



Scottish Sea Farms achieves its first ASC certification

Summer Isles has become the first farm in the company's estate to gain Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) accreditation, making Scottish Sea Farms just one of two salmon producers in Scotland to attain certification.

Considered one of the most demanding of all global seafood certification schemes, there are currently 11 ASC Standards covering 17 farmed species.

The ASC Standard for farmed salmon was developed in collaboration with scientists, government agencies, NGOs, farmers, processors and retailers alike, and is underpinned by seven core principles spanning regulatory compliance, fish health, responsible use of feed and medicines, environmental interactions, employee conditions and community engagement.

For a farm to gain certification, it must be independently audited and assessed as meeting each requirement – a feat that fewer than five per cent of salmon farms in Scotland have achieved to date – and reassessed annually to maintain certification.

Overseeing the process at Scottish Sea Farms is dedicated Aquaculture Technical Lead for ASC certification, Anna Price.

'ASC-certified farms are considered the global elite in terms of performance,' said Price. 'Gaining our first certification is the culmination of two years of hard work involving several different departments and functions.'

'It wasn't that we weren't already farming to high standards; in every instance we were. However, there was still a considerable amount of work involved in evidencing and reworking our processes and procedures.'

A sentiment echoed by Summer Isles Farm Manager Sarah Last. 'The last three crops have been record-breaking for us in terms of high fish survival and low lice levels, thanks to vigilant husbandry of both salmon and cleaner fish, so there hasn't been an overhaul of our farming approach as such. Where ASC certification has been invaluable, however, is in highlighting ways in which we could hone some of our day-to-day activities even further; small changes which, when combined, could make a big difference.'

It's not just the farm itself that is expected to meet the ASC's exacting standards but its suppliers too: from feed and nets to boats and divers.

Said Scottish Sea Farms Head of Technical Andy Gourlay: 'ASC certification demands a lot of the supply chain as well, particularly smaller suppliers with fewer resources, including a comprehensive ethical survey.'

'Knowing that we want to achieve certification of more farms, we took a long-term approach and invested in an ethical specialist to independently vet our suppliers against the ASC criteria.'

'They created a map of each existing supplier and introduced a questionnaire for all new suppliers, with the result that we now have a database showing which suppliers already meet ASC criteria and which still have some work to do.'

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Community engagement ranks equally highly amongst the requirements of the ASC Salmon Standard, with farms expected to demonstrate interaction with local stakeholders – something that comes naturally to the Summer Isles team.

Trainee Farm Manager Seamus Hitchings, who has been manning the fort while Last has been on maternity leave and has worked extensively with Technical colleagues on the ASC certification process, explained: 'We live in a small community of about 200 people, 12 of whom work on the fish farm, and we get on very well.

'We attend community council meetings and often invite locals out on the farm. Our hope is to extend this to local schoolchildren to help teach them about the range of careers available.'

In addition to gaining certification of its first farm, Scottish Sea Farms also achieved chain of custody certification of its processing and packing facilities at South Shian near Oban – confirmation that the necessary procedures are in place to ensure that any fish that go on to carry the ASC logo are indeed ASC fish.

Work is now underway to achieve chain of custody certification for the company's processing and packing facility in Scalloway.

As for which farm is next in line to apply for ASC certification, that honour falls to Lober Rock in Orkney. The target is to have up to five farms certified by the end of 2022 to ensure year-round continuity of supply of ASC farmed salmon.

Says Price: 'ASC certification is a win-win. It gives customers further reassurance, and it gives farmers a chance to see and draw from international best practice. Going for certification of more farms can only be a good thing for all.'



Seumas Hitchings and Sarah Last

Blending talents in bigger Shetland operation

Shetland Regional Manager Richard Darbyshire



Five months on from Scottish Sea Farms' acquisition of Grieg Seafood Shetland, the management restructuring – the first of a three-phase plan for the region – has been completed, with operations streamlined for greater efficiency and productivity.

Blending all the talents of Scottish Sea Farms and Grieg will ensure the smooth running of 25 marine farms, said Richard Darbyshire, formerly Scottish Sea Farms' Regional Manager for the Northern Isles and now Regional Manager for Shetland.

