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## CONSERVATION

### SEA EAGLES

The *BBC Scotland* website reported that a pair of sea eagles, both four years old, have successfully raised a male chick in a Forestry Commission (FC) Scotland wood in Fife. It is the first time that the white-tailed sea eagle has bred in the east of the country for almost 200 years.

85 birds, taken from nests in Norway, were released in Fife between 2007 and 2012 [Aug 12]. The east coast reintroduction was the third phase of a national reintroduction project that started back in 1975 on the west coast of Scotland, after the species became extinct in 1918.

The Raptor Persecution Scotland blog reported that at least 24 of those 85 birds didn't survive; the cause of death included poisoning, being shot, accidentally electrocuted or hit by trains.

The east coast reintroduction project is run by RSPB Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and FC Scotland. Funding has been provided from the RSPB, SNH, the Heritage Lottery Fund and the Fife & Rural Tayside Leader programme.

RSPB Scotland has asked members of the public to email reports of any white-tailed eagle sightings on the east coast: [eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk](mailto:eastscotlandseaeagles@rspb.org.uk)

### CORN BUNTING

The *BBC News* website reported that RSPB Scotland said that no corn buntings were heard on Barra or Vatersay in the Outer Hebrides for the first year since monitoring began [Sep 12]. One territorial male has been spotted on Benbecula. RSPB Scotland said that parts of the Uists were now the last strongholds of the buntings in the Western Isles.

### KNAPDALE BEAVERS

Five young beavers (kits) have been spotted at the Scottish beaver trial site at Knapdale in Argyll [Apr 13]. Beavers have bred at Knapdale every year since the trial started in 2009.

The trial, which is a partnership between Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and FC Scotland, will end in May next year, followed by a period to assess the impact of the beavers' return on the environment and economy.

See: [www.scottishbeavers.org.uk](http://www.scottishbeavers.org.uk)

### RED DEER

The *BBC News* website reported that red deer on the island of Rum are breeding earlier each year, thought to be as a result of climate change and the availability of improved grazing for the animals.

Professor Josephine Pemberton, of Edinburgh University, said: "We've found that several timing events have got a lot earlier, for example the calving dates have come forward by about 12 days. The rutting dates also come forward too, which is consistent with that, but also the antler casting and cleaning dates have come forward. There may be an effect on actual antler size, because they're very sensitive to the grazing conditions in the year when they're being grown. We do, indeed, find that after you adjust for the age of the stag, the antlers are getting bigger."

The red deer population on Rum has been studied since 1953; climate change research is based on data gathered since 1980.

## GOLDEN EAGLES

The *BBC News* website reported that the Highland Foundation for Wildlife (HFW), SNH, Natural Research and the RSPB attached satellite transmitters to young golden eagles in both Galloway and Strathspey in July 2010. Two young, tracked females laid eggs this year, at just three years old, having mated with older males in the Scottish Borders and Aberdeenshire.

Roy Dennis, of HFW, said: "This is very exciting, as it is the first proof in Scotland that golden eagles can breed at three years. It shows that when they live in areas with plenty of food and little competition, golden eagles can breed at three years old. Unfortunately, the eggs did not hatch but that is not surprising for such young individuals."

Professor Des Thompson of SNH said that the areas where the birds had bred had both been identified as having several unoccupied territories. He also said that previous research had pointed to a link between persecution and younger golden eagles managing to secure territories and attempting to breed. He said: "The shortage of older females may explain why such young birds have managed to breed. Provided the right conditions now prevail – persecution free, good availability of prey, good weather, and appropriate habitat – then we hope that these birds will attempt to nest again next year and young will fledge. This would signal the start of an upturn of the fortune of golden eagles in these areas."

However, the Raptor Persecution Scotland blog reported that, according to several scientific studies, the occurrence of breeding sub-adult eagles should actually be used as an early-warning of potential population decline. The reason these Scottish golden eagles are attempting to breed at three years of age is because there is little or no competition for that vacant territory. This is because one or both of the territorial adults have been killed and there are very few non-breeding adults around to challenge for the territory. If the population was healthy, it would be these breeding-age 'floaters' that would move in to the territory, not an immature three-year old bird.

Whitfield *et al* also demonstrated that sub-adult and mixed-age breeding golden eagle pairs in Scotland have lower breeding success than adult pairs. This is a result of inexperience and persecution, as most golden eagle territories in Scotland with sub-adult breeders are in areas associated with illegal persecution.

See: Whitfield D.P. *et al* (2004). The Effects of Persecution on Age of Breeding and Territory Occupation in Golden Eagles in Scotland. *Biological Conservation* 118; pp 249–259

### ST KILDA SEABIRDS

The *BBC News* website reported that the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) said that the seabirds on St Kilda had a moderately successful breeding season this year. The island group has about 136,000 puffins.

Gina Prior of NTS said: "Our monitoring has found that the breeding success for puffins was at a similar level to last year with about 45% of breeding pairs raising chicks. We'd be looking for around 70% of nests to produce a chick ideally. If the current levels continue for the long term,

then the population of the colony could start to decline as the number of chicks just won't replace the adults who are dying off."

Two Leach's storm petrels, which have been in decline on the islands since the late 1990s, have raised chicks for the first time in nest boxes.

- A pair of swallows raised three chicks on the main island of Hirta. A nest was established in a garage used by defence contractor, Qinetiq, who agreed to leave the doors open for the duration of the breeding season. Swallows are regular summer visitors to St Kilda, but this is the first year that they have successfully raised young.

#### CAPERCAILLIE

The *BBC News* website reported that a significant increase in capercaillie has been monitored on the Rothiemurchus estate near Aviemore. Rothiemurchus is one of the main sites for breeding for capercaillie; 80% of the UK population of the rare birds is located in the surrounding Badenoch & Strathspey area. The *Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that the Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust completed the annual count, and found a hen to chick ratio of almost 1:4, a much better breeding success than in recent years.

The increase is credited to responsible behaviour by visitors, together with work with SNH to provide a safe environment for the birds. Steady increases in overall numbers have been achieved with a much better breeding success this year than in previous years.

#### BEEES

The *Herald* reported that the rare leafcutter bee has been discovered in the Cairngorms National Park for the first time, on the Mossie near Grantown-on-Spey.

The *Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that blaeberry bumble bees have been reported on sites proposed for housing in Carrbridge, Nethy Bridge, Grantown and near Aviemore. A common *colletes*, a rare solitary bee, has been discovered in Abernethy on Speyside.

#### SPECKLED WOOD

The *Herald* reported that the speckled wood butterfly has spread rapidly north from England into the Borders and Lothians, and south from the Moray Firth. It had previously survived in warmer refuges around the Moray Firth and the west coast but most of the country, including the central belt, was too cold for the species.

Paul Kirkland, of Butterfly Conservation Scotland, said: "We thought that the speckled wood might take ten years to become established in the central belt, but at this rate it will happen in the next couple of years."



