Pollock, the organisation’s recently appointed Head of Sustainability.

With a PhD from Stirling’s Institute of Aquaculture and a background in the feed business, most recently as Sustainability Manager for the North Sea at Cargill Aqua Nutrition, Pollock is ideally placed to drive forward the sector’s green goals.

‘Our ambition is to be net zero ahead of 2045 and my role is to help the sector collectively achieve this target,’ Pollock told The Source.

‘The Sustainability Charter is a long-term vision and covers not just greenhouse gas emissions, but a broad sustainability

agenda, and strengthening community engagement too.’

Pollock’s priorities include building a broader understanding of salmon farming among a wide group of stakeholders, ensuring an operating environment which supports the sector’s growth and resilience.

‘The sector realises it has to grow in a sustainable way and we want to make sure that message gets out there, particularly to the key MSPs who have an interest not only in production, but in the supply chain too, which extends through much of Scotland.’

A significant part of Pollock’s job involves liaising with wild salmon interests and she is keen to work towards a more balanced view of aquaculture being just one of the pressures believed to affect wild salmonids.

The SSPO’s one-year-on update of the Charter will demonstrate the strides already made in completing new



nutritional studies, analysing the sector’s carbon footprint and other key baseline information, including on the use of biodegradable and recyclable packaging.

This will all be presented during two sessions at COP26, both on November 3: a morning panel discussion on packaging (featuring, among others, Donald Buchanan from Scottish Sea Farms), and an evening reception hosted by SSPO chief executive Tavish Scott.

In the meantime, Pollock, already a familiar face in fish farming circles, plans to get out on the farms as much as possible ‘to see what’s happening in the sector and reconnect to people’.

People on the move

It's been a busy few months for career progression within Scottish Sea Farms, with a bumper 17 internal promotions since summer.



Carlota Castaneda-Cobo



George Prosser



Ali MacAulay



Craig Grounds



Donovan Russell



Phil Shaughnessy



Andrew Morrison

Within freshwater, Carlota Castaneda-Cobo has been promoted from Acting Operations Manager at Barcaldine to Operations Manager, while Scott Simcox has been appointed to Junior Engineer having recently completed his four-year apprenticeship.

On the marine team, George Prosser has been appointed Farm Manager at Dunstaffnage, with Ali MacAulay taking on the role of Trainee Farm Manager at Lismore West.

Husbandry hands Craig Grounds and Donovan Russell (Creran) have been promoted to senior husbandry, as have Robbie Nice (Kishorn South), Phil Shaughnessy (Summer Isles) and Tobias D'Eathe (Swarta Skerry), while Andrew Morrison moves from Senior Husbandry to Trainee Farm Manager (Eriboll).

Within engineering, Mark Brodie has been appointed to Engineering Supervisor (Orkney) and Joshua Garrett to Engineer and Transport Manager, while out on the fleet Gerry Carney has joined the Kallista Helen crew as a Technician and Allyn Drummond has been appointed to Thermolicer Operative.

Last but by no means least, Scalloway's Connor Morrison and Mark Dano have both progressed from Processing Operatives to Processing Team Leaders, and David Hipson has been appointed to Processing Engineer at South Shian.

Shetland to pilot discounted nursery places scheme

Scottish Sea Farms is looking to pilot a nursery scheme in Shetland that will help parents with the cost of pre-school places as well as after-school care.



Elijah Tulloch, Shetland

The company is in discussions with Scalloway-based Hame Fae Hame, which caters for children aged one to 12, and the HR team now wants to hear from Shetland based staff to gauge the level of interest in the initiative.

Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw said the plan is in keeping with the company's family friendly policies, which include generous maternity and paternity packages, upgraded in the spring.

'As a rural employer, and with a lot of young staff, we are aware of how hard it is to get child-care,' she said.

'We decided to trial this in Shetland as we have found the ideal joint venture

partner there; 'Hame Fae Hame' which is located near our processing factory in Scalloway and is run by Kaye Sandison, whose husband David Sandison is a consultant in the seafood sector.'

