Good VIBES for Scottish businesses supporting sustainable development

15 November 2018

Businesses in Scotland are continuing to step up to increasing environmental challenges and yesterday (14 November) 10 Scottish companies were rewarded for their commitment to sustainability at the VIBES – Scottish Environment Business Awards.

Those awarded include; Aqualution Systems Ltd, Beyond Green, Clearwater Controls Ltd, Devro (Scotland) Ltd, Hickory, Peel Tech Ltd, Scottish Leather Group Limited, Spruce Carpets Limited, The James Hutton Institute and Xanthella. Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service and DSM Nutritional Products (UK) Limited also received commendation at the award ceremony held at Radisson Blu in Glasgow and attended by more than 400 business figures.

The announcement follows a rigorous judging process, where each of the 43 finalists were visited by a team of judges to assess their environmental processes.

The 10 businesses awarded, which represent a range of sectors and sizes, demonstrated challenging their everyday working practices to embrace the economic opportunity of sustainability with all reaping the wider associated benefits including increased resource efficiency, resilience, competitiveness as well as a positive working culture.

The businesses were awarded under a range of categories including; management (large and small), circular economy, environmental product or service, hydro nation water innovation, green team, innovation, sustainable and active travel and micro business – highlighting the diverse ways businesses can implement best practice in their daily activity

This included everything from repurposing donated carpet for re-sale to the development of a safe disinfectant which can be used across multiple sectors from farming and food to pharmaceuticals.

The awards also demonstrated how even small changes can have a big difference, for example adopting active travel practices that reduce both reliance on cars and carbon emissions to implementing management programmes that empower staff to make more sustainable choices.

One of the biggest threats to humanity is climate change and in light of this, a Climate Adaptation Award was also introduced this year in partnership with Adaptation Scotland to reward a business that demonstrates managing climate related risks. This was awarded to The James Hutton Institute for its innovative work on the International Barley Hub, an ambitious development to create a world-leading centre to translate excellence in barley research and

innovation into economic, social and environmental benefits. Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service also received commendation in this category.

Commenting, Bob Downes, chair of SEPA and head of the VIBES judging panel, said:

> The VIBES – Scottish Environment Business Awards celebrate business leadership in sustainable environmental investment, and are an excellent opportunity to recognise and reward companies for going beyond 'business as usual' and driving sustainable growth through innovation.
>
> "The most successful businesses in the future will be those that are not just compliant, but which are also low carbon, low material use, low water use and low waste, and which see environmental excellence as an opportunity. This is at the core of SEPA's One Planet Prosperity regulatory strategy.
>
> "It is very encouraging to see the diverse range of businesses, small and large, which are taking important steps to reduce their impact on the environment and which understand how environmental excellence can also benefit their bottom line. I would like to congratulate each of this year's winning businesses and organisations, and hope that others will be inspired to follow in their footsteps."

Each of the 2018 VIBES – Scottish Environment Business Awards winners is now eligible to enter the next European Business Awards for the Environment (EBAE) which is open to winners and runners up of RSA Accredited award schemes. VIBES is the only Scottish based RSA Accredited award scheme.

Sponsoring the awards this year was: Adaptation Scotland, Chivas Brothers Pernod Ricard, Climate-KIC through ECCI, Energy Saving Trust, Farne Salmon and Trout, Glenmorangie, Greenvale AP, Mabbett, NetRegs, Scottish Government, ScottishPower, University of Stirling Management School, Vegware and Wave.

For more information on VIBES – Scottish Environment Business Awards please visit www.vibes.org.uk

– Ends –

Notes to Editors:

VIBES – Scottish Environment Business Awards is a strategic partnership between Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Scottish Government, Scottish Water, Scottish Enterprise, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Zero Waste Scotland, and Energy Saving Trust.

The Awards are further supported by CBI Scotland, the Institute of Directors, the Federation of Small Businesses, Bright Green Business, Quality Scotland

and Scottish Council for Development and Industry.

The Awards are accredited by the RSA Environment Awards Accreditation Scheme (www.rsaaccreditation.org).