## FARMING

#### WILD GOOSE

The *Herald* reported that a trial by Scottish Natural Heritage, the Orkney Resident Greylag Goose Adaptive Management Pilot, is to allow wild goose to be sold by licensed sellers [Jul 13]. The resident greylag geese population has been expanding rapidly, and causes agricultural damage. It is hoped that the trial will encourage sustainable use of the geese, while generating income for locals and minimising agricultural issues. The meat will be on sale until July 2014. Licence controls will ensure that the introduction of the sale of wild geese will not drive up the number of geese shot to unsustainable levels.

The sale of wild goose meat is normally prohibited under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

#### HONEYBEES

The *BBC News* website reported that a survey by Strathclyde University for the Scottish Beekeepers Association (SBA) found that more than 30% of managed honeybee colonies failed to survive the winter [Jun 13]. Some 156 colonies out of the 498 taking part in the survey were lost, almost double the rate of loss for the previous year. The high loss rate could have an effect on crop pollination, agricultural yields and food prices.

Scotland is amongst the highest loss rates in Europe this year, while similarly high losses have been reported recently from England and Wales.

300 members of the SBA, which represents most of the country's estimated 1,300 beekeepers, were polled.

Data on wild honey bees was also collected. 11 out of 20 wild honeybee colonies, known to be alive last September, and reported on this spring, have now died. This survival rate, 45%, is the worst amongst feral colonies since monitoring began five years ago.

Bees face many challenges including habitat loss, reduction in the variety of forage sources, the spread of pests and the possible adverse effects of pesticides. Poor weather conditions are a particular problem in Scotland, with severe winters followed by long, cold, wet springs, especially if it comes after a wet summer.

- American Foulbrood (AFB) was discovered in an apiary in Strathglass, north of Inverness.

AFB has also been found in an apiary near Turriff in Aberdeenshire. Outbreaks of AFB have previously been reported and dealt with in this area over recent years.

The infected hives have been destroyed; there is no permitted treatment for the disease in the UK. There are no risks to public health from AFB and no implications for the quality and safety of honey. The movement of bees and related equipment into or out of the affected apiary are under specific controls.

Beekeepers are asked to be vigilant for signs of the disease particularly if they had recently been sharing an apiary. The bees affected in Turriff had recently been foraging on oil seed rape in an apiary which was shared by several other beekeepers. All beekeepers are asked to maintain good husbandry practices and to notify any suspicion of disease to: [BeesMailbox@scotland.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:BeesMailbox@scotland.gsi.gov.uk)

Outbreaks of AFB have previously been reported in Stranraer and in Perth [Jul 13].

BeeBase, the national bee database, has up-to-date information on the control of AFB and bee related issues.

See: <https://secure.fera.defra.gov.uk/beebase/public/register.cfm>



## WOODLANDS

#### WOODLAND STATISTICS

*Forestry & Timber News* reported that the latest national statistics (provisional) have been released for the year until March 2013. The area of woodland in Scotland is 18% of the total land area.

See: [www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/statistics)

- Paul Wheelhouse, the minister for environment & climatic change, and Fergus Ewing, minister for energy, enterprise & tourism have re-committed themselves to achieving targets for new planting and to support Confor's efforts to promote a more accurate understanding of the economic, environmental and social benefits of commercial forestry.

The Scottish Government is committed to achieving 100,000 hectares of new planting by 2022, with a 60:40 split in favour of commercial softwood. Mr Wheelhouse told the sector to 'keep planting and do not be put off by the latest Common Agricultural Policy reforms.'

#### RAASAY WOODLAND

The Raasay Development Partnership has applied to the National Forest Land Scheme, administered by Forestry Commission (FC) Scotland, to purchase 711 acres of Forestry Commission woodland on the island. The community's plans include creating woodland crofts, developing a micro hydro scheme and a wood fuel business.

See: [www.forestry.gov.uk/nfls](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/nfls)

#### COMMUNITY PRACTICE

FC Scotland has set up a health check study to look at what has been achieved over the past ten years and to identify and build on good practice to help focus resources to deliver maximum benefit in future. Local communities will be helped to develop ideas and projects that will deliver social, environmental and economic benefits.

The group carrying out the study will be chaired by Ian Ross, former chair of the Forest for People Advisory Panel, which carried out the last review of community practice in 2005. The study group will report in spring 2014.

Contact: email: [craig.millar@forestry.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:craig.millar@forestry.gsi.gov.uk); telephone: Lochaber District office, 01397 702184

#### PHYTOPHTHORA RAMORUM

The *Galloway News* reported that FC Scotland surveys have now established that *Phytophthora ramorum* is widespread in larch trees in Galloway Forest Park [Jun 13]. Larch accounts for only a small percentage of trees in the park, and 7% of Dumfries & Galloway's trees overall.



## FISHFARMING & FISHERIES

### LOCH ETIVE FISHFARM

The *Herald* reported that Dawnfresh Farming Limited has reapplied to Argyll & Bute Council for planning permission for a new rainbow trout farm on a former mussel farm site in Loch Etive, north-east of Oban [Dec 12].

The Salmon & Trout Association Scotland (S&TAS) says that the proposed fishfarm will pose an unacceptable additional threat to the integrity of the River Awe. The S&TAS has raised concerns this will lead to a greater chance of farmed trout escaping into the wild.

Hughie Campbell Adamson, chairman of S&TAS, said: "The rainbow trout farms in Loch Etive have a poor record for containing their stock. There have been numerous escapes in the past. These large and voracious alien trout run up the River Awe where inevitably they eat the juvenile salmon, thus severely depleting the stocks of the native fish."

There is a genuine risk that should this predation not just continue but increase we shall see the further demise of one of Scotland's great salmon rivers."

The S&TAS believes that the farm would threaten Loch Etive's wildlife, wild fisheries, loch recreation, tourism and tourist businesses, all for the benefit of just one private company and at the expense of the local community

The *ForArgyll* website reported that the Dawnfresh application runs contrary to the Loch Etive Coastal Zone Management Plan.

### SEA-LICE

The *BBC News* website reported that Hughie Campbell Adamson, of S&TAS, has demanded that the Scottish Salmon Producers' Organisation (SSPO) retract a statement made by its chairman, Professor Phil Thomas dismissing the impact of sea lice on wild salmon. A study published in *Agricultural Sciences* by Ireland's Marine Institute justified the salmon fishing industry's stance that a mere 1%-2% of wild salmon deaths are due to sea-lice.

A critique of the article, led by Martin Krkosek and published in the *Journal of Fish Diseases*, argues that the Marine Institute's work has 'fundamental errors' and the new interpretation of the research claims there are 'grave mistakes in measuring control and treatment groups, leading to wide inaccuracies.'

A fresh examination of the original data shows that the impact of sea-lice on wild salmon causes a far higher loss (34%) of those returning to Irish rivers than the 1% loss that was calculated in the original paper.