After more than 20 years in the company, overseeing Orkney until 2020 when he took on the wider Northern Isles remit, Darbyshire is relishing the new challenge in Shetland, which he prefers to call an 'opportunity'.

'Shetland is an increasingly important region for Scottish Sea Farms, on target to produce around 20,000 tonnes of premium farmed salmon annually, and it's hugely exciting to be given the responsibility of taking that business forward,' he said.

'We want the best people with the best ideas to drive progress, so we have Scottish Sea Farms people working alongside former Grieg people in the pivotal roles.

'Instead of having, say, 29 people reporting directly to me, there is now a key team, which includes Grant Cumming, former Managing Director of Grieg in Shetland, who is Operations Manager; Robbie Coutts – formerly Scottish Sea Farms Shetland Area Support Manager – now promoted to Area Manager for the west side of Shetland; and John Blance – formerly Grieg Seafood Shetland Area Manager for Setterness and Whalsay – now promoted to Scottish Sea Farms Area Manager for the east side of Shetland.'

With the restructuring process finalised, Darbyshire is focusing on phase two of his management plan which involves bringing the two companies' farms under one farming approach and identifying opportunities for cost efficiencies. Phase three will involve making the necessary changes and implementing an action plan.

Here, he says that both companies can learn from each other and 'pool all our resources to get the best results'.

'One of the areas where Grieg led the way was in freshwater treatments for sea lice and gill health. On the flip side, they didn't have any capacity for physical delousing.

'Now we are able to use what was formerly Grieg's wellboat for freshwater treatments, while their former farms can use Scottish Sea Farms' new thermo delouser, the Kallista Helen, as well as the Helen Mary and the Voe Viking.'

Darbyshire said any cultural differences between the two businesses have been easily resolved and they are now working as one: 'I'm really impressed with the quality of the Farm Managers we have brought on board; they have learnt fast.'

He adds: 'One of the things I like about Shetland is that the sector is so well thought of here; it's a huge part of the financial success of the islands, with so many other businesses relying on the success of salmon farming. It's great to be part of that and I can see nothing but a huge future ahead.'

Renewable powered feed barge a first for Scotland



Scottish Sea Farms is trialling a system that uses solar energy to power a feed barge, believed to be the first initiative of its kind and designed to eliminate the need for diesel.

The innovative technology, installed at Holms Geo in Shetland, has been developed in collaboration with Ocean Kinetics, MMG Welding, StorTera and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

Solar panels connected to an 'intelligent' storage facility, both located on shore, capture and transfer energy via a cable out to a second storage facility on the farm's feed barge, with smart control technology determining and optimising energy flow.

It means the farm's base load will be powered by solar energy as much as possible, with any remaining requirement met by alternative green energy sourced from the grid.

'This will be our first renewable energy powered fish farm barge,' said Robbie Coutts, Area Manager for the west of Shetland.

'The generator will just be a back-up, unlike current hybrid solutions which still depend on the generator for recharging batteries.

'If successful, the project will reduce operational and maintenance costs and carbon emissions, which, in turn, will help improve air quality, minimise noise pollution and enhance the environment for employees and the

local community alike.'

Holms Geo was chosen for the trial because of its proximity to the shore, reducing the risk of power being lost during transfer, with the system retrofitted to the existing barge in place of the office area which was moved on shore.

There are also plans to install batteries on the farm's small workboat, which would make Holms Geo all-electric.

Richard Darbyshire, Regional Manager for Shetland, said: 'Shetland has a big renewables sector and I think there is a great future in this technology. We'd like to see it rolled out to other farms, wherever we can get a cable out to a barge.'

Doubling of efforts to prevent predation

One year on from a government ban on the use of acoustic deterrent devices and last resort seal shootings, Scottish Sea Farms has been trialling several new measures to help prevent predation.

The farm team arriving at Swarta Skerry and Bellister in Shetland are used to seeing up to 60 seals on the nearby island between the two farms.

But thanks to a trial with double netting, there has been no seal predation since the beginning of the cycle last July.

