

Friday 30th August 2002
For Immediate Use

Crown Estate funding for aquaculture and environmental research projects

The Crown Estate today announced details of the first tranche of funding from its Fish Farming Research Committee. The Committee, which was established in October 2001, meets annually to review aquaculture, marine and environmental research and to provide expert recommendations to the Crown Estate on how funds should be reinvested to help the aquaculture industry meet its environmental aims. The following funds have been awarded by the Crown Estate:

- £46,822 to the University of Aberdeen for ongoing research into host odour traps for sea lice ⁽¹⁾
- £41,076 over three years to part-fund a National Development Officer to work on issues relating to the health of wild salmon and sea trout for a Tripartite Working Group formed of the Scottish Executive, Scottish Quality Salmon and the Association of Salmon Fisheries Boards ⁽²⁾
- £38,500 over 18 months to the Scottish Crop Research Institute for research into the biological impact of fish farm nitrogen ⁽³⁾
- £35,599 to FRS Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen and the University of Wales, Bangor for a scoping study into the aquaculture carrying capacity of sea lochs, voes and other coastal waters ⁽⁴⁾
- £30,000 over three years to Seafish Aquaculture for research into the evaluation of automatic feeding systems to promote sustainable and environmentally-sensitive cultivation of Atlantic cod ⁽⁵⁾
- £20,000 to the Shetland Shellfish Growers' Association for the evaluation of effective, long-term, non-lethal methods in Eider Duck predation control at shellfish farms ⁽⁶⁾
- £20,000 to FRS Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen for research into the development of a treatment to protect fish against Infectious Pancreatic Necrosis ⁽⁷⁾
- £6,000 to the North Atlantic Fisheries College, Shetland for the funding of course costs for two MSc studentships for one year ⁽⁸⁾

The Crown Estate's Fish Farming Research Committee comprises representatives from: the Crown Estate; the Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Natural Heritage; the Association of Salmon Fisheries Boards; the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department; the Fisheries Research Service; Scottish Quality Salmon; the Shetland Salmon Farmers' Association; the British Marine Finfish Association; the Association of Scottish Shellfish Growers; the Shetland Shellfish Growers' Association and one independent member.

(continues)

As well as new funding for the afore-mentioned research projects, the Fish Farming Research Committee also approved continued funding for two ongoing projects:

- £46,705 to the North Atlantic Fisheries College, Shetland for the continued establishment of its seabed sampling (benthic) analysis service ⁽⁹⁾
- £20,000 to the British Marine Finfish Association for research into halibut broodstock nutrition ⁽¹⁰⁾

The Crown Estate owns the seabed out to the 12 mile territorial limit and is obliged under the Crown Estate Act 1961 to charge a rental to those who make use of it, including fish and shellfish farmers. Salmon farm rentals are based on a formula which is agreed with the industry and make up less than one percent of the total costs to the industry. The Crown Estate also administers a regulatory role for fish farming. This role is currently under review and the Crown Estate would welcome early transfer of this role to local authorities as soon as legislation allows.

Ian Pritchard, Fish Farming Estate Manager at the Crown Estate said: *"The Crown Estate has supported research into aquaculture for many years now. Since 1987, it has provided more than £1.85 million for a wide range of research and related projects. The Fish Farming Research Committee plays an important role in determining research priorities and allocating available funds."*

"The Committee and funds have been put in place because of the clear need for further research to ensure a sustainable future for the aquaculture industry. It is hoped that the Committee will continue to act as a catalyst to attract matching research funds from other bodies as well as benefit in kind contributions from industry, and will help the industry to rise to future environmental and sustainability challenges whilst also addressing the other, separate problems that it faces."

