



Record visitor numbers open doors to greater understanding

September will see Scottish Sea Farms host its 270th visitor since January, a record for the company and the result of a concerted drive to increase awareness and understanding of the sector.

In many instances, individuals and organisations have approached Scottish Sea Farms directly. Others have been introduced to the company by sector organisation Salmon Scotland.

Combined, it's resulted in 33 scheduled visits so far this year, spanning a diverse range of backgrounds: customers, regulators, government, educational and environmental groups, students, suppliers, and members of the public to name a few.

With keen interest in all aspects of salmon farming – from freshwater, marine and processing, to sales, sustainability and technical – it adds up to a significant investment of time across the company, but one deemed well worth it.

'Visitors get an insight into the complexity, care, passion and investment within the sector,' said Head of Freshwater Rory Conn.

A sentiment echoed by marine colleagues. 'The beauty of people coming out to the farm is that they get to see what we do and speak to the team in person,' said Scallastle Farm Manager Michael Keenan. 'No question is off limits. In fact, we encourage open, honest, constructive discussion.'

'With most of the team living locally, it's also an opportunity to convey to

visitors from more central areas just how important salmon farming is to Scotland's remote communities.'

Indeed, visitor feedback highlights that nothing beats seeing exactly what goes on and why – not just in terms of food production but also in terms of the environmental care shown.

Dr Andrea McColl, Senior Development Manager for Life Sciences at Highlands and Islands Enterprise, who led a group of overseas visitors in April as part of the A3 Scotland conference, said: 'Seeing in real life what an aquaculture facility looks like, the scale and complexity of the operation, gave the group a great insight into the sector. Our hosts were happy to answer our many questions, spanning science, technology and operations, and the group came away much more knowledgeable.'

Daniel Merryfield, Programme Lead for MSc Sustainable Aquaculture at Plymouth University, agreed: 'Visiting Scottish Sea Farms has been a great experience for our students. The staff that host us have shown a genuine desire to practise and promote ethical fish farming – minimising the environmental footprint and maintaining welfare.'

It's this authentic experience that's so crucial, says Head of Processing Donald Buchanan. 'We don't do anything differently on the day of a visit, other than take time out of our normal day to show guests around. When your facilities and farms run as they should do every day, there's no need.'

'So perhaps the most satisfying part, for us, is seeing how impressed people are by the level of technology, skill and care that goes into our work. It's further affirmation that we are doing the right thing as a business.'

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Freshwater team pay tribute to 'everyone's go-to guy'

Technician Nathan Ritchie



Tributes have been paid to Scottish Sea Farms hatchery technician Nathan Ritchie who died in July while on holiday in Spain with his friends.

Nathan, much loved son of Janet and Stewart, had 'a heart of gold' and 'an unrelenting upbeat attitude', said his friends and colleagues, many of whom attended his funeral at Mallaig Community Centre on August 20.

A talented piper, originally from Mallaig, Nathan suffered a massive asthma attack and, despite efforts to save his life by his friends and the Spanish ambulance and hospital staff in Barcelona, he passed away, aged just 24.

Nathan had worked at Barcaldine as a RAS technician since 2019, following roles at CalMac and before then with Inverlussa Marine Services. He also worked for a spell at Scottish Sea Farms' Nevis farms and as a boatman for the company.

'Ambitious, creative and with a real passion to learn', according to one colleague, Nathan was named student of the year when he completed a SVQ level 5 in Maritime Studies.

Those who worked with him remember 'a true character but a gentleman at heart', 'everyone's go-to guy at Barcaldine, always willing to help, always keen to be of use', and 'a mischievous guy' 'full of joy and bad jokes'.

One of his workmates, speaking for the whole team, said Nathan was 'a credit to his parents...a charming, polite and admirable young man who never failed to put a smile on your face'.

Others recalled his 'great craic' and the 'wicked twinkle in his eye'. All said he would be 'deeply missed'.

Rory Conn, Head of Freshwater, said: 'Nathan was a young man always happy to see you and always there to lend a hand in any way he could; he grabbed an opportunity with both hands.'