The full list of VIBES – Scottish Environment Business Awards 2018 winners are as follows:

- **Circular Economy – Sponsored by Chivas Brothers Pernod Riccard**:

  Spruce Carpets Limited **(Winner)**

- **Hydro Nation Water Innovation – Sponsored by Scottish Government:**

  Aqualution Systems Ltd **(Winner)**

- **Sustainable and Active Travel – Sponsored by Energy Saving Trust:**

  Beyond Green **(Winner)**

- **Climate Change Adaptation – Sponsored by Adaptation Scotland:**

  Aberdeen City Council Countryside Ranger Service **(Commendation)**

  The James Hutton Institute **(Winner)**

- **Management SME (under 250 employees) – Sponsored by Stirling University Management School:**

  Hickory **(Winner)**

- **Management Large (over 250 employees) – Sponsored by Glenmorangie:**

  DSM Nutritional Products (UK) Limited **(Commended)**

  Scottish Leather Group Limited **(Winner)**

- **Environmental Product or Service – Sponsored by NetRegs:**

  Clearwater Controls Ltd **(Winner)**

- **Green Team – Sponsored by Wave:**

  Devro (Scotland) Ltd **(Winner)**

- **Innovation – Sponsored by ScottishPower:**

  Xanthella **(Winner)**

- **Micro Business – Sponsored by Climate KIC through ECCI:**

  Peel Tech Ltd **(Winner)**

Scottish salmon farm medicine significantly impacting local marine environments as SEPA unveils firm, evidence-based proposals for a revised regulatory regime

07 November 2018

Scottish salmon farm medicine is significantly impacting local marine environments. That is the conclusion of one of Scotland's largest and most comprehensive marine research projects into aquaculture, undertaken by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

- Scottish salmon farm medicine significantly impacting local marine environments concludes SEPA research report, which increases the now substantial weight of scientific evidence that the existing approaches do not adequately protect marine life.
- SEPA announces firm, evidence-based proposals for a revised regime that will strengthen the regulation of the sector.
- New, tighter standard for the organic waste deposited by fish farms.
- More powerful modelling using the best available science, replacing 15 year old framework.
- Enhanced environmental monitoring and creation of new SEPA enforcement unit to ensure compliance is non-negotiable.
- New interim approach for controlling the use of Emamectin Benzoate, pending UK Technical Group recommendations to Scottish Government.
- New approach could allow for larger farms than traditionally approved, provided they are appropriately sited in sustainable locations.
- Scotland-wide consultation events across November and December.

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The survey, 'Fish Farm Survey Report – Evaluation of a New Seabed Monitoring Approach to Investigate the Impacts of Marine Cage Fish Farms', undertaken by specialist marine scientists using research vessel the Sir John Murray, examined environmental impacts from eight Scottish fish farms. 302 chemical

samples were analysed from 93 sample stations and 296 ecological samples from 142 sample stations.

Samples for chemical analysis were analysed for the sea lice medicine Emamectin Benzoate (EmBz) and Teflubenzuron (Tef), last used in 2013. The medicines were detected in 98% and 46% of samples respectively, with residues more widely spread in the environment around fish farms than had previously been found. Moreover, the research concluded that the impacts of individual farms may not be contained to the vicinity of individual farms.

The research survey was published today (Wednesday, 7th November) as part of proposals by SEPA, one of a number of organisations regulating finfish aquaculture*, for a revised regime that will strengthen SEPA's regulation of the sector. The proposals follow 16 months of work by the agency, including 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.

Scotland is the largest Atlantic salmon aquaculture producer in the European Union and third in the world after Norway and Chile. A contributing factor to this is Scotland's reputation for a high quality environment and abundant freshwater resources.

SEPA's draft Finfish Aquaculture Sector Plan is ambitious in its aspirations for an industry where in the future:

- The Scottish finfish aquaculture sector recognises that protecting the environment is fundamental to its success and is foremost in all its plans and operations.
- The sector is a world-leading innovator of ways to minimise the environmental footprint of food production and supply.
- The sector has a strong and positive relationship with neighbouring users of the environment and the communities in which it operates. It is valued nationally for its contribution to achieving global food security.

