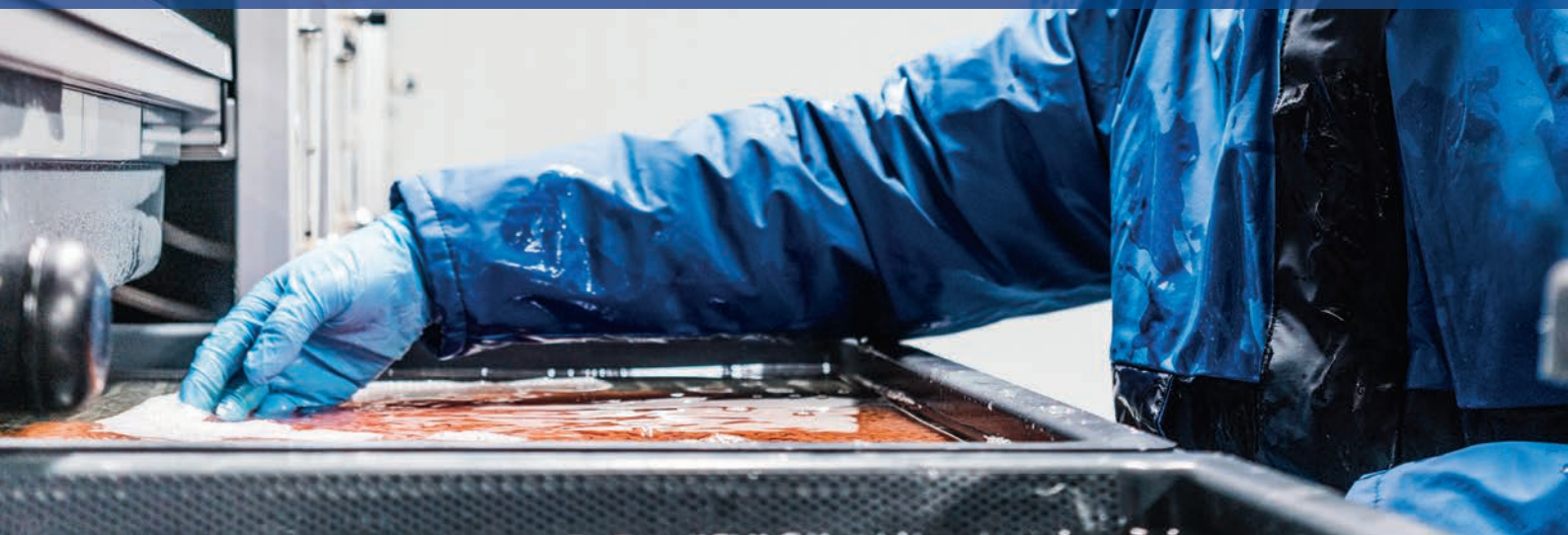


Barcaldine takes ova control with new incubation unit



Scottish Sea Farms is to open a new £2M incubation unit at Barcaldine Hatchery this autumn that will help ensure security of egg supply and improve fish survival.

Currently, the company receives fertilised eggs that have developed to the eyed stage from its specialist suppliers.

However, thanks to a new incubation unit, which will be located in its own dedicated building adjacent to the main hatchery, Scottish Sea Farms will soon be able to receive eggs immediately post-stripping and fertilise them on-site.

This means they can be incubated through the most fragile stages of their development until robust enough to be transferred to one of the company's three hatcheries: Barcaldine itself, Knock on the nearby Isle of Mull, or Girdsta in Shetland.

'What we're doing is creating a bespoke facility that will allow us to have greater control of the eggs even earlier in the production cycle,' said Scottish Sea Farms Head of Freshwater Rory Conn.

'We'll be able to take our time through these most critical initial stages, incubating the eggs for longer and at lower temperatures as we deem appropriate.'

Emerging research suggests that incubating eggs at lower temperatures during the very early stages can have

better outcomes for fish health later in life, particularly with regards to cardiac health.

'We would be looking to incubate as low as possible, likely 2-3°C, to encourage the slow and steady development of the ova.'