Dr Krkosek said that the purpose of the research was not to downplay other factors involved, but to highlight that parasites can and do have a large effect on the conservation of wild salmon stocks.

Mr Campbell Adamson said: "In light of what has now been clarified by Krkosek and his fellow experts in this field, one would hope that the SSPO, if it is to retain any credibility as the representative trade body for the salmon farming industry in Scotland, will have the integrity to withdraw formally the press release it issued in February in which the SSPO chairman, Professor Phil Thomas, made his inflammatory and ill-considered statement.

"It is now clear that the paper the SSPO and Professor Thomas relied on to justify their position is simply a travesty and, indeed, given

the flaws which have now been exposed, should never have been published."

Scott Landsburgh, of SSPO said: "We stand by our position and we, like they, are entitled to our opinion."

Dr Krkosek calculated that 39% of wild salmon deaths were down to sea-lice and these figures were rigorously challenged by salmon farmers.

Professor Christopher Todd, of the Scottish Oceans Institute at St Andrews and involved in the study, said: "The salmon aquaculture industry has long placed a high priority on controlling sea-lice in their captive salmon but these results do emphasise the need for the industry to not only maintain the health of their own stocks, but also to minimise the risk of cross-infection of wild fish."

### BLUE-GREEN ALGAE

Raised levels of naturally occurring algal toxins have been found at Loch Striven, Argyll & Bute. Commercial shellfish harvesters have been contacted by the council and harvesting postponed until algae levels subside.

- Monitoring work undertaken by Argyll & Bute Council has identified that there is a risk of elevated levels of bacteria in cockles from Campbeltown Loch at Kildalloig Bay. Cockles from this area should not be collected or consumed and cannot be placed onto the market until 30 September.

- Raised levels of shellfish toxins have been identified on Seilbost Sands on Harris. Commercial shellfish harvesting in the area has been postponed.

### MACKEREL & HERRING QUOTAS

The *BBC News* website reported that Sigmundur David Gunnlaugsson, the Prime Minister of Iceland, accused the European Union of an 'ongoing campaign of threats' in breach of international maritime law over the issue of fish quotas, in particular the obligation on coastal states jointly to agree on measures to protect and develop shared fish stocks [Jul 13]. The EU wants to bring forward sanctions against Iceland. Mr Gunnlaugsson demanded that the EU withdraws the threats and allows a peaceful settlement to be found under 'free negotiations.'

The *Herald* reported that the Faroese government had requested an international tribunal to declare the EU in breach of its obligations under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. It asked for EU authorities to be 'ordered to refrain from the threat or adoption of coercive economic measures on the Faroe Islands.' The Faroe Islands said that the EU rules do not give it a sufficient share of herring and that a higher quota is justified by an increase in the number of herring in its waters.

Both Iceland and the Faroe Islands say only multilateral negotiations can agree management of the herring stock.

EU trade sanctions against the Faroe Islands have now been introduced. The sanctions mean European countries are banned from importing herring landed by the Faroese, who have only ten boats in the pelagic fleet compared with 29 in the UK.

The Prime Minister of the Faroes, Kaj Leo Johannesen, who has a business background in fish exports, accused the EU of taking steps only to protect its interests. He said: "The mackerel and the herring is in huge quantities much more into our area and that is what we are reacting on, that we own a bigger part of this stock ... It is short-sighted and ill-considered of the EU to take such an unjustifiable step against one of its nearest European neighbours and partners."

He said that the migration patterns of herring

are changing, that they are eating more food in Faroese waters and that is damaging other stocks. He said: "It's not the guy who is fishing 5% who is destroying the stock, it is the guy who is fishing 95%. But we hope we will have a negotiated solution."

John Wallace, of Peterhead Port Authority, said: "The pelagic stocks of mackerel and herring are in a sustainable condition because of the good husbandry carried out over many years by the EU and Norway as primary custodians. There has been a price to pay for these prized stocks and the condition they presently enjoy, which Faroe played only a very small part in.

"What is galling and offensive about this matter, is that I believe the Faroese traded away some of the pelagic quota they took for other species with Russia, even bringing in outside processors to handle product they themselves could not handle. If this had been built up gradually and responsibly with EU and Norwegian agreement and participation, we would not be where we are today.

"These sanctions have been a long time in coming into effect but have not been knee-jerk and are robustly thought through. At the end of the day, this has come down to a behavioural problem and the EU must now do all it can to ensure that Faroe and Iceland's actions are proportionately dealt with, before normal service and relations can be resumed."



## MARINE

### LERWICK SINKING

A fishing boat, *Prospect*, sank in Lerwick Harbour on Shetland, carrying 22,000 litres of fuel. Wildlife tour operators in the area were concerned for breeding birds and common seals in the vicinity.

### MARINE LITTER

Keep Scotland Beautiful, the Marine Conservation Society and The Scottish Seabird Centre have launched a joint campaign, Clean Up Scotland. It aims to rid the coastline of litter which can be responsible for the death and distress of seabirds and marine wildlife.

### INNER HEBRIDES SEWAGE

The *Herald* reported that Alan Reid MP has written to the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) concerning raw sewage on the beach at Baile Mor on the island of Iona in Argyll. SEPA said that six areas, including Baile Mor and Scartnish on Tiree, have been highlighted as priority cases for action in a review of 200 communities with private sewage discharge and no sewage treatment systems. SEPA called on the Scottish Government to allocate £12m to Scottish Water to link the communities with the public sewage systems. Other blackspots are Edinburgh Road, Linlithgow; Easter Quarff, Shetland; Newtonnill, Wick and Pierowall, Westray.

### BASKING SHARKS

27 basking sharks have been tagged in the second year of a project to find out more about their life cycle [Jul 13]. The work, which uses small tags attached to the sharks to track their movements, was carried out around the islands of Tiree and Coll by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and the University of Exeter. The movements of 15 of the sharks can be followed live online. So far most have stayed around the Inner Hebrides, one has ventured to the Outer Hebrides and back again, and two headed to the north coast of Ireland.

Dr Suzanne Henderson from SNH, said: "[The sharks] were slightly later to appear than in 2012;

this may be due to the availability of plankton, which they feed on. However we're delighted to have successfully tagged all 27 and now we're looking forward to seeing where they go over the next few months. Although we know a lot about basking shark biology and worldwide distribution, surprisingly little is known about their seasonal movements. The information we get from these tags will add to the results from the work we did in 2012, helping us build up a picture of the sharks' behaviour throughout the year."