It is also clear that all operators in the sector will reach and maintain full compliance with Scotland's environmental protection laws, with SEPA working to help as many operators as possible to move beyond compliance.

Whilst SEPA's latest Compliance Assessment Scheme (CAS) data saw overall compliance levels for the sector drop during 2017 to 81.14%, against a relative peak of 85.75% in 2016, the industry is innovating through the use of 'non medicinal farming' using wrasse, a small fish that tackles sea lice, full or partial containment and enhanced fallowing.

Specifically, SEPA's firm, evidence based proposals for a revised regime that will strengthen the regulation of the sector include:

- **A NEW TIGHTER STANDARD FOR THE ORGANIC WASTE DEPOSITED BY FISH FARMS**

Marine cage fish farming across Scotland operates using open-net cages. Fish faeces; any uneaten food; used fish medicines and other chemical treatments escape from these cages into the marine environment. The heavier, organic particles (the fish faeces and uneaten food) together with any medicines sticking to them are deposited on the sea floor. Natural biological process then break down and assimilate the material over time.

The tighter standard limits the spatial extent of the mixing zone around farms. The controls we will apply to these mixing zones will bring them into equivalence with modern practice on mixing zones for other waste effluent discharges into the sea, including those from urban waste water.

- **MORE POWERFUL MODELLING USING THE BEST AVAILABLE SCIENCE**

The new regulatory framework will use new, more accurate computer modelling approaches that will improve our understanding of the risk to the local environment and allow assessment of the larger-scale impacts including interactions with other farms.

The science about fish farming is very complex and these new approaches will bring the aquaculture sector up to date with the modelling practices which are being used for other industrial sectors where there is a longer history of operation and analysis.

- **ENHANCED ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING & NEW ENFORCEMENT UNIT**

Operators will be required to invest in more accurate monitoring, including of waste coming from fish farms. The creation of a new enforcement unit will strengthen the checking and verifying of monitoring that fish farm operators are required to undertake. SEPA will also increase and strengthen monitoring of the impact of fish farms in surrounding areas.

- **NEW INTERIM APPROACH FOR CONTROLLING THE USE OF EMAMECTIN BENZOATE**

SEPA has asked the UK Technical Advisory Group (UK TAG), a partnership of the UK environment and conservation agencies, to make recommendations on new environmental standards for Emamectin Benzoate to the Scottish Government. UK TAG was established by the governments of the different parts of the UK to oversee the scientific process of developing the environmental standards used across the UK for protecting the water environment.

UK TAG is in the process of developing its recommendations. This includes obtaining and considering independent scientific peer reviews of the evidence. After UK TAG makes its recommendations to the Scottish Government, Scottish Government will consult on draft directions on the establishment of new environmental standards.

While this UK TAG work continues, SEPA will adopt a precautionary principle position which imposes a much tighter interim standard for the use of Emamectin Benzoate at any new site. This is based on the now substantial weight of scientific evidence that the existing standards do not adequately protect marine life. This interim standard will set a limit so low that it will, effectively, mean Emamectin Benzoate can only be discharged in very

limited quantities at any new site.

- **NEW APPROACH TO SUSTAINABLE SITING OF FARMS**

The combination of the new standard, the more accurate model and enhanced monitoring will allow the siting of farms in the most appropriate areas where the environment can assimilate wastes. It will also allow SEPA to better match biomass to the capacity available in the environment and continue to assess that through the operation of the site. This may allow for the approval of larger farms than would have been traditionally approved previously, provided they are appropriately sited in sustainable locations.

Overall, the proposals will combine to encourage operators to site and operate their fish farms in environmentally less sensitive waters and use improved practices and technologies to reduce environmental impact.

In practice, we anticipate this will lead to fewer fish farms in shallower, slow-flowing waters and more fish farms in deeper and faster-flowing waters. We also anticipate it will encourage the adoption of new technologies such as partial and full containment to capture organic waste and any remaining medical residues. SEPA has seen some industry operators successfully developing new approaches such as non-chemical ways of managing fish health. Our new regime will support these encouraging developments.

As one of a number of organisations regulating finfish aquaculture, SEPA believes its proposals have the potential to significantly improve in the environmental performance of the industry.