By receiving eggs immediately post-stripping, the freshwater team will also have greater influence over another key welfare factor – water quality.

'Exposure to clean water is hugely important and we're very confident of our water quality here at Barcaldine,' said Conn.

'Equipped with the most sophisticated recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) of its kind in Scotland, the main hatchery draws in freshwater from the nearby

Gleann Dubh reservoir and puts it through a complex system of filters and UV light to remove anything greater than 0.01 microns and ensure that no bacteria or viruses can get through.

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Meet the team: Barcaldine Hatchery Operations Manager Mike Tresise

Breathing new life into redundant fish pens



Head of Freshwater
Rory Conn

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'Within the new unit, there will be three similar RAS setups, supplying water to the racks where the new eggs are housed.

'Any one of the racks can be supplied by an individual RAS setup so we can supply them all at different temperatures should we choose to – the importance being that it gives us control over how quickly or otherwise the ova develops.

'And because the water is so clean, it's as safe as it can possibly be for the ova.'

The new unit is expected to create four additional jobs at Barcaldine, skilled roles that will involve everything from fertilising the eggs with milt, to rinsing and disinfecting the ova.

Once the eggs reach the eyed ova stage, they will go through a comprehensive quality check process to ensure that only viable eggs are transferred to incubation trays.

'The priority with this latest investment in our freshwater farming is to secure the supply and quality of our ova and provide the capacity for optimal incubation, from fertilisation onwards,' said Conn.

'The priority with this latest investment in our freshwater farming is to secure the supply and quality of our ova'

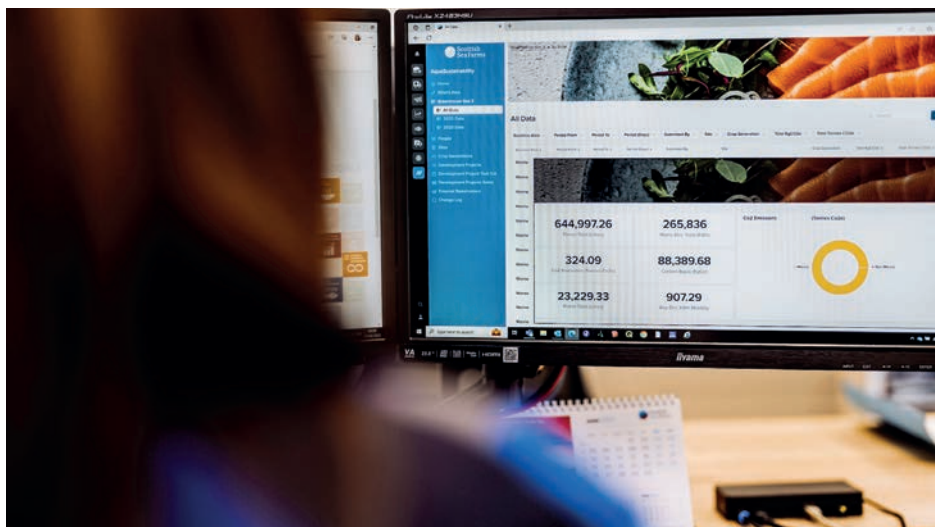
'Initially, we'll fertilise only a proportion of our ova supply on-site. However, the unit has the capacity to accommodate all our current and future ova requirements.'

The new unit is the latest investment by Scottish Sea Farms to future-proof egg supply and fish health and survival.

Other work in this area includes a ground-breaking collaboration with genetics specialist AquaGen to produce a supply of eggs from broodstock that have been proven to thrive at Scottish Sea Farms marine sites – a project that's now in its fifth year.



The new incubation unit tucked away on-site



In-house digital transformation a 'game changer'

Scottish Sea Farms is undergoing a digital transformation that has so far seen over 140 time-consuming processes transferred online.

Behind the switch from analogue to digital is David Anderson, Head of IT, and his internal IT/Digital team. They've been working with different departments across the company to build a bespoke software system that enables once cumbersome tasks to be completed quickly via a series of online apps.

The key driver for the new in-house platform, called Aqua X, was the Covid pandemic, said Anderson.