Welcoming the funding, Brian Simpson, Chief Executive of Scottish Quality Salmon, said: *"Scottish Quality Salmon members make a major contribution to the Scottish economy by way of employment and food exports. We believe there are opportunities to further increase these benefits by developing the salmon farming industry in a responsible, sustainable manner. This requires forward planning based on quality research and development such as these funded projects."*

John Thomson, Director of Strategy and Operations for West Scotland at Scottish Natural Heritage said: *"We are pleased to see that so much of the research investment by the Crown Estate has gone towards projects which will help to reduce the impact of aquaculture on the environment and wild fish stocks. In the long-term, this should help to make Scotland's aquaculture industry more sustainable."*

- ENDS -

Media Contact:

Stan Blackley, PR Office, Crown Estate

(T) 0131 226 7241 ex.224 (M) 07770 742449 (E) stan.blackley@crownestate.co.uk

Editors Notes:

1. Sea lice are the major disease affecting farmed fish. Sea lice are attracted to the fish by the natural chemical signals, or odours, that they give off. This research project aims to develop a method for attracting, trapping and controlling sea lice using these odours as attractants.

Project Contact: Dr A. J. Mordue (Luntz), University of Aberdeen: (01224) 272883

2. The National Development Officer will work to promote co-operation between wild and farmed fish interests, to develop a network of Area Management Groups (AMGs) and Agreements (AMAs) and to develop projects to help control sea lice and protect and restore wild fish populations.
Project Contact: Jinny Hutchinson, SEERAD Fisheries Group, Edinburgh: (0131) 244 6223
3. Although Nitrogen is naturally occurring in sea water, it is also released into the marine environment through sewage, agricultural practices and fish farming. These Nitrogen outputs have been accused of playing a part in the appearance of algal blooms in coastal waters. This project aims to provide detailed data on the Nitrogen outputs and impacts of fish farming.
Project Contact: Dr N. W. Kerby, Mylnefield Research Services, Dundee: (01382) 568568
4. The carrying capacity of coastal waters for shellfish farming is dependent on a range of environmental factors. This project aims to prepare and identify a number of technical and scientific methods which could then be used to establish the carrying capacity of coastal waters.
Project Contact: Dr Ian M. Davies, FRS Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen: (01224) 876544
5. There is considerable interest in the farming of cod in the UK, but only limited experience. Atlantic cod feeding patterns are different from those of other farmed fish. This project aims to develop appropriate feeding and husbandry strategies for Atlantic cod to allow their farming, and to ensure that this is done in the most sustainable and environmentally-sound way.
Project Contact: Mr M. Gillespie, Seafish Aquaculture, Acharachle, Argyll: (01397) 875201
6. Eider Ducks are the main predator of mussel farms. This research project aims to help Shetland's mussel farmers to develop an effective, long-term, non-lethal and non-harmful deterrent to persuade the birds to leave the mussel farms and return to their traditional wild feeding grounds.
Project Contact: Mr Lindsay Angus, North Atlantic Fisheries College, Shetland: (01595) 772403
7. Infectious Pancreatic Necrosis (IPN) is a viral disease which affects smolts shortly after their transfer from freshwater to seawater. Mortality levels can be high where IPN occurs and effective prevention is an industry priority.
Project Contact: Dr A. E. Ellis, FRS Marine Laboratory, Aberdeen: (01224) 295607
8. This funding will cover the course costs of two MSc studentships at the North Atlantic Fisheries College in Shetland for a period of one year.
Project Contact: Mr G. Johnson, North Atlantic Fisheries College, Shetland: (01595) 772000
9. This funding is for year two of a two-year commitment to support the continued establishment of a sea bed sampling (benthic) analysis service to provide Shetland fish farmers with information on the condition of the sea bed for use in fish farm consent and monitoring processes.
Project Contact: Mr G. Johnson, North Atlantic Fisheries College, Shetland: (01595) 772000
10. This funding is for year two of a three-year commitment. The project aims to identify the optimum broodstock diet for farmed halibut in terms of both fish health and egg quality. Initial indications from the work carried out to date are very encouraging.
Project Contact: Dr J. S. Buchanan, British Marine Finfish Association, Roslin: (0131) 440 2116
11. The Crown Estate is part of the hereditary possessions of the Sovereign '*in right of the Crown*'. Its profits are passed to the Chancellor of the Exchequer each year to help meet the cost of Civil Government (£163.3 million this year - 2001/2002). Crown Estate Commissioners have a legal duty to maintain and enhance the capital value of the Crown Estate and the income generated from it under the terms of the Crown Estate Act 1961.