Nathan is still managing to help others, with the JustGiving page set up in his memory by his parents having now raised more than £10,000 for The Special Care Baby Unit at Raigmore Hospital in Inverness, where he was cared for as a premature baby, and for Mallaig & Ardnamurchan District Pipe Band.

Trials give cleaner fish a little kelp

Seaweed ropes at Scallastle. Photo: Sam Wright



A Scottish Sea Farms trial encouraging settlement of seaweed in salmon pens, with the aim of replacing artificial kelp hides for cleaner fish, is producing promising results.

Seaweed ropes have been strung across two pens at Scallastle, in the Sound of Mull, each with four to five lines that have established to a depth of 7-8m since the project began at the start of the year, overseen by Farm Manager Michael Keenan and team.

And not only is the seaweed doing well, but the salmon and cleaner fish (wrasse and lumpfish) seem happy too, said Regional Production Manager for the Mainland Innes Weir.

'This is a small-scale, proof of concept trial exploring whether kelp will grow to a depth that allows cleaner fish to create a habitat, and whether it will survive throughout the winter,' said Weir. 'If successful, we can stop putting artificial plastic hides in pens.'

'There is no downside that we can see and several advantages. Studies have shown that seaweed absorbs CO2 and removes nitrogen and phosphorous from the ecosystem. It's a bit like planting trees to offset your carbon footprint.'

In another, more recent trial, harvested seaweed ropes, with the roots still attached, have been installed in Loch Spelve to see how they re-establish.

Both the Scallastle and Spelve projects are a collaboration with Oban-based seaweed company Celtica, which obtained seeded lines from SAMS (the Scottish Association for Marine Science) in Dunstaffnage.

Scottish Sea Farms is trialling two different seaweed species which, whilst not suitable for food production, could have potential use as a fertiliser once removed from the farms.

The plan is to roll out the programme, with less exposed farms most likely to be selected.

'Introducing seaweed into the pens is like working with nature,' said Weir. 'Because kelp has a natural, anti-biofouling property within it, we don't need to clean it.'

'Regardless of what type of farming you do, whether it's marine or terrestrial, we're all looking towards more biological solutions.'



Duane Coetzer (left) with Richard Darbyshire and Jim Gallagher

‘All to play for in Orkney’ says ambitious new boss

Taking on the role of Orkney Regional Manager could be seen as a daunting prospect, both maintaining the area’s reputation for excellence and following in the formidable footsteps of outgoing manager Richard Darbyshire.

But Duane Coetzer brings nearly 20 years’ aquaculture experience to his new post and is relishing the opportunity to build on the legacy he has inherited.

Born in South Africa, fish farming has taken him to the west coast of Scotland, then to Tasmania in Australia, and now back to Scotland again, for what could be his dream job.

‘Orkney has long been idolised by the fish farming community and regarded as one of the best places to work,’ Coetzer told The Source.

‘And it’s good to be back in Scotland, most of my working life has been here, I know the sector and know the challenges.’

Coetzer said he fell into fish farming after heading to Scotland from South Africa in 2003, and has worked for Dawnfresh, the Scottish Salmon Company (now Bakkafrost Scotland) and Mowi.

He is just back from a spell as General Manager of Marine Operations at Tasmanian salmon farmer Petuna and plans to make Orkney a permanent base.

Coetzer said he was attracted by Scottish Sea Farms’ ‘proper sense of community’ and its record for retaining staff over a long period.

‘In Orkney, some have been there for 20 years or more and there is a lot of passion to continue striving to improve and be as sustainable as possible.’

He was also drawn to the company’s approach to fish welfare, with as little handling of the stock as possible.

‘That fitted very well with my own core values – at the end of the day, we are first and foremost caregivers to animals.’

After just a few weeks in the job, Coetzer said his priority is to spend as much time as he can out on farm, getting to know people and ‘seeing how we can best work together to continue our growth’.

‘It’s an absolutely fantastic team. They care about what they do and they care about each other. I learn as much from them as I hope they do from me.’

‘I’m very lucky that I don’t have to make a lot of changes straight off, there is a solid foundation to work on. Richard ran a very well-structured operation.’