Farm Manager David Bisset said: 'We were hit hard by seal predation during previous generations. Introducing Seal Pro nets did help but it didn't solve the problem completely, so for this generation we decided to try double netting.

'The outer net is still the Seal Pro, then we've added a nylon net on the inside, which helps keep the young fish further away from the pen edges where the risk of predation is greatest.

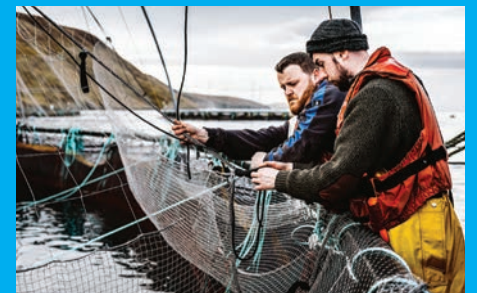
'Since input, we have had no seal attacks; they seem to have moved away completely.'

Such has been the improvement that Bisset is already thinking ahead to the next generation of fish.

'Having a smaller net inside the bigger net changes the stocking density. This is fine when the fish are young but when the current generation reach a certain size we'll need to remove the inner net to comply with RSPCA stocking densities.

'Moving to larger, deeper pens for the next generation would allow double netting to be used throughout the marine stage.'

Over at Holms Geo, Farm Manager John Henderson has recently moved



to 120m pens, each fitted with double netting.

'As with every new advance, it's been a learning curve,' said Henderson. 'But the extra work involved will be 100% worth it if it reduces predation.'

Seals aren't the only species to predate on farmed fish. Sea birds can pose a challenge too. To this end, Holms Geo is trialling fibreglass poles which help raise top nets even further away from the water's surface.

The team are also experimenting with scarecrows on pens.

'We've taken a centuries-old tactic from land farming and applied it to marine farming to deter sea birds from coming too close,' says Henderson. 'Time will tell if it works but we'll try anything to protect the fish.'

Covid app: fast facts

As we say farewell to our daily Covid questionnaire, a few fast facts. Since its launch in 2020 the app saw:

103,784
employee entries

7,165
visitor entries

12,798
scans of the QR code.

Our 100,000th entry was made by Shetland Infrastructure Manager Ian Anderson.

Update on Griggs report: Minister to drive blueprint for change

The Scottish Government is to set up a forum to oversee regulatory reform in the aquaculture sector, in line with the recent review by Professor Russell Griggs.

Rural Affairs Minister Mairi Gougeon will chair the Ministerial Aquaculture Strategy Forum, announced during Aquaculture UK in Aviemore in May. She also announced the formation of a consenting task group to make 'rapid progress' towards achieving a more simplified permitting process.

Griggs, whose review was commissioned by the Scottish government, recommended in his report, that:



Rural Affairs Minister Mairi Gougeon with Salmon Scotland Chair Atholl Duncan (left) and Chief Executive Tavish Scott (right)

- A reformed regulatory framework should be delivered within 12 months for each part of the aquaculture sector (finfish, shellfish and seaweed)
- All existing farms should be examined to ensure that they can operate within that framework and any that can't then give up their licences
- The approval process for aquaculture is streamlined with a single consenting document and a single licensing payment, based on tonnage output of each farm, which covers the costs of all bodies involved in the new framework and addresses community benefit.

Gougeon said: 'Developing world-leading legislation for aquaculture is key to developing a sector that is both environmentally and economically sustainable, operating within environmental limits and with social licence, ensuring there is a

thriving marine ecosystem for future generations.'

The Ministerial Aquaculture Strategy Forum – the make-up of which is still to be agreed – will advise on the development of the Scottish Government's Vision for Aquaculture which will have enhanced emphasis on environmental protection and community benefit.

Gougeon has tasked the Scottish Science Advisory Council to consider whether the scientific recommendations of the Griggs review support the sector's sustainable development and tackle environmental challenges.

She also introduced a change to the marine licence validity period for finfish and shellfish farms from six to 25 years.

Tavish Scott, Chief Executive of Salmon Scotland, said the Minister's personal commitment to chair the strategy forum was 'a very strong sign of her leadership on this'.

