



New tanks in position at Knock

Knock investment boosts freshwater flexibility at Scottish Sea Farms

Scottish Sea Farms' freshwater hatchery at Knock on Mull has undergone an upgrade that will improve egg supply and increase smolt capacity by 300,000.

The flow-through facility has been fitted with five new 8m tanks which replace a number of smaller tanks, enabling a better outcome for the fish as well as increased capacity and greater flexibility in smolt productions.

The new tanks, which replace smaller outdoor 3m tanks, are housed within a large polytunnel with a dark cover so light can be controlled – a significant enhancement for fish welfare while also providing weather-proof working conditions.

Head of Freshwater Rory Conn said Knock can now produce 1.5 million smolts annually, complementing production from the RAS (recirculating aquaculture system) hatcheries at Barcaldine and Girdsta, in Shetland.

'The changes at Knock have been comprehensive and allow us to produce

more smolts at the size we want, at the appropriate time for stocking our marine sites, and to do that in a more cost and environmentally efficient way.

'Scottish Sea Farms' strategy is to have larger, more robust animals going into the sea and that is equally applicable for Knock as it is for Girdsta in Shetland and Barcaldine. In recent years, we've more than doubled the average smolt size, as a company and out of Knock.

'The development on Mull has also given us much greater flexibility throughout the cycle. The plan here had been to move away from egg production and take in fry at around 3-5g from the recirculation hatcheries at Barcaldine or Girdsta where we have greater ability to manage temperature.

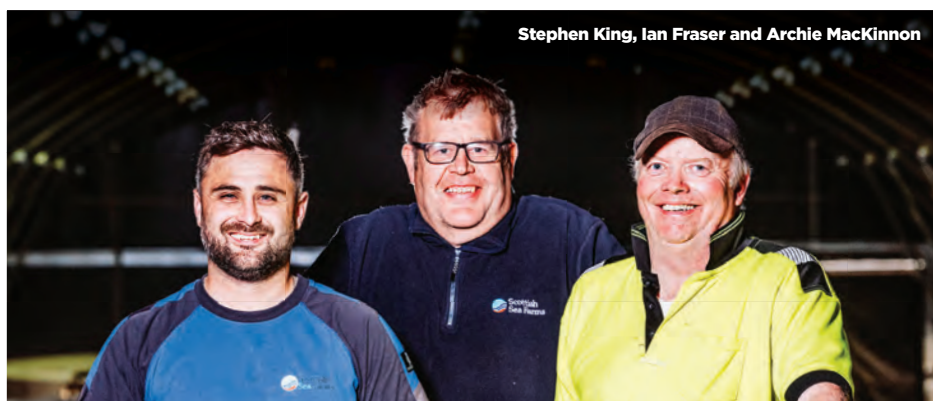
'But with egg availability being constrained at certain times of the

year, which pressurises incubation capacity on all sites, maintaining egg incubation and first feeding capacity at Knock is important to ensure we can produce the smolt numbers when they are required.

'Repurposing tanks, space and heat recovery infrastructure has been very CapEx efficient and provides production flexibility at a lower operating cost, relative to what was on site.'

Rory credits long-time Knock Manager Ian Fraser with reimagining the new hatchery configuration to enable a steady supply of smolts.

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Stephen King, Ian Fraser and Archie MacKinnon

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Ian, who celebrated 38 years with the company in April, said repurposing some of the old tanks and installing an upgraded water supply and heat recovery system provided a more energy efficient environment for the incubation unit.

'The hatching and first feeding stages require more heating and it tends to be less economical to heat water in a flow-through unit than in the RAS at Barcaldine, where water is used multiple times.

'But when we took the old tanks out, we repositioned eight of them in the back of the shed and, with the new water system, we now have first feeding capacity for up to one million fish.'

The development, which did not disrupt production at Knock, is now complete and the freshwater team is finding it easier managing the bigger but fewer tanks, said Ian.

'Repurposing tanks, space and heat recovery infrastructure has been very CapEx efficient and provides production flexibility at a lower operating cost, relative to what was on site.'