Recognising the diverse range of views of finfish aquaculture, SEPA is keen to hear directly from individuals, interest groups, NGOs, communities, companies and others with a view on the regulatory proposals.

As part of a seven-week public consultation, SEPA will embark on one of its most significant public engagement programmes to date. SEPA will host a series of nine events across Scotland during November and December where people can find out more, talk directly with specialist teams and provide direct feedback as we strengthen our regulatory approach.

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 stridently oppose its existence.
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> “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 sixteen months we’ve done more science, more analysis and more listening than ever before. Whilst we’re seeing innovation in the sector, we’ve concluded that Scottish salmon farm medicine is significantly impacting local marine environments which increases the now substantial weight of scientific evidence that the existing approaches do not adequately protect marine life.
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Sector Plans

SEPA is changing today, creating a world-class environment protection agency fit for the challenges of tomorrow. By moving away from the traditional site by site regulation to grounding our regulation and activities across whole sectors, we will shape our interactions with every sector and the businesses in them.

Sector plans will be at the heart of everything we do and will help regulated businesses operate successfully within the means of one planet. In every sector we regulate, we will have two simple aims.

We will ensure that:

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Fife farmer fined for slurry pollution in Bluther Burn

05 November 2018

A Dunfermline farmer was fined £500 at Dunfermline Sheriff Court on 1 November 2018 following a three day trial for his involvement in a slurry spreading operation that resulted in pollution of the Bluther Burn near Saline.

James Gemmell Cousar was found guilty of causing and permitting a contractor to spread slurry without adequate instruction, supervision or training. As a result of the spreading a number of fish and invertebrates were killed along a five kilometre stretch of the Bluther Burn. The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) investigated the circumstances leading up to the pollution, and submitted a report to the Procurator Fiscal.

SEPA received notification of the pollution through an anonymous complaint that the burn was running a green-brown colour. On attending the site SEPA officers discovered that the water was cloudy and brown and smelt of slurry.

During their investigations SEPA identified that the contractor had been told to carry out the spreading with only very basic instruction. The slurry, which was spread as an organic fertiliser, was applied in excess on wet, boggy fields near to a watercourse and in unsuitable wet weather conditions.

Approximately 400,000 gallons (1.8 million litres) had been spread over three days on an area covering 40 acres (16 hectares) at a rate that was too fast. This was in excess of the recommended amounts in James Cousar's own farm waste management plan.

The pollution incident resulted in a high number of dead invertebrates, including freshwater shrimps, beetles, snails, worms, and fly larvae and two young trout being found as far as five kilometres downstream of the discharge point.

Callum Waddell, SEPA's reporting officer, said:

"Every day SEPA works to protect and enhance Scotland's environment, and we are clear that environmental compliance is non-negotiable. There is no reason for this incident to have happened. The spreading of slurry is heavily regulated and the amount of farm slurry spread during inappropriate conditions would never be allowed. We will always take enforcement action in line with our enforcement policy against those who show disregard for the regulations, and we are pleased that James Cousar has been held to account of this."

Ends

Notes to Editor

The exact charge James Gemmell Cousar was found guilty of was:

Between 7 October 2016 and 12 October 2016, both dates inclusive, at Lynn Farm, Steelend, Dunfermline you James Gemmell Cousar did carry on and you James Gemmell Cousar did cause or permit Alexander Forbes Winchester, a Contractor, to carry on a controlled activity, namely an activity liable to cause pollution of the water environment in that you did instruct, said Alexander Winchester, a newly appointed farm hand, to carry out a spreading activity, namely spreading of slurry on fields, without adequate supervision or training and as a consequence a quantity of slurry was spread inappropriately which did discharge into the water environment, namely the Bluther Burn at National Grid Reference NT 0630 9195 and this did cause pollution of said watercourse and did adversely affect the invertebrate and fish populations up to 5 kilometres from the discharge point and did cause the deaths of fish and invertebrates without the authority of an authorisation under the aftermentioned Regulations; CONTRARY to the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2011 Regulation 4 and 44(1)(a) and the Water Environment and Water Services (Scotland) Act 2003 Section 20(3)(a)

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