

BBC Panorama response

✘ 20 May 2019

On 20th May 2019, BBC One's flagship investigations documentary 'Panorama' will focus on the Scottish salmon industry. The Panorama programme, entitled 'Salmon Farming Exposed', will examine the environmental performance and practices of the industry. It also looks at the regulatory oversight of the industry, including SEPA's role.

In November 2018, SEPA, as one of a number of organisations regulating finfish aquaculture, announced firm, evidence-based proposals for a revised regulatory regime that will strengthen the protection of the marine environment for the people of Scotland. The regime will be introduced next month.

The new regime follows twenty-two months of work by colleagues across the agency, a 2017 consultation, and two Scottish Parliamentary committees, one of which concluded that "the status quo is not an option", adding that the industry's expansion goal "will be unsustainable and may cause irrecoverable damage to the environment" unless governance and practices are improved markedly.

Terry A'Hearn, Chief Executive of the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, said: "Whilst a high quality environment and abundant freshwater resources are vital to Scotland's aquaculture sector, it's an industry that attracts polarised positions, from those who cite its economic contribution to those who oppose its existence.

"As one of a number of organisations regulating finfish aquaculture, SEPA is clear that our job is to make sure environmental standards protect the marine environment for the people of Scotland and we make sure the industry meets those. That's unequivocally our focus.

"Consequently across the last twenty-two months we've done more science, more analysis and more listening than ever before. We announced enhanced environmental monitoring and the creation of new SEPA enforcement unit to ensure compliance is non-negotiable. Officers are currently engaged in a programme of unannounced visits to confirm compliance with regulatory requirements.

"As an organisation based on law and evidence, SEPA routinely reviews data from operators, from SEPA monitoring and from third parties. Whilst it would be inappropriate to pre-judge potential outcomes, SEPA will fully investigate suggestions of alleged industry wrongdoing made by BBC Panorama.

"SEPA is unable to comment further on its current audit and unannounced inspection programme underway at present."

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