Anyone finding a tag around the shores of the UK should telephone: 0300 244 9360; email: [baskingsharks@snh.gov.uk](mailto:baskingsharks@snh.gov.uk)

See: [www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/species/fish/sea-fish/shark-tagging-project/](http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/species/fish/sea-fish/shark-tagging-project/)



## POLITICS & PARLIAMENT

### CAPE WRATH

*The Sunday Herald* reported that the Ministry of Defence (MoD) plans to expand the military bombing range at Cape Wrath in Sutherland, despite announcing that it had decided not to proceed with the purchase of land around the lighthouse [May 13]. A private MoD memo makes clear that the Royal Navy is still interested in buying the land; one recent email notes that the MoD may have to persuade the Scottish Government that the purchase is necessary 'on grounds of national security needs.'

Richard Lochhead, the environment minister, said: "It's beyond belief that the MoD think that the local community becoming owners of the land at Cape Wrath is a threat to national security. Perhaps they might like to explain if it is tourists enjoying the views, locals having tea and cakes in the café, or walkers completing the Scottish National Trail that pose the greatest threat."

More than 300 pages of documents released by the MoD under freedom of information law show that extending the MoD's 9,000 hectare bombing range at Cape Wrath is seen as 'critical for future military operations.' The range is used twice a year for NATO Joint Warrior exercises on land and at sea, and is the largest live-firing range in Europe. Access is presently restricted for up to 120 days a year during military exercises.

In 2011 the Northern Lighthouse Board offered to sell the MoD more than 40 hectares at the northwest tip of the range. The MoD was anxious to prevent 'a hostile neighbour owning the land which could see future military exercises being interrupted' as well as extending the firing range. However, the navy and the MoD's property division disagreed over costs and there was public protest when the MoD said that, if it bought the land, access by the local community would be precluded.

When the MoD publicly withdrew its bid in May, it was widely praised. However, an internal memo from Navy Command expressed concern about potential issues from the proposed community buyout, and said that it would be interested if the MoD property division decided to support further development of the range area.

The Scottish Government approved the local community bid to buy the land, giving it five years to raise enough money [Jun 13].

Dave Morris of Ramblers' Scotland said: "These latest revelations, will send alarm bells ringing throughout the outdoor recreation movement."

Durness Development Group promised that it would not be a 'hostile neighbour.' Kevin Arrowsmith, the local development officer, said that the MoD would be 'unacceptably heavy-handed' if it attempted to exercise powers of compulsory purchase.

### DEER MANAGEMENT

*The Herald* reported that Holyrood's Rural Affairs, Climate Change & Environment committee is to consider bringing Deer Management Groups (DMGs) under parliamentary control. More than 60 DMGs have been set up voluntarily over the past 30 years. They provide opportunities for land managers and other bodies to collaborate on issues surrounding the animals, although Scottish Natural Heritage has ultimate legal responsibility for deer. DMGs are sometimes seen to act in their own interests, trying to restrict the shooting of deer to sport only, and often opposing controversial culls. The committee believes that growing deer numbers damage vital environmental work such as the restoration of native tree species.

The committee convenor, Rob Gibson MSP, cited the example of the John Muir Trust proposing a red deer cull for its 9,000 acre Quinag estate in north west Sutherland last year [Oct 12]. This was because the balance in the local habitat was found to be badly skewed towards deer numbers and against the regeneration of native woods. However, it was opposed by the local DMG, which had backed the traditional approach in Quinag of 'deer stalking first with the environment trailing behind.' Mr Gibson argued that this happens across Scotland.

He said: "Open hostility, personal threats and conflict were reported between supporters of traditional deer stalking and environmental workers for the poor state of the Special Area of Conservation (SAC) at Ardvar and Loch a'Mhuillinn on the southern shores of Eddrachillis Bay. I saw how current practices in deer management are failing the biodiversity of the area. I saw the SAC, a European environmental designation in poor condition. [DMGs] are not statutory, nor is their code of good practice for deer management. The group meetings are rarely if ever held in public. Opinions other than those in support of traditional elite deer stalking are unwelcome. I believe it is time to bring DMGs under statute and make the Code of Good Practice for Deer Management a legal entity. I consider the biodiversity of the nation is threatened without a fundamental change."

He contrasted DMGs to district salmon fisheries boards, which had been subject to Acts of Parliament since the 1860s and are about to be made more accountable by the Scottish Government.

Richard Cooke, of the Association of Deer Management Groups, said that the association acknowledged the equal legitimacy of all management objectives and frequently emphasised the necessity of open communication and compromise. Conflict resolution was increasingly important. He said: "At present that process takes place under the voluntary principle and generally works well. The regulatory approach to deer management groups proposed by Mr Gibson would not obviate the difficulties of reconciling ecological, economic and social objectives."

Duncan Orr-Ewing, of RSPB Scotland, said that the charity had long supported a statutory system for deer management to better balance the public and private interests.

Alex Hogg of the SGA said: "While this may have been a laudable imperative on John Muir Trust ground, their refusal to entertain fencing, to properly consult with their neighbours and to

discuss alternatives, meant their laudable imperative then became a major problem for everyone else and was clearly going to have a negative socio-economic affect, putting jobs at risk. This one area, however, is not wholly representative of the situation across Scotland where the voluntary deer management system is operating well and, in recent years, has been working better thanks to greater co-operative working with SNH."

He said that sporting activities, including deer stalking, brought major economic value to Scotland, as well as preserving employment and opportunities in areas where there would otherwise be greater migration without a healthy industry. One of the problems in introducing a statutory system, for example, was that it would be very difficult for the public purse to be able to match private investment.

Putting the DMGs under statutory control would mean 'taking decisions away from the people who have the requisite knowledge to make them and placing them in the hands of those they deem to have less. It is hard to justify.' He said: "What you could end up with is the worst of both worlds. An unpopular, inflexible system operating at high cost to the public purse which doesn't solve the problem it was set up to address."

Dr Maggie Keegan, of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, said: "We support Rob Gibson's stance. In some areas of Scotland, deer numbers are managed at levels which are not in balance with the natural environment and the damage caused through overgrazing and trampling pressure is causing severe damage to some of Scotland's internationally important protected sites and landscapes. There is also a cost to the taxpayer because erecting deer fencing to keep deer out of protected sites and woodlands is expensive. In the past 10 years alone over £20 million has been spent from the public purse on deer fencing across Scotland."



## GENERAL ENVIRONMENT

### GIANT HOGWEED

Stirling Council rangers are conducting a survey of the giant hogweed along the Allan Water between Greenloaning and the River Forth. This survey repeats one completed in 1984; the aim is compare the results to see how much the hogweed has spread in nearly 30 years.

### PLANNING REFORM

The Scottish Wild Land Group (SWLG) has responded to the Scottish Government's consultations on the draft National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy [Jul 13]. The SWLG believes that both documents are far too biased in favour of industrial windfarm developments and offer very little meaningful protection to sensitive environments or wild land. Both will favour short-term financial gain by large companies and landowners while disempowering local communities and undermining Scotland's long-term economic and environmental prospects. The main points in SWLG responses are:

- That the government's 'overall purpose' of achieving sustainable economic growth is poorly defined and, in practice, means that short-term economic benefits will be prioritised over longer term economic, environmental and social factors.
- That it is inappropriate for planning policy to be used to achieve one set of policy targets (the expansion of renewable energy developments) when its role should be to balance competing interests and requirements for land use.
- We support the proposed protection of National Parks and National Scenic Areas from windfarm

developments, but believe that this protection should include any large industrial developments, and that it should extend to 'core areas' of wild land and incorporate buffer zones around sensitive landscapes. Local and regional designations should also be better respected.