Coetzer is also committed to the company’s ASC programme; Orkney’s Lober Rock farm was going through the final stages of accreditation as he arrived.

‘There is more work involved, just as when we joined RSPCA in the beginning, but it is a highly regarded standard to be part of.’

Coetzer believes that not only Orkney but also Shetland will benefit from having separate management again, with focused leadership.

And will there be healthy competition between himself, Richard and Regional Manager for the Mainland Innes Weir?

‘I think there’s going to be fantastic competition! We are three very strong-minded people and I think each one of us is constantly going to want our regions to outshine each other.’

‘I hope to replicate the success achieved by Richard and his team in terms of lice control on Orkney. But in terms of production, it’s all to play for.’



Environmental Assistant Vivienne Gaffney

‘Force of nature’ will be sorely missed

Vivienne Gaffney, who passed away on August 20 after a long battle with cancer, was a ‘force of nature’ who lit up the lives of her colleagues, both in SEPA Shetland, at Grieg and lastly in Scottish Sea Farms.

An active figure on the Environment team in Shetland, Vivienne was ‘always purposeful’, said her colleague and friend of nearly 20 years, Kaye Williamson.

‘She was petite but so full of energy. She would come into the office like a little whirlwind, with a huge sense of fun. She loved a party and was usually the instigator of any events outside work.’

‘She worked hard and was very knowledgeable, a really good team member, whatever team she was in, and she would always manage to get the difficult things done, with ease.’

Head of Sustainability & Development Anne Anderson, who first worked with Vivienne at SEPA, said: ‘Those fortunate to have worked with Viv will know her to have been a real force of nature when it came to the causes closest to her heart: people, the planet and animal welfare among them.’

‘Her indomitable spirit will be sorely missed by many but by no-one more so than her beloved husband Sean, daughter Anna, son Danny and granddaughter Lila.’

A JustGiving page has been set up in Viv’s memory, raising funds for a charity important to her: Shetland Cats Rescue. To give, go to: <https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/matina-hunter-2>

Work experience on farms for future fish vets

As part of the wider drive to recruit more vets into salmon farming, Scottish Sea Farms has introduced a new work placement programme, believed to be a first for the sector.

Seven young vets – mostly in their third year, which is when veterinary students typically undertake clinical work in terrestrial farms, stables and boarding kennels – have taken part in the programme so far, spending one to two weeks learning about fish welfare.

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

To address the gap, Scottish Sea Farms Head of Veterinary Services Ronnie Soutar, in consultation with Edinburgh and Glasgow vet schools, devised the scheme for students interested in gaining more knowledge about aquaculture.

Scottish Sea Farms vet Alison Brough, who has been hosting the students, said the response has been very positive.

‘The students have been genuinely interested in what we do,’ she said. ‘I start by taking them to Barcaldine, which gives them a thorough background, from incubation all the way through to smolts.

‘They have helped the technicians feed the fish and clean the tanks, and they have taken samples with Emily, our Freshwater Fish Health Biologist.

‘Then we move on to marine farm visits, mostly on the mainland but also to Mull.’

Students have been shown how to do a basic post-mortem on a fish, how to take histology samples, and do routine gill swabs.

‘This gives them a really good understanding of the diseases wild and farmed salmon are challenged with and how we manage them,’ she said.

Edinburgh students Natasha Weers (left) and Mae Yeap (right)



At the end of their placements, the trainee vets have a meeting with the veterinary team so they can go through any questions.

Edinburgh student Natasha Weers said she now has ‘a better understanding of salmon production as a whole’.

‘I am thankful for all the staff we met for their hospitality and for patiently and enthusiastically sharing all their knowledge with us. I truly learnt a lot and have cultivated an interest in this industry through the experience.’

Fellow Edinburgh student Mae Yeap agreed: ‘All the staff were extraordinarily kind and helpful, making sure we were well taken care of every step of the way. The experience was very eye-opening and has definitely motivated me to explore deeper into the marine aquaculture field.’

Wild fish expert Dr Martin Jaffa



River gradings put west, east and north coasts on a par

The Scottish government’s river conservation gradings for 2023 suggest that areas without salmon farms are as susceptible to declining stocks as those with salmon farms.