Families in Scotland already receive 21 hours of free pre-school provision a week from the government and Scottish Sea Farms is aiming to offer further support to make child-care more affordable.

'We now want to gather views from our Shetland staff to see what the demand would be for discounted nursery places and whether they would use a service like this,' added Bryant-Shaw.

'If the trial is a success, we'll see how we can then support families in Orkney and on the mainland; we're just at the beginning of the journey.'

If you're a working parent in Shetland, tell us your thoughts on the pilot scheme by emailing HR Business Partner for Northern Isles: emma.leyden@scottishseafarms.com



Become a better manager with online coaching

Scottish Sea Farms has introduced a new coaching service to help staff in supervisory roles maximise their professional and personal potential.

In conjunction with coaching company Know You More, the programme will provide informal one-to-one sessions on demand, via an online portal.

Employees can stipulate what they want to talk about and will then be matched with an accredited coach for an initial, confidential one-hour chat.

This can cover anything from improving general communication skills to managing difficult conversations with colleagues.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw said that unlike traditional coaching, the Know You More sessions were tailored to specific requests.

'This service provides an additional safe space where people can seek advice on how to be better managers or how to progress their careers,' she said.

'Anybody from supervisor up to senior management – people who manage others or are responsible for an area – who wants a coaching session can log on to the portal.

'The HR department is always on hand to support, but the professional coaching platform allows people to have a deeper conversation dedicated to them and what they're trying to achieve.

'It is an invaluable tool that will help people gain confidence in any situation, whether they are a new manager who wants to perform better in meetings or a leader seeking to motivate an entire team.'

Launched on October 4, the Know You More portal is available via the HR Sharepoint > Management Academy.

First class Chloe joins the Supply Chain gang



With growing international exports and Brexit, the responsibilities of the Supply Chain have become ever more complex, and finding the ideal candidate to complete the team proved a challenge for Head of Operations Ewan Mackintosh.

'We needed someone with a head for figures, who was quick thinking and saw Supply Chain as a potential career rather than as a stepping stone to something else,' he said.

Enter Chloe MacLeod, who graduated from Glasgow Caledonian last year with a first class honours degree in International Business and Marketing, which she was keen to put to good use, preferably without moving away from her local community in Benderloch.

'I'm very lucky to have found something so suited to what I did at university, and that the job came up at the right time,' said MacLeod, whose boyfriend spotted the advert on Facebook. 'There are not a lot of opportunities in the area.'

The Supply Chain team is now centralised in South Shian, so MacLeod,

who started at Scottish Sea Farms in May, can travel to the office in minutes.

'Every day I learn something new. At first, all the terms went right over my head but now I feel I know what they're talking about.

'Things can change at the drop of a hat. Recently, there have been a lot of orders going out to China because of the size of the fish that are coming in and I've really enjoyed discovering all the processes that have to be in place for the fish to get there.'

MacLeod also made her first visit to a farm in July and has already taken the lead on a project that entailed liaising between DFDS and the marine and processing teams. In September, she embarked on an export training course with the Chambers of Commerce.

So how does she see her future?

'I'm very lucky to have found something so suited to what I did at university, and that the job came up at the right time'

'I feel like although I'm quite new and still being inducted in all the aspects of the job, there are different paths I could take in this role or in a different role within the company.'

For his part, Mackintosh, who joined Scottish Sea Farms in 2003, believes he now has the balance just right in Supply Chain, with MacLeod bringing a new dimension to the combined expertise of Brian Shearer, Georgia Mitchell, Lyndsay Foster and Nicola Wood.

'Chloe is an asset to the team, which I think is one of the best we've ever had.'

Staying well this winter

With the worst of the Covid pandemic hopefully behind us, health professionals are preparing for more typical winter ailments such as colds and flu.

Scottish Sea Farms' Occupational Health Nurse, Diane Dixon, encourages staff to call her if they have any niggling health concerns, especially while GP appointments remain elusive.

'If you can't get to see your own doctor, there is nothing worse than sitting worrying,' she said. 'At least I can point people in the right direction.'

Diane's advice for staying fit and healthy over coming months is based on common sense – eating, exercising and sleeping well.