- That a coherent strategy for renewable energy developments is urgently needed, to end the overloading of the planning system by speculative proposals.

- That peat lands represent a priceless environmental resource and carbon store, and should have stronger protection.

- That establishing a National Ecological Network to link protected and semi-natural areas would bring considerable benefits, not least in terms of mitigating the effects of climate change, and should be a priority.

- That the conditions for allowing damaging developments in protected areas should be clearer, and should not include subjective terms such as 'substantially', 'significantly' or 'satisfactorily', which are very hard to interpret in practice.

## CAIRNGORMS PARK HOMES

The *Herald* reported that a campaign coalition (the Invertebrate Conservation Trust, the Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group (BSCG), the Cairngorms Campaign and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks) is to take its case to the UK Supreme Court to challenge the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)'s plans for almost 2,000 new homes in the National Park [Jul 13]. After two defeats at the Court of Session, campaigners are continuing to challenge the local plan, which would allow large scale housing developments. The coalition argues that the developments were a threat to wildlife and ecology protected by the European Habitats Directive.

The *Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that a BSCG spokesman said: "We consider that impacts on natural heritage should be identified at the earliest opportunity rather than left to near the end of the planning process when realistically, in practice, it is too late. Important conservation goals cannot be delivered without giving them the priority they deserve. The Cairngorms National Park supports key populations of some of Scotland's most threatened and valued wildlife and their conservation needs should be fully taken on board from the start of the planning process."

The outcome of the Supreme Court decision could follow as late as 2015. An application has been made to cap costs but the CNPA is making an objection against the protective expenses order.

The CNPA reconsidered the permission it gave in principle in 2010 for An Camas Mòr, in the light of new environmental information emerging from the legal challenges and elsewhere and 'a number of material changes in the policy context.' However, the CNPA planning committee granted permission in principle, for the second time, saying that there was a need for new housing in the National Park.

## FINDHORN RADIOACTIVITY

The *BBC News* website reported that sand dunes at Findhorn in Moray are being tested for radioactivity. The site, near the former RAF Kinloss base which was closed in 2012, was identified last year as a potential risk; up to 1,000 contaminated aircraft were dismantled and buried there after the end of World War Two [May 12]. Test pits were examined for radiation contamination by Moray Council's contaminated land unit and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency. It is believed that chemical ordnance

containing sulphur mustard or mustard gas may also have been buried.

The site is one of nine across Scotland being analysed as part of a probe into radioactive contamination at Ministry of Defence (MoD) sites.

Environmental reports prepared for the MoD showed authorities have been aware of 'potential human health and environmental risks' at Kinloss since 2004.

## WATER POLLUTION

Cyanobacteria (blue-green algae) has been discovered at Loch Eck in Argyll & Bute, following the death of two dogs who had been swimming in the loch.

Members of the public are advised to not swim in the loch or use it for activities like canoeing or water skiing until the problem subsides.

- Water sports were suspended at James Hamilton Heritage Park in East Kilbride after a routine inspection of the loch detected blue-green algae. South Lanarkshire Leisure and Culture said the action was a precautionary measure.

- Grahams Dairies Ltd was fined £3,200 at Stirling Sheriff Court for allowing trade effluent to enter Beacon Burn, which then enters Forglenn Burn. The burn ran white with the discharge of milk washings.

## RED GROUSE

The Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust (GWCT) has published results of a 20 year research project which monitored radio-tagged red grouse hens in Strathspey in the Cairngorms. GWCT said the research suggested that the dates when eggs were laid have advanced by 0.5 days per year.

Rising April temperatures have been a major influence on egg laying. Warmer springs provide more plant food for the hens to get into good condition for breeding.

However, higher temperatures in May and August may not favour crane flies, an important food source for the chicks. Grouse numbers were not affected by the temperature range reported in this study, published in *Ibis*.

## PROSECUTION

Two brothers were fined a total of £1,000 at Kirkwall Sheriff Court after being found guilty of killing and taking wild birds from Birsay Moor RSPB reserve in Orkney. Snipe and grouse were shot and killed in the incident.

## BORDERS BUZZARD

The *BBC News* website reported that tests on a buzzard found dead in the Borders have now shown it was both shot and poisoned. The bird was discovered next to a forestry plantation close to Carcant Hill in the Heriot area at the end of June.

## CANAL SLUDGE

Scottish Canals and Strathclyde University are collaborating on a two year project to recycle plant materials and sediment removed from waterways. It may be used after drying and compacting, to make building blocks or used instead of peat or as an ingredient in concrete.

Scottish Canals is to increase dredging by 50% after the first hydrographic survey of canal depths for five years. Around £250,000 per year is currently spent removing up to 4,000 tonnes of material which is taken away for disposal.

## WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) has published a report, *Building an evidence base for managing*

*species conflicts in Scotland*, which looks into wildlife management conflicts. The report findings are based on speaking to stakeholders and looking at existing research.

Examples include sporting estates which may have different management objectives from their neighbours – perhaps wanting to keep deer populations at a high level for hunting, alongside an estate wishing to cull deer to regenerate forests or protect natural sites. Other examples include the reintroduction of sea eagles in areas with crofting interests in sheep rearing, and projects to conserve protected species of geese, with numbers growing and eating farmers' crops.

The report finds that most conflicts are complicated and involve many factors and different viewpoints. The authors assert that it's as much about understanding people as it is about understanding the wildlife, and working with all sides is crucial to find common ground. The report outlines work to help reduce conflict, such as improving the baseline monitoring of certain species and building partnerships between people.

A second phase to this project is being carried out in the coming months. This will see SNH and the University of Aberdeen conducting a number of real-life trials with stakeholders, based on five key conflict areas: sea eagles; fish-eating birds; pine martens and capercaillie; gulls in the urban environment; and mountain hares. These trials will use the findings of the report to look at how to best manage conflicts about how wildlife is managed.

Alastair MacGugan of SNH said: "There may always be conflicts between interest groups; we live in a small country with an increasing number of people, and there are huge social and economic demands as well as wildlife duties and obligations, all of which make any conflict a tricky and delicate process. But this doesn't mean we should shy away from the challenge: in fact, we are already making progress and these trials should give us more tools to work together."

Steve Redpath, of the University of Aberdeen, said: "Much of the scientific research has concentrated on better understanding the ecology behind these wildlife conflicts. There are still ecological questions to be answered but unless we understand how people interact with each other, the biological answers may never be implemented. Bringing a social science approach to wildlife conflict management is relatively new and this next phase of work with SNH will help ground some of the principles in practice."