'During the first wave of the pandemic, we needed a way to manage the health and safety considerations associated with coming into the workplace. For example, filling in health questionnaires and doing temperature checks.

'To capture that data quickly and gauge the risks, we developed an online tool so that employees and contractors could submit information via their phones.

'We then saw the potential of what the tool could do and built our own project management solution that, unlike some systems on the market, gave us close to 100 per cent of the functionality we were looking for.'

In the three years since, the platform has added functions such as recording audits, harvests, hygiene inspection reports, diving permits and containment standards, along with monitoring greenhouse gas emissions, electric vehicle charging data and Contractor Safety Compliance.

'Whenever there's a requirement for a new process, the default position is now

to develop it within these applications, especially where tasks typically use a lot of paper.

'It also gives us a central database from which we can analyse and identify trends, whether biology or regulatory-related, and make further efficiencies.'

The goal is to digitalise all other paper or Excel-based processes across the company, rapidly capturing a wide range of data that can be acted upon immediately.

Those already using the platform, such as Head of Technical Andy Gourlay, are seeing the benefits.

'AquaTechnical has revolutionised our operations. By consolidating all our records and processes into a single, user-friendly platform, we have achieved real gains in efficiency, productivity, and data accessibility. The impact on our business has been nothing short of game-changing.'



Head of IT David Anderson

Consolidation of farming estate continues

Scottish Sea Farms' drive to modernise and consolidate its farming estate into a smaller number of sites with fewer pens but of a larger size is picking up pace.

One of the company's longest farmed locations, Loch Nevis, is next in line with a £1.5 million upgrade.

Two of its three farms – Nevis A and Nevis B – are being modernised, while Nevis C is being temporarily rested.

Where once there were 12 x 80m circumference pens at each farm, there will now be five 120m pens, reducing the overall number of units from 36 to just 10 while maintaining the same overall biomass.

This will allow more space between pens, increase water exchange and oxygen flow in and around farms, and, in turn, enhance growing conditions further.

And with fewer pens for the farm teams and support vessels to get around, the new configuration will also help maximise operational efficiencies and response times.

Evidence-based move

Regional Production Manager for the Mainland Innes Weir said: 'We've seen, at other farms that have been through the process already, that consolidating into fewer pens but of a larger size gives us the ability to better manage our resources, equipment, fish health and welfare, and water quality.'

'It also provides greater scope to minimise the impact of environmental

challenges that can pass through farms, such as the acute micro-jellyfish event that affected Loch Nevis last autumn.

'That was a natural point for us to pause, reflect on what worked well about the site but also what more we might be able to do going forward to pre-empt the challenges of an ever-changing climate.

Under PDR (permitted development rights) rulings that came in two years ago, salmon farmers are now able to apply to increase pens to a maximum circumference of 200m.

'At Nevis B, we could have gone to 160m pens. However, at Nevis A, where it's shallower, 120m pens were more suitable.

'We felt that fitting out both farms with five 120m pens would give greater consistency for the farm team.'

Appetite for action

Both farms will be stocked later this year and the farm team is feeling positive about the upgrade.

'There's a real appetite to see the new farm configuration in action and the benefits to fish health and welfare,' said Farm Support Manager Martin Ruddick, who has been overseeing the installation of the pens and moorings, all supplied by Scale AQ.

'In addition, there will be a new transfer vessel, from Flugga Boats in Shetland,



Farm Support Manager Martin Ruddick

that's fully enclosed, making getting to and from farm safer and more comfortable. It's also considerably faster, cutting the journey down from 30-45 minutes to 15-20 minutes.'

Picking up pace

Loch Nevis is the fourth of six such upgrades and consolidations to take place this farming year, following Fiunary in the Sound of Mull, Bring Head in Orkney and Setterness South in Shetland, with Wyre and Swarta Skerry – both also in the Northern Isles – due to be stocked soon.

This brings the total number of modernisations since 2021 to 14.

Next up, in early 2024, will be Kishorn North, South and West; Summer Isles; and Toyness.