Local contractors supplied the tanks and Scottish Sea Farms' Senior Freshwater Engineer Stephen King and regular contractor Archie MacKinnon oversaw the works.

David Bird



Crews commute in comfort with safer, faster boats



A new Scottish built boat deployed at Lismore West is cutting journey times to and from the farm and making trips safer and more comfortable for the crew.

The 9m Leigha-Anne, named after Trainee Manager Ross McNab's daughter, was constructed at Arran Workboats and came into service in June.

The heavy-duty enclosed vessel ensures the farm crew avoids the worst of the weather en route to work.

Two further Arran Workboats vessels, five years old but to the same design, have also been purchased and refurbished to comply with the new MCA Workboat Code 3 (see Sector News story page 5).

They will operate at Bloody Bay and Charlotte's Bay and are named after former Charlotte's Bay Manager Stephen Woods' granddaughter, and Farm Support Manager Andrew MacLeannan's two daughters.

Mainland Marine Engineering Manager Craig Cameron said staff welfare was key in the investment.

'Not only are all these boats covered, but they also come with seating, complete with shock absorbers, so the

crew are not bouncing about on rough seas.

'That's a huge advance in safety. The crews have been on the boats and the feedback is very positive.'

Lismore West Farm Manager David MacMillan said his team's commute, a round trip of 24 miles, one of the longest in Scottish Sea Farms, was now much more pleasant.

'It used to take about 40 minutes one way but now we're getting there in 25 minutes. And with heating throughout and the latest man overboard recovery system, we can go out in all weathers. We won't have to scrape ice off the windows and winter won't feel like winter!'

Scottish Sea Farms has a long-standing relationship with Arran Workboats, said Cameron.

'We always look to work with local builders wherever possible. We received a number of strong tenders and are grateful to everyone who took the time to submit. On this occasion, we selected Arran based on both price and the quality of work we know they can deliver.'

Pioneering aquaculture course showcases sector

A course designed by Scottish Sea Farms to give high school students an insight into salmon farming has almost doubled its intake for the new academic year.

The Into Aquaculture initiative, launched two years ago in Tobermory on Mull, has been adopted by Oban High School, where it has just taken on its second cohort, up from six to 11 pupils.

The initiative caught the eye of judges in the recent Food and Drink Federation awards, where it made the shortlist in the education category.

Delivered by Scottish Sea Farms in conjunction with UHI Argyll, the programme, which runs from August to March, offers S5 pupils everything from classroom-based theory to hands-on experience of the full salmon lifecycle, through visits to a freshwater hatchery, marine farms, and the humane harvesting processing facility at South Shian.

The classroom sessions have mostly been presented by Scottish Sea Farms Shuna Manager Andrew MacDougall, who has drawn on his many years' experience to enthuse youngsters with the possibilities of a career in aquaculture.

'I've always enjoyed interacting with pupils and staff at the many career and STEM events Scottish Sea Farms attends so I was delighted to be invited to help deliver the Into Aquaculture course,' said Andrew. 'Getting this project up and running was a real team effort.'

The weekly farming modules include a fish dissection, so students can better understand the biology and physiology of a salmon, and practical water sampling using microscopes.

Scottish Sea Farms Talent Development Business Partner Irene Pozo, who helped set up Into Aquaculture, said it was a great way to showcase the sector.

'Aquaculture is an important local employer in rural Scotland and the programme aims to expand students' understanding at a younger age, across a range of topics.

'The course provides them with an introduction, as well as a National Progression Award at SCQF Level 4, and if they decide they like the sector, they can then go on to apply for an apprenticeship or any entry level job.'

Two further high schools, Campbeltown and Lochgilphead, are now looking to include Into Aquaculture in their offerings to students.

Scottish Sea Farms has worked with other producers and sector skills body Lantra to create a course book that will ensure students at all schools receive the same level of information and access to on-site experiences.



Hands-on fish dissection

Scottish Sea Farms' success in China a team effort

Scottish Sea Farms has won the 2025 Quality Salmon Producer Award in China, presented at the Global Salmon Industry Development Summit in Shanghai at the end of last month.