See: [www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2030](http://www.snh.gov.uk/publications-data-and-research/publications/search-the-catalogue/publication-detail/?id=2030)

## NEW LANARK QUARRY

The *Herald* reported that Save Our Landscapes, set up to oppose proposals by Cemex to extend Hyndford Quarry onto land near New Lanark, has received international backing from visitors to the area [Apr 13]. More than 9,000 local people have also raised objections.

South Lanarkshire Council has received more than 2,000 letters of objection. The plans to extend the quarry are expected to go before the council on 8 October.

20 MSPs have signed a motion for Scotland to protect the Falls of Clyde buffer zone.

James Simpson, of the International Council for Monuments and Sites, has warned that the project risks undermining Scotland's reputation for safeguarding its heritage.

## ST KILDA SHEEP

The *BBC News* website reported that a University of Edinburgh study looked at the size of male Soay sheep horns on St Kilda. A gene was discovered

that controls horn size; rams can grow large, medium or small horns, depending on the genes they inherit from their parents. The research suggests that although large-horned rams win more females, rams with small or medium-sized horns are more likely to live longer.

In addition, sheep with medium-sized horns carry the small-horned gene, and can pass it on to successive generations by mating as successfully as their big-horned cousins, and living relatively long lives.

The research explains how small horns have survived for thousands of years and not been lost, despite the relative mating success of big-horned males. Researchers used more than 20 years' worth of data gathered from the wild flock on St Kilda.

Dr Susan Johnston, of the School of Biological Sciences, said: "Until now, we did not fully understand why small horns had not died out. Although it may appear that larger horns are better, we found that the increased survival of medium-horned rams allowed them to catch up with their big-horned rivals in terms of how many offspring they have. As they are carriers of the small horn gene and have many offspring, this means that small horned rams will continue to turn up in the population."

The study, published in *Nature*, was funded by the Natural Environment Research Council, European Research Council, and Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council.

**BADGERS**

Scottish Badgers reported that 910 badgers have been killed on Highland roads in the past ten years; 615 of these were killed on the A96 alone; more deaths occur in August than at any other time of the year. In 2013 so far, 32 badgers were killed on the A96, many deaths are not reported to Scottish Badgers.

See: [www.scottish-badgers.org.uk](http://www.scottish-badgers.org.uk)

**RED KITE**

The Scottish SPCA is appealing for information after a red kite was found severely injured in South Lanarkshire having been shot near Leadhills. The juvenile female red kite was later euthanased. Contact: telephone: 03000 999 999

• *Blogging Birds* is a collaboration between RSPB Scotland and the University of Aberdeen. Information provided by satellite tags fitted to red kites is being interpreted and transposed by a computer programme and then automatically published in the form of a blog post on the project website. At the moment there are four red kites 'blogging' about their daily and weekly movements with maps showing their movements.

See: <http://redkite.abdn.ac.uk/>

**ENVIRONMENT STATISTICS**

Scotland's chief statistician has published *Key Scottish Environment Statistics 2013*. The publication provides key datasets on the state of the environment in Scotland, with an emphasis on trends over time.

See: [www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/01056](http://www.scotland.gov.uk/stats/bulletins/01056)

**GEOPARKS**

The *West Highland Free Press* reported that the Scottish Government has announced £280,000 of new funding for Scotland's two UNESCO Geoparks in Shetland and the North West Highlands [Dec 11]. The funding means that their international status is secure; UNESCO requires that Geoparks are financially secure in order to remain a member of the European and Global Geoparks Networks. The funding is allocated over two years and is the first that the Geoparks have

received from the Scottish Government. It will allow the Geoparks to develop their educational and tourist potential.

**COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENT**

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has published its Compliance Assessment Scheme figures for 2012. The scheme details how well permitted operators in Scotland have met the conditions of their licences and helps SEPA identify problem areas. It covers operators with Pollution Prevention & Control (PPC) Part A and Part B permits, as well as Waste Management Licenses (WML) and Controlled Activity Regulations (CAR) point source discharges. For the first time under the CAS scheme, sites licensed under the Radioactive Substances Act (RSA) have also been included in the figures for 2012.

The 2012 figures show a further improvement in licence compliance from 2011. The percentage of operators achieving a rating of excellent, good or broadly compliant is 89%, an overall increase of 2% across various regulatory regimes. Of the 3,839 licensed activities assessed in this year's scheme, 2,855 (74%) were rated Excellent, 526 (14%) as Good and 40 (1%) as Broadly Compliant. The remaining were classed At Risk (151 or 4%), Poor (220 or 6%) and Very Poor (47 or 1%).

**SPEY CONSERVATION**

*The Strathspey & Badenoch Herald* reported that the Speyburn whisky company is joining forces with the Spey Foundation in a one year partnership to support conservation work. Obstacles which prevent salmon and sea trout from spawning in the Spey will be removed, and the catchment's natural features restored to improve biodiversity.

• A species of water crowfoot, native only to southern Scotland, has spread along the lower Spey downstream of Grantown from a garden escape some 20 years ago. A member of the buttercup family, it grows in mats on the surface and is now considered to be a significant problem for freshwater pearl mussels, choking out mussel beds and causing sandy deposits to cover the fine stone substrate used by both mussels and salmon. The only viable method of control is hand-pulling.



**ENERGY**

**TRANSMISSION CHARGES**

The *BBC News* website reported that Ofgem has announced plans to cut the charges per unit of electricity for firms generating power in the north of Scotland and linking to the National Grid [Jun 13].

Ofgem says that the costs of connecting islands to the grid will fall too, although not to the same level as the mainland because of the cost of subsea links.

Ofgem's indicative modelling suggests that mainland network charges for wind generation in the north of Scotland would reduce by about 50%, from £25/kW to £12.21. Island renewable generation would also benefit.

Ofgem said that the proposal would narrow the difference in generation tariffs between the north and south of Britain. Tariffs in the north will decrease whilst tariffs in the south will increase relative to the *status quo*.

Scottish Renewables said that the proposals were a positive step forward for renewable projects on the Scottish mainland, but added that charges would still be significantly greater than in the rest of Great Britain. Niall Stuart said: "Disappointingly, these changes will not result in a single project being taken forward on

the Scottish islands, home to Europe's best wind, wave and tidal resources. We still therefore need the UK government to see through its commitment to introduce a financial support mechanism specifically for the Scottish islands to help them manage the burden of continuing high transmission costs."

Ofgem has launched a consultation on the proposals, and plans to publish a final decision at the end of the year.