Wellboat boosts freshwater treatment options



Photo: Ronja Kvaløy at Mangaster, courtesy of Farm Manager Robert Turnbull

A second freshwater treatment vessel has joined the Scottish Sea Farms fleet, to be deployed wherever needed across the estate.

Currently in Shetland, the Ronja Kvaløy, owned by Norwegian wellboat company Sølvtans, complements the Inter Caledonia, which Scottish Sea Farms acquired on contract earlier this year.

Both wellboats have reverse osmosis technology on board, which means they can convert seawater into freshwater to treat for sea lice and improve gill health.

At 3,000m³ capacity and 76m in

length, Ronja Kvaløy is a bigger boat than the 2,200m³ Inter Caledonia.

Shetland Regional Production Manager Richard Darbyshire said that with the farming estate having grown, the company needs to expand its resources to match.

'We have seen the benefits of freshwater treatments over the past two years and as we increase our production, the Kvaløy will give us extra capacity.

'The reverse osmosis system not only saves time sourcing freshwater but also provides crystal clear water, allowing us to monitor the fish better during treatment.'

Fish health forum focuses on 'better future'

The issue of winter ulcers, and possible solutions, dominated discussions at a recent fish health conference in northern Norway.

Delegates at the annual Lofoten Seminar, organised by Norwegian company STIM, heard how winter ulcers, mainly caused by the bacteria *Moritella viscosa*, can devastate salmonids.

In 2022, Norway alone saw 296 locations report an outbreak of *Moritella*, while over the first five months of 2023 up to 60% of total mortality within the Norwegian sector was attributed to ulcers, which also affect growth.

It's believed handling can trigger some outbreaks and that treatments such as physical delousing should be avoided during high-risk periods.

Speaking at the seminar, Norwegian vet Per Anton Sæther discussed the pressing need for novel vaccines capable of protecting fish against the newer variants thought to be responsible for the most recent infections.

One such vaccine is already in development by Pharmaq but while

there are 'big hopes', details around when it might become available are not yet known.

In the meantime, vets advised using preventative tools such as autovaccines, probiotics and bacteriophages, as well as continuing to release strong, healthy smolts, assessing risk factors before stocking, and taking quick action by culling sick fish.

In addition, strict biosecurity measures should be enforced aboard wellboats and feed delivery vessels, as these represent a big risk factor in spreading disease.

'Be a team player and notify your neighbours about health issues on your sites,' urged STIM vet Sverri Strøm.

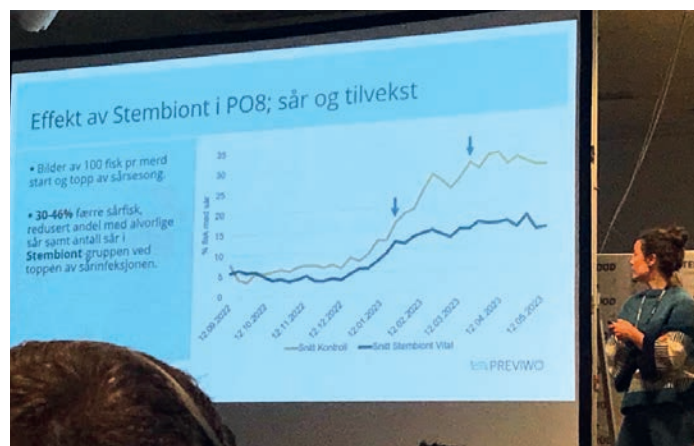
Scottish Sea Farms veterinarian Jakub Pierzynowski, who attended the conference, told The Source that the seminar provided a valuable forum for fish health professionals to share

experiences and learn of the latest breakthroughs.

'The work going on in the pharmaceutical companies, with new vaccines and bacteriophages, will deliver a better future. But it was good, also, to get confirmation at a global level that what we are already doing in Scottish Sea Farms, in terms of managing fish health, is the correct approach.'



Fish vet Jakub Pierzynowski



Orkney trial could pave way for low-frequency acoustic deterrent use



Photo: A-ASR, courtesy of Ace Aquatec

A trial, conducted by St Andrews University scientists, has found that new generation, low-frequency acoustic startle response (ASR) devices caused no harm to species such as harbour porpoises.