Some 29 rivers are listed as Grade One (most sustainable), 31 as Grade Two (catch and release should be promoted) and 113 as Grade Three (catch and release is mandatory).

The gradings are less stringent than previously, despite recent catches being the lowest on record. For example, in 2018, there were 122 rivers classified as Grade Three – nine more than this year – and just 28 Grade One rivers and 21 rivers classified as Grade Two.

Of the 13 rivers where catch and release is mandatory, six are located outside the salmon farming area and seven within.

And one of the rivers that has fallen two grades from a Grade One to a

Grade Three is located on the north coast, in an area well away from salmon farms.

In addition to the 13 that have been reclassified as catch and release only, another seven rivers have been downgraded from Grade One to Grade Two. Three are in salmon farming areas, including the River Ewe, and four are in the north-east – the most notable being the River Helmsdale which has been Grade One since the early days of classification. Meanwhile, the only river in Scotland to see an improvement in its conservation grading is located in the heart of the salmon farming area, in the Outer Hebrides.

Dr Martin Jaffa, who analysed the

new classifications in his weekly blog *reLAKsation*, argued it’s impossible to see how 100% catch and release, voluntary or mandatory, will safeguard the future of wild fish stocks.

‘The River Dee has been mandatory catch and release for over 20 years and yet catches have continued to decline,’ he said.

‘Perhaps when stocks are under significant threat, the only remedial measure that should be considered is to close the river to fishing completely until all possible contributing factors can be thoroughly and robustly explored.’

reLAKsation is available to read at callandermcdowell.co.uk

Salmon Scotland membership gives supply chain stronger voice



Inverlussa Managing Director Ben Wilson (right) with Salmon Scotland Chair Atholl Duncan (middle) and Jarl van den Berg, General Manager of Hendrix Genetics (left). Photo: Salmon Scotland

There has been an enthusiastic response to sector body Salmon Scotland's move to extend its membership to the supply chain, with more than 20 businesses now signed up.

One of the first to join was Mull-based Inverlussa Marine Services, with Managing Director Ben Wilson becoming one of two new supply chain members elected to the Salmon Scotland board.

'As soon as I heard that Salmon Scotland was looking to open up the membership to the supply chain, I thought it made total sense,' Wilson told The Source.

'As a company, we're as invested in the sector as the producers are and can add our weight to the organisation and help it highlight the importance of salmon farming to Scotland.'

Wilson said he believed now was a good time to broaden the sector body because suppliers had become increasingly integral to the farming operation.

'The days of our vessels just turning up at farms to be told what to do are long gone. Now we're building very specialised boats with skilled crews, as the sector has grown and required more bespoke services, and we feel we're a core part of that.'

Local ambassadors

Inverlussa has a fleet of 18 vessels, growing to 20 by the end of the year, all involved in salmon farming, and employs 115 people.

'We're happy if Salmon Scotland can use us to strengthen the sector's voice. Our boat crews work alongside farmers and, like the salmon producers, we have a lot of employees who live in the community

and we can see the vital importance of these jobs.

'This importance isn't just felt in remote rural areas, but also in the Central Belt and parts of Aberdeen, Inverness and the east coast. We need to highlight the huge geographical reach of the supply chain, which operates across Scotland,' Wilson added.

Stronger sector voice

Salmon Scotland chief executive Tavish Scott said 'it has never been more important to have a strong voice speaking on behalf of the sector', following the creation of the new Scottish Aquaculture Council to help shape future aquaculture policy and streamline regulation.

Wilson has already been to his first Salmon Scotland board meeting, along with fellow supply chain member Jarl van den Berg, Managing Director of Hendrix Genetics, and said it provided new insights into how much goes on in the background of food production.

'I can hopefully bring something different to the table and also represent other supply chain members. I think now there is a responsibility for suppliers to promote the positives and the investment in the sector.

'We did this recently when we delivered new hybrid powered vessels. In the past, we might not have publicised what we were doing, but it's for the good of the whole sector if we all work together.'