The accolade recognises the company's efforts to grow the Chinese market, which involved a trip to China earlier this year by two of the sales team, Georgie MacKenzie and James Grant, to meet key importers.

Head of Markets Celine Kimpflin said Scottish Sea Farms' success in China had been 'truly a team effort', from the farming teams growing 'those beautiful big fish' to the processing, packing and logistics protocols.

'It is the dedication and drive from our colleagues in the factory and supply chain that really made this happen,' she said.

Donald Buchanan, Head of Processing Operations, and the processing team are responsible for packing all Chinese orders in plastic-lined boxes and for keeping a close eye on grading and quality.

Head of Technical Quality Control Andy Gourlay and his team implement the extra quality checks. And Head of Operations Ewan Mackintosh and the supply chain team manage the mountain of health certificates.

Scottish Sea Farms had about a 45 per cent share of Scottish exports to China last year.

Eday team earns best-in-crop bonus

Eday in Orkney has become the first marine farm to receive a payout for best-in-crop under Scottish Sea Farms' new bonus scheme.

Introduced in autumn 2023 to recognise productivity, fish performance and efficiency, the scheme rewards teams across three key areas – economic conversion ratios (ECRs), yield per smolt (average live weights landed), and cost of stock.

There is also an enhanced bonus for the best-in-crop, which is based on the best performing site in each year class. However, to meet the criteria the site must have achieved the ECR bonus.

Farm Manager Jimmy Dakin explained: 'Out of all the farms that

put fish to sea in July to December 2023, Eday came out top of the league on ECR, which triggered the enhanced bonus. We're incredibly proud of that result.

'It's also important that the bonus is shared equally across the team. Whether you're the farm manager or just starting out, everyone plays their part in achieving success. Many of our colleagues are long-serving, and our two-weeks-on, two-weeks-off rota also helps maintain a healthy work-life balance.'

Eday, one of the company's highest tidal sites, took in smolts directly from Barcaldine for the first time in 2023, having previously been supplied from Wyre. The fish performed strongly from the outset, achieving what Jimmy described as 'phenomenal' growth last summer.

Several operational improvements contributed to the result:

- **Installation of a feed barge enabling remote feeding for the first time;**
- **Deployment of wrasse to support good biological performance;**
- **Reduced handling of fish, minimising stress;**
- **On-site net washing to enhance biosecurity.**

Regional Production Manager for Orkney and the Mainland Duane Coetzer praised the achievement: 'These are excellent results in one of our highest energy farms. They are a true reflection of the team's hard work, dedication and focus across all areas of the business – from fish health to colleague welfare and overall site performance. It's a fantastic example of what can be achieved when everything comes together.'



Innovation key to sector ambitions says Minister

Securing the future of aquaculture innovation is 'hugely important' in accelerating the sector's progress in Scotland, said Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon at the Aqua Nor trade show in Trondheim, Norway, last month.

Addressing exhibitors and visitors at the Scottish pavilion, the Minister said the Scottish government was 'ambitious in looking to increase innovation' and outlined a number of developments in the pipeline.

These include 'the establishment of an independent future Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre', she said, as she paid tribute to the achievements of SAIC (the Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre) over the past ten years, adding that an announcement on its long-term future would be made later this year.

There is also an opportunity to develop a 'geographic cluster' in the Highlands and islands, she said, defining a cluster as 'interconnected businesses, supply chains, labour, education and public sector organisations, all operating in a particular field'.

And the Minister voiced support for an Aquaculture Innovation Farm, a proposal championed by the UK Agri-Tech Centre and due to be discussed by sector stakeholders at a forum this month.

The UK Agri-Tech Centre's Martin Sutcliffe delivered a talk, 'Stop Treading Water – The next wave in responsible aquaculture', which called for action in support of developing an Aquaculture Innovation Farm.

And he said the Centre's team gained valuable insights from visiting the facilities of Norway's SINTEF Ocean and FHF (the Norwegian Seafood Research Fund).