The Ace Aquatec A-ASR system, which emits short, targeted low-frequency sound bursts, was installed at a Scottish Sea Farms site in Orkney, selected because of the high density of harbour porpoises in the area.

The device was switched on and off over a two-month period, with five monitoring stations moored at different ranges.

Throughout, harbour porpoises were regularly detected, both while the A-ASR was active and inactive, indicating they were undisturbed by the device.

It was also shown that the sound output (aimed at 0.8-1.2kHz compared with 10-20kHz of previous devices) fell outside the hearing sensitivity range for harbour porpoises, meaning it may only be audible at short distances from the pen.

Lead researcher Alex Coram, of the Scottish Oceans Institute at St Andrews, said: 'This project improved understanding of low-frequency acoustic seal deterrents and how they can be used in a sustainable way that does not impact sensitive marine species.'

Scottish Sea Farms Head of Sustainability and Development Anne Anderson said the study, undertaken with a research EPS (European Protected Species) licence issued by NatureScot, was an important step forward.

'If the devices used do not cause harm, as has been shown in Orkney, then under current rules we should be able to use those models without having to apply for an EPS licence.'

It's hoped that the second phase of the SAIC (Sustainable Aquaculture Innovation Centre) backed trial will get underway later this month, also under a research EPS licence, aiming to establish the effectiveness of A-ASRs in deterring seals.

Salmon 'best on welfare' in M&S seafood supply chain

As Aquaculture and Fisheries Manager at M&S Food, Linda Wood oversees multiple species but probably spends more time on farmed salmon than any other fish.

Not only is M&S Select Farms salmon, supplied by Scottish Sea Farms, one of the retailer's five top volume species, but it also leads the way in terms of welfare practices, said Wood.

'Farmed salmon is one of the single best examples of the work being done to ensure high fish welfare. Grown to RSPCA Assured welfare standards, it sets the benchmark for the 41 other species in our supply chain to aspire to.'

Constantly seeking to improve standards further, Wood recently hosted a group of M&S seafood suppliers on a visit to Norway for a welfare-focused week, with representatives from across the wild fish and aquaculture sectors, including Scottish Sea Farms' Head of Technical Andy Gourlay.

'When we're farming any animal, we have a duty of care at all stages of its life,' said Wood.

'On our most recent visit, we were specifically looking at finding out more about the sentience of animals, fish and shellfish, and understanding the most

humane methods of dispatch.

'We met with scientists from various universities to discuss the benefits of stunning an animal before dispatch and what best practice might look like.

'Salmon farmers are really leading the way in this area, investing in a number of methods that could also be adopted for wild fish.

'Scottish Sea Farms, for example, use a swim-through electrical stunning system, meaning the fish remain in their natural environment of water. This same approach could, with time and investment, be transferred to pelagic fisheries, such as mackerel and herring, because they are live hauled from the sea in a similar way to salmon.

'Alternatively, dry stunning, where salmon are stunned on a conveyor belt, has now been installed on fishing boats in Norway for wild fish and is proving to work very well.'

Wood, who took up her role at M&S Food last August, has a background in



M&S Aquaculture and Fisheries Manager Linda Wood with chef Tom Kerridge

seafood production and brings to retail an understanding of the challenges faced by salmon farmers, not least those exacerbated by warming seas.

'I was at Scottish Sea Farms' Scallastle site in the Sound of Mull a few weeks ago where the water was five degrees warmer than it had been the year before.

'But the sector does more monitoring than anyone else, it's more organised, and companies collaborate a lot more with each other. The entire sector tries to solve its problems together.'

As a long-time supplier and M&S Select Farms award winner, Scottish Sea Farms has become 'a bit of a go-to' in representing the retailer's Agriculture & Fisheries team, said Wood.

'Scottish Sea Farms Managing Director Jim Gallagher spoke at this year's Royal Highland Show. That in itself speaks volumes; one of our fish farmers talking to agricultural farmers about what it's like to be part of the M&S supply chain.'

Brexit delays drag on as digital scheme is dropped



A new digital health certificate system aimed at speeding up seafood exports to Europe faces further delays after a pilot scheme was scrapped by the government.