New college looks to recruit future fish vets

Scotland's first new vet school in 150 years is keen to encourage the next generation of veterinarians to take up livestock practice, including aquaculture.



Shetland Regional Manager Richard Darbyshire with Professor Caroline Argo and SRUC Director of Skills and Lifelong Learning Mary Thomson

The SRUC vet school in Aberdeen, which will accept its initial intake of students next year, hopes to attract candidates from rural Scotland to address shortages in veterinary provision and support the country's prized food sectors.

To find out more about fish farming, the school's Dean, Professor Caroline Argo, and fellow vet and SRUC Director of Skills and Lifelong Learning, Mary

Thomson, visited Scottish Sea Farms' Shapinsay and Wyre farms in Orkney. Scottish Sea Farms Head of Veterinary Services Ronnie Soutar and Regional Manager for Shetland Richard Darbyshire conducted the tour.

'They seemed to be impressed with the professionalism of the sector,' said Soutar. 'They are more used to beef and sheep farming in Scotland, which tend to be family run businesses. Aquaculture is a very different lifestyle, with all the benefits of working in a bigger organisation.'

'The sector needs good people coming in to meet the increasingly complicated requirements of the job, post-Brexit, and to replace EU fish vets who have decided to leave the UK.'

Darbyshire said the contrast between Shapinsay and Wyre gave the SRUC an insight into different practices.

'Shapinsay is fairly low tech with quite a small barge, whereas Wyre is one

of our newer farms in Orkney, with a 200-tonne barge and high-definition feeding systems.'

'They were also able to see the opportunities in aquaculture for youngsters and how good the training programmes are.'

Instead of being campus-based like traditional vet schools, the SRUC will operate on a dispersed model, where students go out to veterinary practices to do most of their learning, said Soutar.

'They are looking to establish partnerships in aquaculture where students will come out to farms and learn about fish health care.'

'It's not just about creating a pool of vets, it's about making veterinary jobs attractive, and I think we do that.'

Reflecting on the visit, Professor Argo described sea farming practice as 'truly inspirational' and the sector and the people working with it 'utterly memorable.'

New comms boss hails 'renaissance' in Scottish salmon

Scotland's salmon farming sector is on the cusp of an exciting new chapter, as fast-paced innovation aligns with much anticipated regulatory reform to drive expansion and sustainable growth.

This is the firm belief of Andrew Watson, who has just taken up his new post as Head of Communications at Salmon Scotland.

Watson, who brings to the role 17 years' PR and marketing experience - most recently as Cooke Aquaculture's Scottish comms chief - says he is committed to helping the sector reach its full potential.

'There is so much going on and so many opportunities that we can take advantage of right now, so it's a good time to be joining the sector body,' he told The Source.

He plans to hit the ground running and has identified three priorities for the next 12 months. The first of these is to further improve the trading landscape post-Brexit.



'There is so much going on and so many opportunities that we can take advantage of right now, so it's a good time to be joining the sector body'

Salmon Scotland's new Head of Communications Andrew Watson

'To reduce the complexity of exporting to Europe, which remains our biggest market, the digitalisation of Export Health Certificates needs to happen quickly,' he said. 'We need to engage not just with the UK government but on a European level.'

High up on the agenda, too, is the implementation of regulatory reforms as recommended by Professor Russel Griggs in his recent review.

'We are at a fork in the road. Griggs will set the direction of the sector for the next five to 10 years, and possibly beyond. We need meaningful regulatory reform to be implemented as quickly as possible.'

Watson's third priority is about regional engagement, particularly on the west coast, where, he believes, there is scope to improve perceptions of the sector.

'Beyond a small hardcore, I think people are open to having their minds changed. We need to debunk the myths about salmon farming and tell the sector's story about the positive impact we have on local communities.'

The best way to educate people about aquaculture is to take them out to the farms so they can see for themselves how the sector operates.

'The impression is that we're a hidden industry but that's just not the case. Once you start to explain to people how it works, how we're regulated, certified, and independently audited, and once people can see it for themselves, the scales fall from their eyes.'