The Scottish pavilion, co-hosted by SAIC and HIE (Highlands and Islands Enterprise), provided a platform for

Scottish suppliers, as well as for sector discussions.

SAIC Head of Research and Innovation Sarah Riddle chaired a panel on Disrupting Innovation, exploring how science, technology, infrastructure, climate change, and social acceptance are shaping the future of aquaculture.

'The drive for innovation in this sector is phenomenal,' she told The Source. 'In just 60 years we have revolutionised operations; if there is a challenge, we're up and at it.'

'But we must work collaboratively, and how the industry and academia can collaborate better, to turn new scientific breakthroughs into scalable solutions, was a key theme at the Scottish pavilion throughout Aqua Nor.'

New slaughter guidelines match sector's high standards

Scotland's salmon sector has welcomed new government guidance on the slaughter of farmed fish, which reinforces existing good practice among producers.

The guidance, under section 38 of the Animal Health and Welfare (Scotland) Act 2006, relates to the welfare of farmed fish at the time of slaughter or killing.

The welfare of farmed fish at slaughter is also covered by UK welfare legislation that states 'animals shall be spared any avoidable pain, distress or suffering during their killing and related operations'.

The salmon sector worked closely with the Scottish government to develop the new guidance, which will ensure that current legislative demands are met and carries the same legal status as primary legislation.

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Veterinary Services Ronnie Soutar said the salmon sector leads other livestock industries in humane slaughter practices.

'We are already matching or exceeding what's being done in other species, because our salmon are stunned and slaughtered in seconds, in harvest stations that are independently certified and covered by CCTV.'

'But the guidance goes a bit further than covering slaughter at harvest. It also includes the culling of small fish, or cleaner fish at the end of a production cycle, or the killing of individual moribund fish.'

'We were reviewing our training and



our procedures around the euthanasia of fish in certain circumstances and this aligns with what we were doing.'

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Technical Andy Gourlay said the company did not need to do anything differently in light of the new guidance: 'It is reassuring that we were already meeting the guidelines.'

Young Aquaculture Society champions next wave of talent

Young aquaculture professionals shared their experiences and ideas for the future during a panel session hosted by the Scottish pavilion at Aqua Nor.

Chaired by seafood influencer James Sibley, recently on assignment in Scotland to promote the sector, they represented youth organisations in Scotland, Norway, Canada and Australia.

The groups are part of the Next Generation Seafood Alliance, created earlier this year with a mission to proliferate the youth voice around the world.

Andrew Richardson, Founder and President of the UK's Young Aquaculture Society (YAS), and also the Technical and Standards Manager at Salmon Scotland, said YAS was excited to take part in Aqua Nor for the first time and proud to be part of the Scottish pavilion.

'Aqua Nor is an infectious, positive place, where the concerns of the day-to-day get lost in the glimmer of what the future could be,' he told The Source.

'The panellists talked about the virtues of advocacy and the challenges of social licence – topics which resonate at a global level.

'We also had a chance to talk to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Mairi Gougeon, who was very supportive. We discussed how YAS could become a useful long-term stakeholder, and what role young aquaculture professionals could play in policy.

'That could involve giving evidence in future committee inquiries, much as the



Minister Mairi Gougeon with Andrew Richardson and members of YAS

Scottish Association of Young Farmers Clubs does, or taking part in evidence gathering.

'Young people bring two core elements: a willingness to say the things that they feel strongly about. And, by definition, young people are thinking about their careers in terms of three or four decades in advance so they have the greatest vested interest.'

YAS Secretary Jess Taylor-McKaig, Scottish Sea Farms' Communications and Marketing Coordinator and Heart of the Community Coordinator, said: 'YAS seeks to engage the next generation in the sector, provide leadership opportunities, a forum to network, and a place to make lasting friendships.'

Navigating the new workboat code



Changes to the Workboat Code, which covers all small commercial vessels including the aquaculture fleet, have seen a mass upgrade of boats and the training and re-training of dozens of farm staff.