• *The Telegraph* reported that constraint payments totalling £1.84m were made to the operators of 28 Scottish windfarms on 3 August [May 13]. The National Grid confirmed that generation far outstripped demand on that day and so companies were paid to switch off or slow down turbines. Catherine Birkbeck, of ScottishRenewables, said that it had consistently called for upgrades to the National Grid and greater storage capacity 'in order to better balance the electricity system and help alleviate constraints on the grid.' Constraint payments are made to all most all electricity generators, whether coal, gas or wind.

**WINDFARM EFFICIENCY**

The calm, hot summer this year has meant that wind turbine sites in Scotland produced very little electricity.

The Scottish Government has a goal of generating the equivalent of 50% of the country's electricity from renewable sources by 2015 and 100% by 2020. Critics called for a change of policy as output from windfarms changed dramatically day-to-day over the summer.

On June 23, windfarms contributed 95,206 MWh (megawatt hours) but two days later the total fell to just 6293 MWh. Over one week at the height of the heatwave, output crashed. Total generation was 22,742 MWh on July 21, only to fall to 9615 MWh over the next six days.

**TRANSMISSION UPGRADE**

The *BBC News* website reported that Scottish Hydro Electric Transmission has awarded £39m contracts for a replacement 16 mile overhead power line along the existing route from Beauly to Mossford, near Garve in the Highlands. The project will involve the removal of 177 old pylons, and replace them with 97 new towers.

SSE said that the work would strengthen the transmission network and create additional capacity to accommodate renewable generation. The line will be completed by the end of 2015 with further reinstatement works being completed in 2016.

**AARHUS CONVENTION & WINDFARMS**

*The Independent* reported that Christine Metcalfe made a legal challenge on behalf of the Avich & Kilchrenan Community Council with the United Nations on the grounds that the UK and EU had breached citizens' rights under the UN's Aarhus Convention [Dec 12]. She claimed that the UK's renewables policies have been designed in such a way that they have denied the public the right to be informed about, or to ascertain, the alleged benefits in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> and harmful emissions from wind power, or the negative effects of wind power on health, the environment and the economy.

The United Nations Economic Commission Europe (UNECE) has now declared that the UK flouted Article 7 of the Aarhus Convention, which requires full and effective public participation on all environmental issues and demands that citizens are given the right to participate in the process.

The UNECE committee has also recommended that the UK must in the future submit all plans and programmes similar in nature to the National Renewable Energy Action Plan (NREAP) to public participation, as required by Article 7. The new ruling calls into question the legal validity of any

further planning consent for all future windfarm developments based on current policy, both onshore and offshore.

Legal experts confirm the UNECE decision is a 'game-changer' for future wind turbine developments in the UK. David Hart, QC, an environmental lawyer, said: "This ruling means that consents and permissions for further windfarm developments in Scotland and the UK are liable to challenge on the grounds that the necessary policy preliminaries have not been complied with, and that, in effect, the public has been denied the chance to consider and contribute to the NREAP."

Mrs Metcalfe and the community council decided to take action after their experience of dealing with the building of the local Carraig Gheal windfarm and problems surrounding the access route, an area of great natural beauty which is also a nesting site for golden eagles. She said: "We were criticised by some for making this challenge but this result absolves us of any possible accusations of wrong-doing ... The government needs to do more than just give ordinary people the right to comment on planning applications; they deserve to be given all the facts.

"[First Minister] Alex Salmond is driving an aggressive green agenda like an express train across Scotland, bludgeoning anyone who gets in the way as being a Luddite and anti-green. It was very gratifying to find that such an important point was upheld [by the UN]. The ramifications will become clearer in time. There will be resistance from various quarters. No windfarm developer has ever had to explain the benefits of wind. Evidence tells us that wind power performance shows not only no reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> and other harmful emissions, but the very reverse ... I'm not a crusader. I'm not a campaigner, but an ordinary person who is fighting for grass-roots democracy. I just want the information to help me understand where this is taking us."

*The Herald* reported that a Scottish Government spokesman said: "Scotland has astounding green energy potential and vast natural resources and there is strong public support for developing cleaner energy which harnesses Scotland's abundant natural resources, creates jobs, helps tackle climate change and reduces our domestic energy dependence on imported fossil fuels that have driven up customers utility bills.

"The Scottish Government has taken a consultative approach when considering windfarm applications and a similar approach to our Renewables Routemap overall. We are also committed to applying strict environment assessment procedures. We are pleased, therefore, that the Aarhus Committee has endorsed the Scottish Government's position in terms of public access to environmental decision-making and environmental information.

"The Compliance Committee, having considered questions around public participation in the development of our renewables policy and handling of the Carraig Gheal windfarm consent application, as well as access to and dissemination of information in considering did not find the Scottish Government in breach of the Aarhus Convention."

**WINDFARM UPDATES**

**Dumfries & Galloway:** The Scottish Government has allowed RES to amend three conditions, relating to noise, imposed on the Glenchamber windfarm, between New Luce, Kirkcowan and Glenluce.

A Scottish Government reporter concluded that the amendments being proposed by the developers were 'more appropriate' than those that Dumfries

& Galloway Council had sought to impose.

**Inverness-shire:** The John Muir Trust (JMT) has gone to the Court of Session in an attempt to reverse Highland Council's decision to raise no objection to a windfarm at Stronelairst, in the Monadhliath Mountains [Apr 13].

The JMT claims that councillors went against advice that SSE Renewables' windfarm would destroy the character of one of Scotland's key areas of wild land. Planning officials advised councillors that the impact of the windfarm on wild land had been overstated by Scottish Natural Heritage and that it would not warrant an objection. As a result, councillors voted not to object to the proposals as long as the original plans for 83 wind turbines were scaled back to 67.

The JMT said that it had received legal advice that the Stronelairst decision was based on a fundamental misinterpretation by the council planning officials of the National Planning Framework, Scottish Planning Policy and the Highland-wide Local Development Plan and was therefore unlawful.

John Hutchison, of JMT, said that the professional advice given to councillors was 'fundamentally in conflict with the existing local and national planning policy which states explicitly that authorities should safeguard the character of wild land areas.' He said: "Since the decision was taken, the Scottish Government has confirmed the existing protection of wild land and proposed a further strengthening of wild land protection. In the light of existing and emerging planning policy frameworks, the decision to not object to the Stronelairst application was, in our opinion, both unreasonable and unlawful."

Helen McDade, of JMT, said that developments at Glenmorrie and Dalnessie had been rejected on wild land grounds [Jan, Feb 13]. She said: "The council has not explained this fundamental inconsistency. However, it would be perverse if the very much larger Stronelairst proposal was not subject to the same rigorous public scrutiny."

Stronelairst has been marked as a wild land area in Highland Council policy and is due to form part of a wider core area of such landscapes.

**Scottish Borders:** A proposed windfarm on Brunta Hill near Westruther has been refused by the local authority. PNE Wind UK Ltd had planned 10 turbines on the site, reducing the windfarm to eight turbines of a lower height.