Here are Diane's top tips for winter wellbeing

- Eat more green leafy vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds to boost the immune system;
- Eat more oily fish, including salmon, which is good for mental health too;
- Take vitamin D supplements – vitamin D levels diminish in the winter because there is less sunlight and we're inside more, yet we need it for healthy bones and a mood boost;
- Exercise, for mental health as well as physical health benefits – try to

find an 'exercise buddy' to help you stay motivated when it's cold and dark outside;

- Get enough good quality sleep – sleep repairs our bodies;
- Reduce caffeine – high caffeine intake has been proven to have a negative impact on people who suffer from Seasonal Affective Disorder;
- Get your flu jab, if eligible;
- Look after your hands – while thorough hand washing is still recommended, avoid dry and cracked skin by using non-perfumed hand creams.

Mull boosts network of life-saving defibrillators

Access to potentially life-saving defibrillators is now island wide on Mull and Iona, with every school in the region fitted with its own device.

The network of defibrillators, which is overseen by the Mull and Iona Community Trust, had been extended to all but three schools.

Now, with a little help from Scottish Sea Farms, three more machines, plus cabinets to house them, have been purchased.

A defibrillator is a device that gives a high energy electric shock to the heart of someone who is in cardiac arrest, and can be crucial in saving lives.

The defibrillators installed in Tobermory High, Salen and Bunessan schools cost a total of £5,300, with Scottish Sea Farms contributing £3,800 and community fundraising paying the remaining £1,500.



Photo courtesy of Mull and Iona Community Trust

Moray Finch, General Manager of the Mull and Iona Community Trust, said that under the Scottish Ambulance Service system defibrillators are registered and maintained by volunteer guardians.

'We wanted to get as much coverage as possible and to improve public awareness of where defibrillators are available,' said Finch.

'Schools are easy to access as they are typically all in settlement areas where people are more likely to be.

'Also, a member of staff will keep an eye on them and all the defibrillators are suitable for use on infants, as well as adults.'

The Mull and Iona Community Trust contacted a number of local businesses, including Scottish Sea Farms, which have defibrillators available to the public around the clock,

and ensured they were registered with the Ambulance Service too.

Community fund-raising, along with support from the family of a cyclist who died of a heart attack on Mull, secured funding for two more defibrillators.

'There were only three primary schools on the island without them so we decided to fund raise for these,' said Finch, who got in touch with Scottish Sea Farms Regional Production Manager for the Mainland Innes Weir.

'Without the support of Scottish Sea Farms, we would have continued with crowd funding in the community but this has definitely speeded it up,' said Finch.

'The local community are really grateful for the support from Scottish Sea Farms. In addition to their defibrillators at their shore bases, this really demonstrates the commitment of the company to the local community.'

Deep diving into school wildlife project

Primary six pupils at Stromness Primary School have been getting better acquainted with nature as part of their environmental studies for the John Muir Award.

But after scouring the shoreline outside their school they needed a little help to find some wild specimens from the sea.

Luckily, Scottish Sea Farms Environmental Scientist Kirsty Brown is a keen snorkeller and, along with Katy Firth from Stromness Museum and Florence Ungaro from EMEC, was only too happy to dive into the waves so the school pupils had some marine samples to identify.

Brown, who also plays underwater hockey, said she finds snorkelling 'great fun': 'We went out at 7am and collected crabs, sea urchins, starfish and a sea potato which we left in buckets outside the school.'

Teacher Alison Leitch said the children have been fascinated by the marine wildlife, especially with the more exciting species like the starfish and sea urchins.

'These encourage them to look more closely at everything else we are seeing in the wild,' said Leitch, who is guiding her class of 16 through the award.

'Schools are trying to do more outdoor education generally and the John Muir award is a great way to find out about what's on the doorstep.'

The only catch has been the weather but Scottish Sea Farms has now provided the school with 30 sets of waterproofs.

'Part of the award is to explore what your local environment is like and all weathers is what it's like here,' said Leitch. 'But the waterproofs will enable us to stay on the shore for longer.'



Photos courtesy of Stromness Primary School