Workboat Code 3, first announced nearly two years ago and coming into force in December 2026, amalgamates all previous codes under one standard. It requires changes to the construction and operation of vessels, as well as to training practices.

Given the scale of the challenge in meeting Code 3, Scottish Sea Farms has spent the past 18 months on a programme of boat improvements and training, and the company is confident of achieving full compliance by the deadline.

Mainland Engineering Manager Craig Cameron told The Source that about half the boats in the company's fleet have now been upgraded.

'It's a lot stricter than the old code, with much less room for interpretation. Instead of saying your boat should have

certain criteria it now says your boat must have these.

'I was aware there would be a mad rush across all sectors as the deadline approached so we embarked on the process early. Some boats sail through it and some need a lot of work.'

The company also had to reassess training under the new code, a task overseen by Scottish Sea Farms' Lead Vocational Trainer Chris Floyd, who was part of the working group who wrote Workboat Code 3.

'Anyone skipping a boat needs to get the training to bring them up to Code 3,' said Chris. 'If, by the end of next year, you haven't undertaken the training, you won't be able to skipper a boat.'

'To begin with, we were sending people to Plymouth because that was the only

place in the UK you could do the training. But now there are around 10 providers nationwide, including Shetland College and centres in Fort William and near Glasgow.

'We are well on course at Scottish Sea Farms, with at least half our people already completing their training. The focus is on a better understanding of radar and electronic chart systems, as well as stability and safety management systems.

'The code is there to help protect everybody and much of the new training is based on what has been learnt from Marine Accident Investigation Branch (MAIB) reports. The bottom line is that this is going to help make vessel operations safer for our staff.'

People on the move

Bringing you up to date with the latest internal promotions

There have been a number of key moves in the Mainland Marine team, with Stephen Woods progressing from Site Manager at Charlotte's Bay to Area Manager for Linnhe Marine Farms, and Martin Ruddick promoted from Farm Support Manager to Infrastructure and Resource Manager (more details right).

Also in Mainland Marine, Declan Taylor has transferred from Trainee Site Manager at Scallastle to the same role at Bloody Bay, and Ross McNab has moved from Lismore West to Charlotte's Bay, in his role as Trainee Site Manager.

Meanwhile, Jacob Ellis has moved from Skipper on the Hollie Rose to Trainee Site Manager at Fishnish, and Ian MacDougall has stepped up from Deckhand on the Hollie Rose to Skipper on the same vessel.

In Freshwater, Katie Brotherton has moved from Technician at Barcaldine to Freshwater Compliance and Production Support in the Freshwater team, while David Bird has moved from Trainee Husbandry at Scallastle to join the Freshwater team at Knock Hatchery in the role of Technician.

In Orkney, Lee Mainland has been promoted from Husbandry to Senior Husbandry at Westerbister, and Gavin Sinclair has completed his Engineering Apprenticeship and taken on the role of Marine Engineer in Orkney.

Finally, in the Shetland Marine team, Daniel Walterson has progressed from Husbandry to Senior Husbandry at Holmes Geo.



Ross McNab



Lee Mainland



Katie Brotherton



Jacob Ellis



Gavin Sinclair



David Bird



Declan Taylor



Daniel Walterson

Trip to Eriboll shows how far we've come



Fiona Soutar at Sian Bay

Visiting a marine farm for the first time in nearly 30 years was a trip down memory lane for former fish health biologist Fiona Soutar.

But it also proved to be a revelation for the NHS leadership coach and wife of Ronnie Soutar, Scottish Sea Farms' Head of Veterinary Services.

Fiona accompanied Ronnie on a veterinary visit to Scottish Sea Farms' most northerly mainland farm at Sian Bay, Loch Eriboll, in June and saw how far salmon farming operations have progressed in three decades, and not just in terms of technology.

'I was really impressed by the care and consideration shown to the fish when being caught, handled for observation, and returned to the pen - and by the general tidiness everywhere,' Fiona told The Source.

'What struck me most, though, was the attention to health and safety throughout. Clean waterproofs, wellies and life jackets were ready for us on arrival and, as soon as we boarded the boat, we were given the safe systems of work information to read and visitor paperwork to sign - even Ronnie, who thought he was exempt as a member of staff but was soon corrected by Callan Rennie, Senior Husbandry.