Export Health Certificates (EHCs) have been required for all animal-based exports to the European Union since the UK formally left the EU single market at the start of 2021.

But a pilot programme of eCertification has now been dropped by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). It means that the long wait for a fully digital system to reduce post-Brexit red tape drags on, costing salmon farming companies in Scotland an estimated £3 million a year.

Salmon Scotland said the trial had been running smoothly and it had hoped the

digitalised solution could be rolled out in the UK and then in other ports across Europe, starting with Boulogne-sur-Mer and Calais, which are the main entry points of salmon to Europe.

'This is one of the mitigations that was promised to overcome the challenges of Brexit,' said a Salmon Scotland spokesman.

'Shipments have been turned back from the border because the paperwork was incorrect, even down to what colour ink has been used.

'A properly designed digital system would help to minimise and eliminate mistakes and make it easier for perishable goods to clear Customs.'

Defra said it would begin to test a 'new and improved service from early 2024'.

People on the move

Our regular update on internal promotions

Starting in Shetland, following the recent promotion of George Miller and James MacDonald to two new Area Manager roles, Robert Turnbull and Craig Robertson have been appointed Farm Managers of Mangaster and Vidlin respectively.

Scott Evans has been made Trainee Farm Manager at Coledeep, Cameron Smith has been promoted to Multi Skilled Engineer at Girsta Hatchery, and Robert Clueness has taken on the role of Net Store Supervisor.

There has been change too within the region's workboat crew, with Magnus Black stepping up to Senior Technician on the Kallista Helen, Gareth Geddes becoming skipper on the Bagheera, Joe Gifford and Ryan Leask appointed to First Mate roles on the Bagheera, and Daryl Smith made First Mate on the Commander.

In Orkney, Matthew Boler has been appointed Senior Husbandry at Shapinsay and Scott Desmond has been made up to Trainee Farm Manager at Hunda. Within Engineering, William Aitken has been promoted to Training Supervisor and Joshua Garrett to Senior Engineer and Transport Manager.

Meanwhile, on the Scottish mainland, Mike Tresise has been promoted to Operations Manager (read more on p7), taking over from Carlota Castaneda-Cobo, who has returned to her homeland of Spain.

Within marine, Sam Wright and Kyle Braid have been appointed to Senior Husbandry at Bloody Bay, with added responsibilities of Fish Health and Feed respectively, while Cezary Milewski becomes Night Hygiene Supervisor on the South Shian processing team.



Scott Evans



Ryan Leask



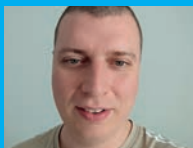
Will Aitken



Joshua Garrett



Sam Wright



Cezary Milewski

Expert advice and support is just a click away

Last month, colleagues received a copy of the company's new 'Employee benefits guide' - including free access to the Employee Assistance Programme and My Health Assured app. But what sort of assistance is on offer, exactly?

'Delivered by leading UK health and wellbeing provider Health Assured, the Employee Assistance Programme gives colleagues and their families free access to clinical expertise and 24/7 support,' said HR Business Partner for mainland marine and freshwater, Claire Scott.

'Whether it's a work issue or something more personal, be it health, family, relationships, financial or legal, there are articles, videos, webinars, factsheets and links to other useful websites.'

There's also the option of more tailored advice, said Kayleigh Evans, Scottish Sea Farms Shetland based HR Advisor.

'Colleagues can talk to a relevant expert by phone or online, or ask to be referred to a qualified counsellor in their local area.'

Recent years have seen the Employee Assistance Programme added to with the My Health Assured app, which offers the same wide range of support, along with discounts and other special offers.

The best way to see what's available, urges Kayleigh, is to have a look yourself.

'Colleagues can find the log-in details for both the Employee Assistance Programme and My Health Assured app on the home page of the employee self-service system.'

Alternatively, you can learn more about the support on offer by watching the introductory video, also available via the employee self-service home page.

Toolbox Talks keep teams in touch

How to keep colleagues in the loop is a common challenge for large departments; however, Scottish Sea Farms' processing team have found a solution.