The plans were rejected because of the 'significant and unacceptable' impact on the landscape character of the surrounding area and an adverse effect on a section of the Southern Upland Way.

- The *BBC News* website reported that the Scottish Government has rejected plans for the Horn Burn windfarm after an appeal. The reporter concluded that Energiekontor's ten turbine scheme near Ayton in Berwickshire would have an unacceptable visual impact. The windfarm was described as 'highly incongruous' in a 'settled, almost gentle, lowland agricultural landscape.'

A bid by Scottish Borders Council to reclaim the costs of the appeal from the developers was turned down.

**COALBED METHANE**

A public inquiry is to be held into proposals for unconventional gas extraction after more than 2,500 people objected Dart Energy's plans to extract coal-bed methane at Airth near Falkirk [Jun 13]. The firm plans to bore 22 new coal-bed methane wells. Both Stirling and Falkirk Councils failed to make a decision on the plans. The Airth site covers a site including Letham Moss and Powdrake Farm in Stirling.

Dr Richard Dixon of WWF Scotland said that fracking (using chemicals) had been introduced at 40% of coal-bed methane wells in Australia to extract the last stores of gas. It is understood further planning permission would not be needed in Scotland if Dart resorts to the method in the future.

**ENERGY-FROM-WASTE**

Scotgen, which has been trying to commission a controversial new £20m energy-from-waste plant in Dumfries since 2009, has told the Court of Session in Edinburgh it intends to go into administration [Jan 13].

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has revoked the plant's authorisation to operate, effective from 23 September, following hundreds of pollution breaches, an explosion and a major fire. SEPA has placed three legal notices on Scotgen since February to clean up its operations. SEPA is also seeking action to avoid pollution and return the site to a 'satisfactory state.'

The agency cited four reasons for the revocation notice:

- Persistent non-compliance with the requirements of its permit
- Failure to comply with an enforcement notice
- Failure to maintain financial provision and resources to comply with the requirements of the permit
- Failure to recover energy with a high level of efficiency

Dr Richard Dixon, of Friends of the Earth Scotland, said that the Dumfries plant now 'looks doomed.' He said: "No community in Scotland can have confidence that any other company can do what Scotgen has repeatedly failed to do. The failure of the Scotgen plant shows us we should give up plans to burn waste and work much harder on recycling and avoiding waste in the first place."

Other waste incinerators have been proposed in Glasgow, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire, Lothian, Perth, Aberdeenshire and Invergoron. Scotgen had planned a second plant at Dovesdale Farm near Stonehouse in South Lanarkshire, but has withdrawn the application [Feb 11].

The Scottish Government rejected plans this month by Grundon Waste Management for an energy-from-waste plant in Perth.

Another company, Viridor, insisted that energy-from-waste plants were essential to realise the Scottish Government's policy of 'zero waste.' The company is building two major facilities in Glasgow and at Dunbar in East Lothian, using different technology from that in Dumfries.



**RECREATION & TOURISM**

**STRATHCLYDE LOCH**

Strathclyde Loch has suffered a fresh outbreak of toxic blue-green algae [Mar 13]. The loch is due to host the triathlon at the 2014 Commonwealth Games. Plans to place a temporary dam in Strathclyde Loch to deal with the problem have been replaced with a barrier option, costing one-third as much. The £370,000 barrier is made up of pontoons, anchors and a low permeable membrane. North Lanarkshire Council said that it will not stop the algae, which makes the water unsafe for swimmers, but would make it 'easier to treat' if it becomes a problem. £1.2m has been set aside to tackle the algae, including a potential further £900,000 requirement for UV treatment.

**GROUSE**

Hot weather this summer has resulted in unusually large grouse broods [see GENERAL ENVIRONMENT above]. Robert Rattray, of sporting let agency CKD Galbraith, said: "Although Scotland endured a cold and long winter, in recent weeks this has made way for sunshine and almost unprecedented warm weather. Careful assessment of grouse stocks is revealing potential for one of the best seasons for many years, with some unusually large broods being seen.

"A late start to the breeding season means that shooting will extend through to September and October in many places. Grouse shooting generates around £30m for the Scottish economy, but I would imagine figures this year will be much higher, with all the knock-on benefits of seasonal employment in local communities."

It is estimated that shooting, stalking and fishing bring in around £350m a year for the Scottish economy.

Tim Baynes of the Scottish Land & Estates moorland group, said: "The role of country sports as a rural employer and custodian of areas of conservation interest cannot be overstated. Many may not appreciate the conservation aspect of moorland management, but the activity required to enable successful grouse shooting - careful rotational burning of the heather, control of problem predators and careful integration with existing farming practices - all enable practical conservation of rare bird populations such as waders at minimal cost to the taxpayer."

**MENIE ESTATE**

*The Sunday Herald* reported that the Menie Environmental Management Advisory Group (MEMAG), set up as a condition of planning approval of Trump International's golf course on Menie Estate, has not met since January [Jun 10].

Allan Garvie, one of MEMAG's members and a retired Aberdeenshire Council senior planner, said that he was disappointed that the Trump Organisation and members of the local community had failed to attend meetings.

A spokesman for Aberdeenshire Council said that MEMAG is a 'continued requirement.' He said: "In order to further meet its obligations, a review of the group's remit is being carried out to ensure it is best placed to consider any future environmental matters relating to the site."

George Sorial of the Trump Organisation said that the outcome of the review would be available in due course.

**GREAT TROSSACHS PATH**

Plans for The Great Trossachs Path have been launched, which will link the West Highland Way and the Rob Roy Way. The new 35 mile path is due to be completed in 2015, and will form the spine of a wider network of trails throughout The Great Trossachs Forest, a large scale woodland restoration project which extends from Inversnaid on the edge of Loch Lomond to Kilmahog near Callander.

The Great Trossachs Path is receiving funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.

**NORTH HIGHLAND WAY**

The North Highland Way is a proposed long distance national coastal trail from John o' Groats to Cape Wrath (114 miles) and ten miles inland from the north coast of Caithness and Sutherland.

See: [www.northhighlandway.org](http://www.northhighlandway.org)

**NEWS OF ORGANISATIONS****ARC**

Amphibian & Reptile Conservation has launched a project to catalogue sightings of frogs, toads, newts, snakes and lizards to create a new Scottish Amphibian & Reptile Atlas, with the data helping to prioritise conservation work across Scotland.

Pete Minting, Scottish project officer, said: "While we do know about some species from monitoring and modelling their numbers, a great deal of the data is not as up to date as it should be and is either very old or difficult to verify. We are looking for any information that we can get on what's out there."

See: [www.recordpool.org.uk](http://www.recordpool.org.uk)

**NTS/RBGE**

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) and the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh (RBGE) are to work collaboratively to protect Scotland's plants, both wild and cultivated. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by the two bodies to share plants to safeguard specimens that might be at risk, work together to conserve endangered wild plants both through replanting projects and by working together on pests and disease management.