With a background that covers everything from corporate communications to public affairs, brand marketing and recruitment, Watson is also a keen sailor in his spare time and relishes the prospect of continuing to work in the marine environment and exploring more of our island communities.

'There are so many positives to look forward to. It's been four years since the parliamentary inquiry that concluded that the status quo was not an option. We agreed then, and the amount of change and innovation that has happened since has been phenomenal.'

'With the Griggs reforms, there is potential for a real renaissance in the sector.'

Innovative approach to monitoring the seabed

Details of a project that could create 'a shift change' in how Scottish salmon farmers assess the impacts of their farms were presented at the recent Aquaculture UK exhibition and conference in Aviemore.

Dr Tom Wilding of SAMS, speaking at a seminar hosted by SAIC (Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre), explained how traditional methods of monitoring the seabed were expensive and time-consuming, with samples taking three to six months to process.

'Benthic monitoring around fish cages will be increasing five to six times over the next few years as SEPA roll out and adopt the new DZR (Depositional Zone Regulation) framework for environmental monitoring,' said Wilding.

A solution that would allow real-time management decisions is being developed in a SAIC-funded initiative, with partners including Scottish Sea Farms.

In proof-of-concept research, scientists subjected grab samples taken around fish cages to both standard macrobenthos assessment and to eDNA (environmental DNA) metabarcoding based analysis. This demonstrated that bacterial-based eDNA characterisation was precise and, using machine learning, that patterns of bacterial eDNA could be used to predict benthic conditions.

'I think eDNA offers considerable potential to reduce the sampling effort and costs associated with benthic monitoring...and it allows near real time management because of that,' said Wilding.

The next stage of the project will standardise the methods of eDNA extraction and analysis over a diverse range of habitats, and embed the innovative alternative approach to macrobenthic-based monitoring in the sector.

The potential benefits stretch beyond regulatory compliance assessment, supporting improved production efficiencies and the development of new farms through improved modelling, said SAMS.

People on the move

To say recent months have been busy in terms of internal promotions would be an understatement – and not just in terms of those already announced as part of the Shetland restructure.

Around our other farming regions, we have seen Andrew MacLeannan promoted to the all-new role of Farming Support Manager for Mull, with Alan Tangny stepping into Andrew's former role as Farm Manager of Fiunary.

Tangny, in turn, will be replaced as Farm Manager of Loch Spelve by Trainee Farm Manager Jacob Ellis, formerly of Fishnish, with Martin Kafka promoted from Senior Husbandry to Trainee Farm Manager at Fishnish.

Elsewhere within our mainland region, there have been several promotions from Husbandry to Senior Husbandry: Tom Rudd at Summer Isles, Andrew Ghazal at Nevis C, and Steven Stewart and Daryl MacIver at Kishorn South.

On Orkney, Callum Clavey has been promoted from Senior Husbandry to Farm Manager of Hunda.

There have been changes within Processing too. Following the untimely death of Jay Hawkins, Matthew Palmer will take up the role of Site Technical Lead for Scalloway – a position Jay had been actively training him for, with Matt Bracegirdle and Llewellyn Wiggins appointed Quality Supervisor and Quality Monitor respectively.

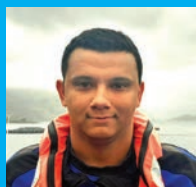
Completing this latest round of internal promotions, Ann-Marie Charleson has been appointed Technical Development Lead, working on projects for Processing and the wider business.



Martin Kafka



Tom Rudd



Andrew Ghazal



Steven Stewart



Callum Clavey



Matt Bracegirdle and Matthew Palmer

'A heart of gold and sorely missed'



April 2022 brought the devastating news that we had lost a dear colleague: Jay Hawkins, Site Technical Lead for Scalloway and an instrumental figure on the team.