'The model of workplace wellbeing we use with patient care in the NHS applies here too: happy well-cared for people produce happy well-cared for fish. Eriboll is a credit to the company.'

Eriboll Farm Manager Martin Mladenov, who oversees Sian Bay and the smaller farm at Kempie on the other side of the loch, believes a farm that looks tidy and organised is more likely to function well.

'I put a lot of energy into educating the guys on the importance of procedures,

especially with health and safety and biosecurity.

'If the team is focusing on the little details, they are spending time on the farm and looking around, so if something goes wrong, they will notice it.'

Martin, who has been Farm Manager at Eriboll for two years, said the farm is performing well from a biological perspective, with good fish growth about half-way through the production cycle.

'The big change for us recently has been getting a shore base, with a new feed station. The farms are about 25 minutes from the shore and going between the two is about 40 minutes so it's a huge improvement in operational efficiency having one person being able to feed both from the shore base.'



Fiona and Ronnie Soutar

Scottish Sea Farms stalwarts take on new leadership roles

Two of Scottish Sea Farms' long-serving farmers have been promoted into new leadership roles in Mainland Marine.

Stephen Woods, former Farm Manager at Charlotte's Bay, is now Area Manager for the Linnhe region, and Martin Ruddick, previously Farm Support Manager for the Linnhe region, has been made Infrastructure and Resource Manager.

Both Stephen and Martin bring a wealth of knowledge and experience, not only of the Mainland but also the company's wider farming areas.

Stephen, who won the Fish Farmer of the Year Award at Aquaculture UK in 2022, has been with Scottish Sea Farms for 30 years, starting his career within the processing team at South Shian before moving into a husbandry role in the Linnhe region, and becoming Farm Manager at Charlotte's Bay in 2009.

He told The Source that after being a Farm Manager for 16 years he was adjusting to a new way of thinking.

'I'm not going to tell the farm managers how to run their sites, I'm a great believer in everyone taking responsibility, from the husbandry person to the manager.

'But I don't want to be invisible in this role, I want to be there with the guys and show support, moral and personal as well as professional.'

He plans to get out to each of the farms in the area at least once a week and has no intention of spending more time in an office.

'Nothing beats being out on the pens and having eyes on the fish for learning

everything you need to know about their condition and health.'

Martin, meanwhile, started his career with Scottish Sea Farms in 2002 in a husbandry role based in Shetland and quickly progressed to Trainee Manager then Farm Manager in 2003.

He transferred to the Mainland in 2012, supporting the Kishorn Farms, before moving south to join the Linnhe farming team in 2013 as Farm Manager. In 2018, he was promoted to Farm Support Manager for the Linnhe/Mull region, and over the last seven years has been an integral part of the Mainland farming operation.

Martin said his new role will further strengthen the region by providing valuable support to all the Mainland teams.

'Having been involved in the recent drive to modernise and consolidate our Mainland farming estate, and seen the improved performance that has brought, I'm looking forward to overseeing future investment to better manage our resources, equipment, fish health and welfare.'



Stephen Woods



Martin Ruddick

Well done to student stars!

One of Scottish Sea Farms' Freshwater Fish Health Specialists in Shetland, Finley Forwood, has been named the 2025 Marine Sciences Student of the Year upon graduating at UHI Shetland's Marine Science and Technology Department with a SCQF level 7 award in aquaculture.

Finley, who completed his apprenticeship alongside his full-time job, said while it had been a challenging test for time management, he thoroughly enjoyed the experience.

'I'm now working through the level 8 SCQF as my next challenge' he said. 'Having graduated in Wales, England and now Scotland, all I need now to complete the British set is Northern Ireland!'

In Orkney, Marine Fish Health Specialist Stephen Gledhill has also graduated, with his SCQF level 8.

Congratulations to both!



Finley Forwood

Career spotlight



Amanda Smith,
Fish Health and Welfare
Manager Orkney

What does your role involve?