Sector news in brief

Norway-UK business event, September 14-16

Crown Prince Haakon of Norway is to address a Norway-UK business conference – Transform, Connect, Create – to be held in Aberdeen and London from September 14-16. Aquaculture is the focus of one of four parallel sessions in Aberdeen, and delegates will be able to hear talks by Salmon Scotland CEO Tavish Scott, salmon farmers and key suppliers.

Among the themes on the agenda are 'Unlocking the growth opportunities in the aquaculture sector', 'Combating fish health and environmental impact', and 'The future is electric' – with Torfinn Hansvik, Technical Director of Moen Marine, discussing hybrid vessels. For more details see <https://na.eventscloud.com/website/39984/home-348/>

Shetland Climate Week, from September 26

Shetland Climate Week, from September 26 to October 3, staged by Shetland Islands Council, will feature a Sustainable Seafood Day (Friday, September 30). Scottish salmon will be on the menu, along with a sector stand promoting sustainably produced salmon, and there will be support, too, from Shetland Fishermen's Association, Shetland Shellfish Management Organisation, Taste of Shetland and the Marine Conservation Society. The activities are part of Scotland's Climate Week, an annual event to raise awareness and encourage climate action across the country.

International Lumpfish Conference, November 30

The Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre (SAIC) is hosting an International Lumpfish Conference on November 30 for invited members of the aquaculture sector. An international line-up of speakers, yet to be announced, will address the event, to be held at the Kingsmills Hotel in Inverness, from 9am – 5pm. For more information contact marketing@sustainableaquaculture.com.

People on the move

Our regular round-up of internal promotions

The mainland marine team have seen three colleagues promoted to Trainee Farm Manager.

Ross McNab, who has 10 years' service with the company, has been made Trainee Farm Manager at Shuna, having begun his journey with Scottish Sea Farms under the guidance of Stephen Woods at Charlotte's Bay before being promoted to Senior Husbandry at Shuna in February 2020.

Iain Flack, who joined the company in 2019, has been appointed Trainee Farm Manager at Kishorn South, progressing from Senior Husbandry.

And Daniel Braid has been promoted to Trainee Farm Manager at Fiunary in the Sound of Mull where he first started out in fish husbandry almost five years ago.

Also on the mainland, Maja Hanmer has been appointed to Senior Husbandry at Fishnish, after two years with the company as Trainee Husbandry then Husbandry.

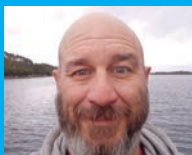
At Nevis A, Sam Robertson has been appointed to Senior Husbandry, two years after arriving at Scottish Sea Farms, from Mowi, in a Fish Husbandry role.

Moving north to Shetland, Robert Isbister, a well-kent face with the company for 32 years now, has taken on the role of Farm Manager at Sweening. His previous roles include Senior Husbandry and Farm Manager at Mangaster.

Also moving into the role of Farm Manager, Gabriel Cocuti takes over at East of Papa Little following six years of continuous service at Grieg Seafood Shetland, latterly as Assistant Farm Manager.



Ross McNab



Iain Flack



Maja Hanmer



Gabriel Cocuti



Robert Isbister

Mental health training to boost wellbeing at work



A new course in mental health training will be available to all Scottish Sea Farms staff from the autumn.

The First Aid for Mental Health online course, devised by Mental Health Scotland, is part of the company's wellbeing strategy for employees and is aimed at encouraging a positive mental health culture in the workplace.

In particular, the training offers guidance on how to identify suspected mental health conditions and provides the skills to start a conversation surrounding mental health.

Scottish Sea Farms HR Business Partner Claire Scott said: 'It can be challenging, at times, to get people to talk openly about how they are feeling.'

'The course gives you pointers – how to spot if someone is struggling with their mental health and how to let them know there are people in and out of the business who could help them.'

Training is conducted by two professional counsellors for groups of up to 12, with two 90-minute sessions

on Zoom, plus modules to be completed, and a final assessment, lasting three weeks in total. Those completing the course achieve an Award in First Aid for Mental Health.

HR Administrator Laura Cameron said a trial of the course, attended by managers across the company, had been a success, with all saying they would recommend the training to colleagues.