Donald Buchanan, Head of Processing, said that monthly Toolbox Talks are now an established means of ensuring consistency and continuity across the team.

'On a marine farm, say, where you have a team of six, it's easier to discuss performance compared with processing which has different teams in different areas working different shifts.'

At the company's Lerwick facility, Toolbox Talks are given by Manager Niall O'Rourke and Operations Supervisor Steven Woods,

while at South Shian it is Operations Supervisor Vasco Borisov who leads the sessions.

'We really worked on our communication during and after Covid, making the talks more in-depth,' said Borisov.

'Rather than focus simply on health and safety, as we did originally, we now provide an overview of key performance indicators, including processing data, audits, visits, staff wellbeing and customer feedback.'

'Throughout, we encourage the team to speak up with their own suggestions so there is feedback from staff to management, not just the other way round.'

Paul Macleod, who oversees Despatch at Shian, added: 'Vasco works hard to make the Toolbox Talks interesting by inserting fun facts to hold our attention.'

'They're also a good forum for those who don't want to raise issues one-to-one but who will take the opportunity to ask questions collectively.'

Leading Barcaldine through the next chapter

When Mike Tresise left his native South Africa three years ago, he was certainly going places, not just half-way across the world but in his career too.

Operations Manager Mike Tresise



Now the new Operations Manager at Barcaldine, who took up his post last month, has arrived at what he considers the ideal destination.

A self-proclaimed 'fish guy', he says 'I never wake up not wanting to go to work', and relishes the demands of overseeing the freshwater production process from egg to smolt.

Tresise inherits a smooth ship from predecessor Carlota Castaneda-Cobo, and plans to continue what she was doing, 'putting out the best smolts we can', as well as emulating her constructive, inclusive approach to management.

'Stepping up from being a hatchery technician to manager helps because I already have a relationship with colleagues that an outside person might not have,' Tresise told The Source.

'Day to day, it's all about the fish welfare, keeping on top of the schedules, cleaning and preparing the units and making sure we send out quality fish. Maybe once I've been in the job for a few months I will see if anything can be improved.'

Tresise hadn't worked with salmon until he joined Scottish Sea Farms in September 2020, but after gaining an MSc in Aquatic Health at the University of Johannesburg he managed a small tilapia farm in South Africa, learning about fish husbandry in a RAS.

He also introduced a broodstock management programme and believes the farming principles were similar to those at Barcaldine, although the scale was much smaller.

'I hadn't worked in a hatchery as technically advanced as this one, but that actually makes things easier, and I've been able to draw on the knowledge of colleagues, some of whom have 15 to 20 years' experience.'

Tresise, who was promoted from Hatchery Technician to Senior Technician, acquiring specialisms in water quality and health and safety along the way, will oversee the new incubation unit at Barcaldine.

'The new unit is an exciting prospect, enabling us to handle the eggs from the get-go and giving us even greater control,' he said.

Barcaldine has become more than a hatchery, serving as a hub for visitors, and Tresise is looking forward to what will be a higher profile within the company and the sector.

'As a technician you don't really get to meet anyone else apart from your immediate colleagues, although I'm in quite a unique situation in that my wife Amanda [Sustainability Data and Reporting Lead in the Environment team], and father-in-law [Engineer Rob Mooney] also work for Scottish Sea Farms.'

Head of Freshwater Rory Conn said Tresise has an in-depth understanding of RAS hatcheries, on top of 'natural people skills'.

'He has quickly gained others' trust, earned their respect and helped them deliver their very best, and I believe he has what it takes to lead Barcaldine Hatchery through the next chapter of its growth and evolution.'

Career spotlight



Vasco Borisov,
Operations Supervisor
Shian Processing

What does your role involve?

I'm responsible for the day-to-day operation of the facility at South Shian, overseeing the whole process from harvesting, to gutting, to packing and dispatch. I also help oversee health and safety, the training of staff, labour costs, and communications, which include monthly 'toolbox talks' involving the entire staff.

What's your background?