I make sure all the fish in the region are being looked after to the highest health and welfare standards, which involves site visits, health screenings and offering support to farm managers. In addition, I deliver welfare training to colleagues, helping them to spot early signs of concern, handle fish in the best possible way, and understand the latest best practice. I also carry out regular welfare audits.

What's your background?

After my degree in Marine Biology at the University of Aberdeen, I worked at a mussel farm in the Western Isles, then moved into fish processing and became a quality manager in Aberdeen.

Why did you choose this job?

I was doing a distance learning Masters in Sustainable Aquaculture at St Andrews and met a former Scottish Sea Farms manager from Eday who asked if I wanted a job in Orkney. At the time, the idea of escaping somewhere remote was very appealing! That was nearly ten years ago.

What are the biggest challenges?

The unpredictability - a lot of the time it's things you can't control in the environment, like micro jellyfish or sea lice. My phone rings constantly but often it's just about reassurance.

And the greatest rewards?

To see how well we're doing as a region and how much welfare has improved. If you want the sector to change and get better you have to be the one on the inside making the changes.

Community welcomes farmer's windfall for windmill



South Nesting Hall provides a focal point for the local community, with regular quiz nights, Sunday teas and folk concerts bringing together people from across this picturesque corner of mainland Shetland's east coast.

Run as a charity, the hall relies on fund-raising and donations, supplying much of its own power through a nearby windmill.

Now the windmill is in need of repairs and the hall's committee of volunteers has turned to the community for help.

Step forward Scottish Sea Farms' Robbie Turnbull, who has donated his

£500 Farm Manager's grant towards the total £2,000 renovation costs.

'Our farm is in the area and I was keen for the money to go to a good local cause,' said Robbie. 'The hall is very well looked after and is a great resource for the community.'

Committee member Louise Johnson welcomed the donation: 'The hall serves an area with about 500 people but is also there for anyone who wants to come from further afield to its events.'

'The windmill provides power for the heating and we then sell what we don't use to the grid, which raises some money to cover the hall's expenses.'

'We also raise money from our caravan hook-up points, which provide a good income over the summer.'

'But it's difficult to find funding opportunities and we're very grateful to Robbie for approaching us with his grant. It will make all the difference.'

Achiltibuie children have a whale of a time

A life-size inflatable humpback whale has paid a visit to Achiltibuie Primary School as part of a joint initiative between Whale and Dolphin Conservation (WDC) and Scottish Sea Farms' Heart of the Community fund.

Children aged five to 12 at the remote school were able to climb inside the whale, which measures 13.5m long and 8.5m wide, and learn about its anatomy, the noises it makes, and discover the important role whales play in ocean sustainability.

WDC, which runs the Scottish Dolphin Centre in Moray, has been touring schools across Scotland with the whale, named Hope.

The visit to Achiltibuie came when Summer Isles acting Farm Manager Seumas Hitchings offered to use his HotC Farm Manager's £500 grant to support the event.

'This is a small community and we didn't want the children here to miss



Hope the inflatable whale on tour © WDC

out on such a great opportunity to find out about marine conservation,' said Seumas.

'The interactive session was a big hit with the kids and we were happy to facilitate it by providing transport, food and accommodation in our six-bedroom staff house.'

WDC Education Coordinator Lorna Hall said: 'It is fantastic to be able to bring this incredible education resource to more rural locations.'

'WDC's education programme works to raise awareness of whales and dolphins,

along with how people can help us keep them safe, by bringing these amazing creatures to life in classrooms and at public events.'

Scottish Sea Farms has also raised money for the Achiltibuie village hall this summer, donating all the proceeds from the Summer Isles' team's salmon barbecue, a regular feature at the local Coigach Gathering.

'The fish farm has been in the area for 60 years and about 75 per cent of the community has worked with farmed fish at some point, so it's good to be able to give something back,' said Seumas.

Heart of the Community at a glance



2025 so far
149 grants and donations given
£118,913 given

All time (2011-present)
1,264 grants and donations given
£2,141,457 given

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