

Sea lice costing fish farms up to £300m a year

Campaigners claim industry opposes tighter rules

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DEVASTATING outbreaks of sea lice are costing Scotland's lucrative fish farm industry £300 million a year ahead of new restrictions to halt the spread being introduced.

Campaigners who want more stringent controls on sea lice in salmon farms claim tighter rules are being resisted by the fish farming industry.

The new regulations introduced under Freedom of Information laws show the extent of the cost caused by the parasite.

New Scottish Government rules, which come into force on April 1, mean that any fish farm found to have a sea lice infestation above a certain threshold will then have to draw up an action plan in conjunction with the Fish Health Inspectorate.

Fish farming is estimated to be worth £650m and supports around 8,000 jobs but it is estimated that one in five farms would fail the new tests.

Scotland is the largest producer of salmon in the EU and the third-largest in the world, sustaining many fragile communities in the Highlands and Islands.

But the Global Alliance Against Industrial Aquaculture (GAAIA)

claims the industry is not sufficiently tackling the devastating problem of sea lice.

Don Staniford, the controversial spokesman of the GAAIA, said: "Instead of allowing the industry to hide from public scrutiny, the Scottish Government should publish site specific sea lice data as is already the case in Norway, Ireland and Canada. Salmon farms breaching sea lice limits should be named and shamed and then closed down if non-compliance continues."

A letter in October from the Scottish Government's Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen conceded that since 2007 the sector had been hit hard by "reduced efficacy of sea lice treatments, the emergence of amoebic gill disease and increased challenges associated with sea lice control, all contributing to increased sea lice numbers across the Scottish salmon farming industry".

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Another document from Marine Scotland said: "Recent analysis suggests that parasites account for an annual loss of up to 16.5 per cent of the value of UK aquaculture production. The vast majority of this relates to the treatment of sea lice."

Campaigners have long argued that information on rates of sea lice infestation should be published for each fish farm, and another briefing paper in July 2016 admitted that "Scotland is arguably out of kilter with the other major salmon producing countries in terms of sea lice publication and the industry's inability to manage sea lice infestation better makes it challenging to hold this line."

Industry body the Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation declined to respond to Mr Staniford, but a Scottish Government spokesman said ministers recognised that sea lice management presents a major challenge.

"We have worked cooperatively with the aquaculture industry to agree a new sea lice management policy, which represents a significant step forward in regulatory control of sea lice levels. We consider this change will result in improvements to the management of sea lice by the aquaculture industry in Scotland," he said.

Seal turns into a landblubber



A SEAL has been found stranded by the side of a road, two miles from the sea.

The female pup was spotted on Bressay, in the Shetland Islands

and it is believed she had belly-flopped her way from the North Sea Coast in search of food.

She was rescued by Gemma Tulloch, 28, one of 360 residents

on the island, and taken to an animal sanctuary.

The pup was hungry and dehydrated but otherwise unharmed.

Diesel cars may soon give way to electric

DIESEL technology is set to be a thing of the past, UK car industry executives believe.

The plan is to invest in the technology needed for battery electric vehicles over the next five years, according to 93 per cent of executives while 62 per cent felt that diesel is losing its importance for manufacturers.

Figures from KPMG's annual global automotive executive survey also show that 90 per cent of executives expect battery electric vehicles to dominate the marketplace by 2025.

John Leech, of KPMG, said: "Improvements in the cost and range of battery technology, coupled with growing concern over the emission of both carbon dioxide and nitrogen oxides from diesel engines, means that almost the whole automotive industry believes that the mass adoption of electric cars will happen during the next decade."

Researchers believe there will be fewer cars and therefore less money to be made from building vehicles in the future as people may opt to use, rent or pay for a car service rather than to own a car.

This was not feared as a looming problem because 85 per cent of executives were convinced their company might make more money by providing new digital services than by selling cars alone.

Eh-oh! TV star Walliams joins the Teletubbies

DAVID Walliams has landed a voice role in the classic children's TV show Teletubbies.

The Britain's Got Talent judge, 45, will be a voice trumpet, which pops out of the ground and announces: "Time for Teletubbies".

He will feature in the new series in 2017, which comes 20 years after Tinky Winky, Dipsy, Laa-Laa and Po - the creatures with antennas on their heads and TV screens on their stomachs - made their debut.

Presenter Rochelle Humes, 27, has also signed up to be a voice trumpet in the hit, pre-school series.

Teletubbies relaunched with a "contemporary look" in 2015, and the addi-



DAVID WALLIAMS: To be voice trumpet.

tion of a must-have 21st-century gadget - a mobile-style phone.

The original show, which spawned a chart-topping single Teletubbies Say Eh-oh!, was seen by around one billion children in more than 100 countries.

Actor Walliams said: "It's really thrilling to be asked to take part in Teletubbies. It's such an iconic show. It was just too good a thing to turn down."

Transport police to undergo inspection

A WATCHDOG will inspect British Transport Police (BTP) ahead of a proposed transfer of its Scottish operation to Police Scotland.

Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) will conduct the joint inspection with the body which examines forces in England and Wales.

Officers, who will begin inspection fieldwork in February, will analyse BTP's efficiency,

legitimacy and leadership. They will also examine strategic issues caused by the proposed transfer.

BTP's inspection was commissioned by the parliamentary secretary of state at the Department for Transport under the Railways and Transport Safety Act 2005.

A single joint report will be produced by inspectors following the examination which will be submitted to the DfT.

Two men sought after serious street attack

A YOUNG man suffered a serious head injury after being attacked in the street.

The 25-year-old was taken to hospital after being hit on the head around 2.20am in Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith. Police are appealing for anyone who witnessed the

assault to get in touch. Two suspects are being sought, and are both described as white men, with medium builds and short dark hair. One was wearing a long-sleeved red top with blue jeans, while the other was wearing a white long-sleeved top with blue jeans.

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