We asked some of those who worked most closely with Jay how they will remember him:

'It was obvious that Jay worked hard to get the best results. However, he also motivated, supported and looked after his team extremely well, which can now be witnessed by the professional way they have continued to manage things, just as Jay would have wished, and is a credit to his coaching. Thanks, Jay, for being a great colleague and friend; one who is greatly missed.' **David Laverty, Quality Lead, South Shian**

'Jay was a great mentor to me during our time working together. It was a pleasure to have known him.' **Matthew Palmer, Site Technical Lead for Scalloway**

'Always remembered as a stickler for proper grammar and a well written email. He had a heart of gold and is sorely missed.' **Sheryl Odie, Internal Auditor**

'Jay was a thorough professional and fearless when it came to doing and saying the right thing and I admired him for that. He built a great team, and it was evident he cared for them as much as they cared for him – a fitting legacy.' **Donald Buchanan, Head of Processing**

'If you were fortunate enough to spend time with Jay, you very quickly came to realise how much he cared: about his team, about doing his job well and, above all, about his family.' **Andy Gourlay, Head of Technical**

Giving the gift of health

With a husbandry role and specialism in health and safety, Finlay Hitchings is more accustomed to being the care giver than cared for. However, he's currently recuperating at home in the Summer Isles after donating a kidney to his stepdad.

'My stepdad's kidney problems were diagnosed a couple of years ago and deteriorated fairly rapidly thereafter, resulting in him needing regular dialysis while he waited on a suitable donor,' explained Hitchings.

But with no donor forthcoming, and dialysis requiring over 15 hours every week, Hitchings began investigating whether he could help.

'Both my mum and me put ourselves forward, and I was found to be a match.'



Summer Isles Husbandry person Finlay Hitchings

'Lying in bed the night before surgery was pretty nerve-wracking, but other than that I felt fairly calm and clear throughout.'

Not only did both surgeries go smoothly but the improvement in the health of Hitchings' stepdad, Willie Urquhart, was immediate.

'Seeing the difference in him so soon made any discomfort 100% worth it. All eyes now are on ensuring his body accepts the new kidney but the signs are good.'

So, no regrets? *'Well, I wouldn't necessarily advise Snapchatting from hospital while on heavy medication, but other than that no regrets.'*

Seeking tomorrow's leaders today



Scottish Sea Farms is setting up a Talent Academy to identify and nurture the next generation of leaders across the company.

Employees of any age and in any part of the business are eligible to apply, in a move designed to fast-track their career progression and create a pipeline for future management positions.

Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw said the idea was to find and develop talented individuals and help them reach their potential within the company.

'We now have over 680 staff and, traditionally we have relied on managers to tell us who is up and coming in their regions or departments.

'The Talent Academy is a route for people to contact us directly and tell us why they

want to be the next Farm Manager, Area Manager, Head of HR, or even Managing Director.'

Those accepted into the Academy will be taught a breadth of skills to equip them for senior roles in the company.

'A typical graduate programme gives you access to different departments which gives you a better understanding of the whole business,' said Bryant-Shaw.

'That's exactly what we want to do because the broader you are in terms of your knowledge, the better decisions you make and the better networks you have, all the things that make you a better manager.

'It may take a year, or it may take three years, the main thing is that our rising stars will be on our radar with targeted

support to get them where they want to be,' said Bryant-Shaw.

For those who apply to the Academy but are not selected, there will still be a development plan and their progress will be monitored by their local manager and HR.

The Talent Academy is the fourth stage in Scottish Sea Farms' Aqua Academy, which also includes Into Aquaculture (working with schools and colleges); Learning Journeys (on the job learning); and Management Academy.

Interested in applying? Simply email tracy.bryant-shaw@scottishseafarms.com outlining why you believe you should be considered for the Academy and what you have done so far to develop your career.

Childcare scheme to be rolled out to other regions

The Shetland trial of discounted nursery places, featured in the October 2021 issue of The Source, has proven such a success that plans are now in progress to expand it to other regions.

Scottish Sea Farms launched the childcare initiative in Scalloway last autumn to help parents pay for pre-school places as well as after school care.

Since then, several Scottish Sea Farms employees have taken up the offer. One, Quality Supervisor and young dad Matt Bracegirdle, said: 'I'm hugely grateful for the financial support. With the rising cost of living at the moment, the help with childcare will ease the pressure a little, for sure.'

