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Intelligence

Scottish salmon farmers to trial simplified licensing and approval process

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By Responsible Seafood Advocate

New consenting process for Scottish salmon farmers could lead to efficiencies and improved community engagement

Scottish Sea Farms is testing a simpler licensing and approval process for salmon farms that could help streamline the overall consenting process for salmon farmers and better engage with local communities.

The trial follows an independent review by regulatory expert Professor Russel Griggs in 2022, commissioned by Rural Affairs Secretary Mairi Gougeon, which found the current process of approving and licensing for aquaculture is complicated, lacks coordination and is not working “as well as it could.”

In the months since, a Consenting Task Group, set up by the Scottish Aquaculture Council to deliver the recommendations, has been working on a new, more coordinated process, with Shetland Islands Council and Highland Council – both of which have been involved in the Group – being the first to pilot the changes.



Scottish Sea Farms is test-driving a new licensing and approval process that could help streamline the overall consenting process.

“The pre-application process will see the two main consenting regimes, namely the local authority planners and Scottish Environment Protection Agency, work together to review the submission in consultation with key stakeholders, rather than each body considering the applications separately, as currently happens,” said Anne Anderson, Scottish Sea Farms Head of Sustainability. “This new, more coordinated approach is anticipated to take three to four months and pave the way for a swifter decision once the formal application has been submitted.”



(<https://globalseafood.typeform.com/podcastq124>).

In the new licensing process, involving residents and businesses is key. Scottish Sea Farms has engaged with Shetland Island Council, community councils and other marine users to discuss the proposals. Two consultation events are already scheduled for February and April 2024.



Scottish Sea Farms launches hybrid-power workboat to reduce carbon footprint

Scottish Sea Farms has added a hybrid power workboat to its fleet, which could cut fuel costs by up to 50 percent and reduce its overall carbon footprint.



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“We’re keen to talk local communities through our proposal, which is to consolidate four separate consents into one farm of 6,000 tons, which is a modest increase of 764 tons overall,” said Anderson. “Should our application prove successful, this would see a potential 29 salmon pens and three feed barges reduced to a maximum of 12 pens supported by one barge.”

Also involved in trialing the new licensing and consenting process, which will apply to new and existing farms, is fellow salmon producer Mowi who will submit the second planning notification – this time to Highland Council.

Mowi is also testing the new licensing process for both new and existing farms. It will submit the second planning notification to the Highland Council. Once both planning notifications have been through the new process, the Consenting Task Group will carry out a thorough review of its success at each key stage.

“The group will be looking to identify any scope for further improvement, informed by feedback from all key stakeholders, including communities, ahead of rolling out the new, coordinated approach to other local authorities,” said Anderson.

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