I have a business administration degree from my native Bulgaria. I joined Scottish Sea Farms in 2015 when I came to Oban as a rugby player (I still play international rugby for my country). Part of the contract was a job and Donald MacAulay (Primary Processing Manager), who knew my coach, took me on. I worked in every stage of production and within a year I was promoted to my current post.

Why did you choose this job?

I liked the idea of doing something different and Donald must have seen some potential in me. Each day, I would take on more and more responsibility until I got to the point where I was helping with the running of the facility.

What are the biggest challenges?

The facility is very dynamic. We have to react at short notice to changes in harvest plans and it's up to me to ensure we make the best use of the workforce and our resources.

And the greatest rewards?

The satisfaction on a Friday when you can look back and say that week went well. Also, the feedback from the team – it's great to get people on board and to hear their ideas because it shows they really care about the job.

Recycled fish pens help keep boat club afloat



Photo: The new pontoon at Glencoe Boat Club, constructed from recycled salmon pens

A Loch Leven boat club has constructed a new pontoon from recycled salmon pens supplied by Scottish Sea Farms.

The pontoon was part of an upgrade at the Glencoe Boat Club, formed in 1972, that also included creating a ramp from part of a fish pen and restoring the pier.

The repurposed galvanised steel pens – six 10m sections – plus a hammerhead and 30 floats were delivered to the boat

club free of charge by Scottish Sea Farms after former club Commodore Angus MacInnes contacted Marine Engineering Manager Craig Cameron.

‘The improvements will ensure the future of boating for generations to come,’ said MacInnes. ‘I cannot thank Scottish Sea Farms enough. When I went to Craig cap in hand he just said ‘leave it with me’.

‘The pens and floats were in very good condition and we now have a pontoon that will last for a very long time.

‘We can accommodate more vessels and with a much bigger tonnage than before and I’m hoping more people will be encouraged to get their boats in the water and go sailing in the loch.

‘Non-members and visitors can also use the pontoon, as it offers the best access in the area and it’s a beautiful spot.’

Cameron said Scottish Sea Farms was happy to help out: ‘It’s great to see redundant farm equipment redeployed for the benefit of the local community in Loch Leven.’

Mull minibus ‘transforms’ islanders’ lives



Photo courtesy of Mull and Iona Community Trust

A transport service on Mull is helping residents in a remote community get to their medical appointments, reach the supermarket for weekly groceries, and engage in social events.

With support from Scottish Sea Farms, Ulva Ferry Community Transport is now running two mini-buses to fill what operators call the ‘missing link’ in the island’s public transport network.

The latest vehicle, an electric 10-seater LDV Maxus with a lift for wheelchairs, came into service earlier in the summer

and bears Scottish Sea Farms livery.

A rota of part-time drivers ensures the minibus, and another eight-seater, also electric and with wheelchair access, are on the road whenever needed to connect users to local facilities.

The transport is also used by Ulva Ferry primary school for outings and trips to swimming and PE lessons elsewhere on the island.

Ulva Ferry Community Transport was set up in 2014 following a consultation by Ulva School Community Association (USCA) and Mull and Iona Community Trust (MICT), which found the provision of transport to be one of the highest priorities of local residents.

MICT General Manager Moray Finch said since the demise of the postbus more than 15 years ago, there had been no public transport options for locals or visitors, exacerbating the isolation of some residents.

‘The community bus has transformed lives, enabling previously housebound

residents to get out and about and offering travel to doctors’ appointments and respite care,’ he said.

‘Our new minibus, which has a range of around 150 miles and makes our community transport fully electric, also takes residents to the community library or lunch club, held on alternate fortnights in one of the village halls.

‘We have some very good and willing drivers on our books who will even undertake overnight trips, if necessary, to drive people to hospital door to door as part of the NHS Highland Transport Scheme.’

A donation of £3,000 a year for three years from Scottish Sea Farms contributes to the operational cost of the service, including the drivers’ fees.

Finch approached Scottish Sea Farms after talking to Regional Production Manager Innes Weir during a housing meeting on Mull.

Heart of the Community at a glance



2023 so far
81 grants approved
£78,469 given

All time (2011-present)
802 grants approved
£1,823,783 given

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

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