'Recently, for all manner of reasons, we've seen more people struggling with their wellbeing. As an organisation that looks after its employees, we thought this was something we could offer to help.'

The next course will be held in October, and then on a monthly basis, depending on demand.

Interested in undertaking the course or nominating someone on your team? For details, contact: laura.cameron@scottishseafarms.com

New award marks 10-year milestone

Scottish Sea Farms has extended its long service scheme to include a new award marking 10 years.

Previously, the company has marked the milestones of 15, 20 and 25 years' service – even, on occasion, 30 and 35 years.

Now the awards have been extended to recognise 10 years with the business.

Scottish Sea Farms Managing Director Jim Gallagher explained: 'The world of work has evolved. Gone are the days when employees automatically stayed with one company for the duration of their career. Nowadays, just as many people move between companies.'

'As a show of our appreciation of those who choose to stay and grow with Scottish Sea Farms – employees who are instrumental to our success – we decided to extend our long service awards to recognise 10 years.'

Amongst the first recipients was Farming Support Manager for Mull



Andrew MacLeannan who said: 'I feel very humble and grateful to be one of the first people to receive the newly recognised 10 years' service award.'

'It's been a great journey over the years with personal growth and changing farming practices to help overcome new challenges, both biologically and practically within teams, but one thing that has stayed the same is the trust Scottish Sea Farms has in its people and the support whenever needed.'

'Getting to work daily with brilliant colleagues and close friends has been pretty awesome too. Cheers to the next 10 years.'

New HR head champions 'people first' approach

Scottish Sea Farms' recently appointed Head of Human Resources, Fiona McCann, may be new to salmon farming but she has quickly become an advocate for the sector and the opportunities it presents.

In fact, talking to The Source just weeks after taking up her post in July, she said she now finds herself suggesting aquaculture as a career to friends with school leaving-children.

'It's such an important sector for creating jobs, especially in remote areas, and for keeping people in those places. I hadn't appreciated that - and the extent of salmon farming's contribution to the country and the economy - before I joined the company,' said McCann.



New Head of HR Fiona McCann

'It's such an important sector for creating jobs, especially in remote areas, and for keeping people in those places. I hadn't appreciated that - and the extent of salmon farming's contribution to the country and the economy - before I joined the company.'

With a varied background covering everything from retail to energy, banking and travel, she will be deploying her extensive personnel skills in recruiting and retaining the best staff.

'It's about making sure we're promoting everything the company does, such as our family-friendly policies, and the benefits we have in place for employees.'

'And it's about spotting talent inside and outside the business, being proactive and ensuring we are competitive in the market.'

McCann said she has inherited a structured department and a great team and will build on the many initiatives set up by outgoing Head of HR, Tracy Bryant-Shaw.

'Tracy has been proactive in making sure we're talking to young people and going out to schools and colleges.'

'And the Investors in People awards, which demonstrate the company's commitment to professional development and employee wellbeing, show how important Scottish Sea Farms regards its people. I want to continue that journey.'

McCann's priority in her first months is to get out and about as much as possible and ask people what they want from her and her colleagues.

Following visits to South Shian and Barcaldine, she went to Orkney to see Lober Rock in operation, with Farm Manager Andrew Park and new Orkney Regional Manager Duane Coetzer as her guides.

'Right across the company, I've never met such a friendly bunch of people. During my interview I could see the camaraderie among the senior leadership team - lots of banter but serious at the same time as they challenged each other too.'

'And since I've started, everyone has been so welcoming, approaching me straight away. Sometimes when you're new in a business, people leave you alone for a while, but you only learn by speaking to people, by getting involved and understanding their demands.'

McCann, who grew up on a beef cattle farm in Cumbernauld, where she still lives, relishes the prospect of working in food production and said she is more excited than daunted by her new role.

'It's far more complex than I expected! But I was attracted by the fact this is a growth business, and the company is very forward-thinking, always looking to see how it can do things better and improve as it continues to develop.'

Career spotlight



Amanda Tresise,
Sustainability Data and
Reporting Lead

What does your role involve?