It is a sentiment echoed by Shetland Processing Manager Joe Fullerton: 'With both my wife and me working, childcare costs are a big part of our monthly expenses. The fact that Scottish Sea Farms pay 25% of our childcare costs is a great employee benefit. I don't know of any other company that is offering this sort of support to their employees.'

Scottish Sea Farms Head of HR Tracy Bryant-Shaw is now in talks with childcare providers in Oban and Lerwick

and is also looking at options in Orkney.

'The overarching aim is to roll-out discounted places across the estate via similar partnerships to the one in Scalloway,' she said. 'We've had a great response and I don't want to leave it there; it makes a massive difference to the families using it.

'I would also like to hear from parents in remote areas, where there may be no nursery provision, to see if we can set up pre-school and after-school support. And anyone who is currently using a nursery or a childminder can also access the subsidy.'

Bryant-Shaw said staff can contact her or the HR team to see how they can claim the discount.

Families in Scotland already receive 21 hours of free pre-school provision a week from the government and Scottish Sea Farms' further support will make child care more affordable in the rural locations where it operates.

The plan is in keeping with the company's family friendly policies, which include enhanced maternity and paternity packages.

Award wins



A big shout-out to Charlotte's Bay Farm Manager Stephen Woods and Team HR for their recent success at the Aquaculture Awards in Aviemore, winning the Finfish Farmer of the Year Award and the Economic Sustainability Award respectively.





Heart of the Community Coordinator Georgie Mackenzie and Head of Markets Celine Kimpflin visiting Oban lifeboat

Passing the baton at Heart of the Community

Handing over the running of Scottish Sea Farms' Heart of the Community trust has been something of a wrench for Georgie Mackenzie after a decade at its helm.

With the sales role she has managed simultaneously now demanding her full attention, she decided the time was right to pass the baton to a colleague, who could devote more time to the job.

Step forward Fiona Martin, Receptionist at the Gremista processing and packing facility in Lerwick, who is now getting to grips with the steady stream of applications coming into Scottish Sea Farms' community funding initiative.

Mackenzie knows she is leaving the scheme she has spearheaded in safe hands, but admits she will miss her work with Heart of the Community.

'I've met some real characters over the years and built great relationships with people, many of whom are funded on a regular basis.

'Being able to deliver the good news by telling people their applications have been successful is such a nice thing to do. I will really miss that side of things, just knowing that you're helping the local community and giving something back.'

Mackenzie became synonymous with Heart of the Community which, since it was set up in 2011, has awarded more than £1.5m to good causes across Scottish Sea Farms' farming regions.

But Martin, whose background was in tourism before she joined Grieg, is looking forward to being the new coordinator and overseeing the continued success of the fund.

'Although it's daunting, it's lovely not to be the one asking for money, as you often are in tourism, but to be handing it out,' she said.

'The hardest part will be turning down applications. I took home the first batch - of 48 - at the weekend and would

love to give everybody something.'

Mackenzie said while there is no limit to the number of grants awarded at the four funding rounds each year, certain criteria apply and applicants must come from one of Scottish Sea Farms' farming regions.

To date, grants of a few hundred pounds to several thousand pounds have been given to local projects.

Applications are typically reviewed at regional level before being put forward to Managing Director Jim Gallagher for final approval.



Fiona Martin



Georgie Mackenzie

Shinty tournament scores Cup Final sponsorship



Photo: John Fullerton Photography

With the world of shinty returning to its normal timetable post-Covid, Scottish Sea Farms has renewed its sponsorship of the Glasgow Celtic Society Challenge Cup Final.

Tournament organisers first approached Scottish Sea Farms about becoming event sponsor in 2018, securing a three-year support package. However, with Covid restrictions causing the postponement of the 2020 Cup Final, that funding only came to an end in 2021.

The new deal will see Scottish Sea Farms contribute towards the cost of staging the event for a further three years - starting with this year's Cup Final on 25 June between Glasgow Mid Argyll and current holders Kyles Athletic.

Donald Fletcher, President of the Glasgow Celtic Society, said: 'We very much appreciate the support of Scottish Sea Farms, which makes the competition viable and helps us protect the staging of this historic South Shinty event.'