There is increasing demand for better data to help identify how companies are integrating sustainability into their operations. My job is to measure progress and ensure Scottish Sea Farms stays ahead of regulatory requirements for mandatory sustainability reporting.

What's your background?

I have Masters degrees in Zoology, specialising in fish health, and Environmental Management focused on impact assessment and sustainability. After completing my studies in Johannesburg, I worked at an environmental consulting firm, then as a Compliance Manager for a group of aquaculture and waste management companies. I joined Scottish Sea Farms in 2020 as a Development Officer responsible for new farms and expansions, before moving into my current role.

Why did you choose this job?

I have the opportunity to address the question of what the world could be like in the decades ahead and what steps we should take now to ensure that the company continues to succeed and play our part in creating a sustainable future.

What are the biggest challenges?

Sustainability is assessed holistically, through an environmental, social and governance lens, meaning the scope of data required to assess our sustainability impact and progress is immense. The biggest challenge involves determining how best to gather data of the right quality in a consistent way.

And the greatest rewards?

Everybody seems to be aware that this is a good thing to do. It is also rewarding knowing that what I am doing day to day is adding value and making a difference little by little.

Mission accomplished at Mallaig play park



Island View Play Park, Mallaig

After nearly three years, a massive fund-raising effort and a few setbacks along the way, Island View Play Park in Mallaig is now open – much to the delight of local children.

The £70,000 project to upgrade the outdated play park was spearheaded by a small group of parents in conjunction with the Road to the Isles Facilities Group.

With funds raised in the community, including a £7,000 donation from Scottish Sea Farms' Heart of the Community Fund, and with a £30,000 contribution from Highlands Council, the plan was to enhance the play opportunities for children.

Since it reopened in July, children from the village and surrounding area have been making the most of the new facilities, said Catherine Young, one of the Mallaig parents behind the initiative.

'It's great to see so many children enjoying the play park. The community is delighted with the results and the builders [local firm Knoydart Construction] have been fantastic from start to finish,' she said.

Schoolchildren at Mallaig Primary School came up with the name – inspired by the stunning view over to Skye and the Small Isles – and held a competition to design

the play park sign, due to be unveiled at an official opening ceremony in September.

'When we first started looking at this project, we thought we would never be able to raise the funds. Without businesses like Scottish Sea Farms, it just wouldn't have been possible.'

Now the parents are turning their attention to older children, who have nowhere to hang out, said Young.

'The play park is for children up to the age of 12 years old so we'd like to set up a youth café for the over-13s. That's the next plan.'

Sports specs put Orkney girls in new league



Pickaquooy Centre, Kirkwall.
Photo: Kirsty Brown

Scottish Sea Farms is supporting an initiative to help protect the eyes of girls during football matches.

Spearheaded by Orkney Environmental Scientist Kirsty Brown, the scheme

has secured funds for sports glasses from Clark Optometrists in Kirkwall and players' parents.

'For adults, there are Scottish Women's Football League rules saying you have to use prescription safety glasses. But with the younger ones, it's a grey area,' said Brown.

'Most children currently wear their normal specs but the lenses could shatter if a ball is kicked at them and kids could get glass in their eyes. The safety glasses are shatter resistant, therefore safer.'

When Brown decided to enter the U14 and U12 girls' clubs in the boys' league, to give them more playing opportunities, the organising committee recommended sports glasses.

With the glasses costing more than £100 each, Brown teamed up with Bringhead Farm Manager Jeff Taylor, who donated £500 from his community allowance.

Support from Clarks and Scottish Sea Farms allows parents to purchase a pair of the glasses for just £30.

Brown said about seven or eight girls will need the glasses initially but the offer will remain open. The players and their parents are delighted. But how did the girls' teams fare against the boys?

'It's been absolutely fantastic,' said Brown. 'They play boys a year down, with mixed results, but they have all loved it, and some are now wearing their new glasses.'

Heart of the Community at a glance



2022 so far

£104.5k of funding given

68 local causes supported

All time (2011-present)

£1.6m of funding given

433 local causes supported

Got a news item from your region or business area? Email thesource@scottishseafarms.com



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