



Media Release

Date: 25th November 2008

Seals demand ceasefire at Holyrood

The Scottish Government will be the target of activists dressed as seals this Tuesday 25th November as protestors call for an immediate and comprehensive ban on the deliberate killing of seals by Scottish salmon producers and other fisheries interests in Scotland and the United Kingdom. An estimated 5,000 seals are shot in Scottish waters each year by salmon farm and fisheries interests.

The protestors, led by the Seal Protection Action Group, will be unfurling a banner reading 'CEASEFIRE FOR SEALS' outside of the Scottish Parliament and hope to hand in a letter signed by 27 leading conservation and animal welfare charities including the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW), the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA), Advocate for Animals, PETA Europe, Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), Animal Aid, British Divers Marine Life Rescue (BDMLR), Animal Concern, International Animal Rescue (IAR), Save our Seals Fund, Seawatch Foundation and Care for the Wild amongst many others. The letter has also been supported by the Labour Animal welfare Society and Scottish Green Party.

Recently scientists from the Sea Mammal Research Unit revealed what they described as a 'frightening' decline in the number of common seals around the UK coast. Under present outdated legislation – The Conservation of Seals Act (1970) - salmon farmers can shoot seals, even during the breeding season, to prevent 'damage' to equipment or stock.

The campaigners believe that salmon farmers can deter seals and other predators by using properly maintained, tensioned nets and other devices, without resorting to lethal methods.

"Scientific evidence now supports our view that this culture of killing seals must stop" said Andy Ottaway of the Seal protection Action Group' "We are calling for a ceasefire for seals with immediate effect and the comprehensive protection of our disappearing seal populations from deliberate killing before it is too late."

The campaigners have also called on major retailers such as Tesco, Sainsbury's and Marks and Spencer to insist that seals are not shot by their salmon suppliers. Sainsbury's, the market leaders in Scottish salmon sales have just committed to end seal shooting as quickly as possible and are calling on their competitors to follow their lead.

In January of this year a public opinion poll found that 75% of the Scottish public support the killing of seals being made illegal in Scottish waters with only 12% supporting Fish farmers and fishermen continuing to kill them.

"Until the governments protect our seals as they surely must, we are also calling on the public to avoid Scottish salmon unless they can be assured that no seals have been killed. We know they support our view that dead seals is too high a price to pay for Scottish salmon"

For further details about the campaign please visit www.sealaction.org or www.protectourseals.org

-ENDS-

Interviews

For interviews, further information or photographs, please contact Andy Ottaway of the Seal Protection Action Group on 01273 471403.

Editors Notes

- The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) registered charity (SC017447) is dedicated to the protection of seals and their environment worldwide www.sealaction.org
- SPAG is a founder-member of the Seal Protection Groups coalition: www.protectourseals.org.uk
- The new research on seal populations was conducted by the Sea Mammals Research Unit (SMRU) at St Andrews University and the latest figures show that last year common seal numbers fell from 4,256 to 3,379 in Orkney, from 1,056 to 800 along the eastern coast of the northern Highlands, from 113 to 102 in the north-east, in Grampian, and from 6,702 to 4,732 on the west coast from Oban to the Mull of Kintyre. There was also a fall, from 445 to 215, in Fife, and by nearly half in the smaller populations around Lothian and Dumfries and Galloway. This was reported in The Guardian Newspaper on Oct 20th. www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/oct/20/conservation-wildlife-seals-marine-endangered
- Scotland is home to globally important populations of grey and common (harbour) seals. About 39% of the world population of grey seals is found in Britain (estimated at 120,000) and over 90% of these breed in Scotland. In addition, it is estimated that 35,000 of a world population of about 500,000 common (harbour) seals are in British waters, with 86% of these in Scotland.
- TNS System Three was commissioned by Advocates for Animals to measure public opinion amongst the population of Scotland. The TNS System Three Omnibus, Scottish Opinion Survey was used as the means of data collection. A sample of 1,003 adults aged 16 and over was interviewed in-home in 43 constituencies throughout Scotland over the period 3rd to 10th January 2008. To ensure that the sample was representative of the adult population and in terms of age, sex and class, it was weighted to match population estimates from the National Readership Survey of January - December 2006.

Which of these do you support in relation to seals in Scottish waters:

- a) It should be made illegal for anyone to kill seals in Scottish waters - 75% (753)
- b) Fish farmers and fishermen should be allowed to continue to kill seals in Scottish waters? 12% (119)
- c) Don't Know? 13% (131)

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Scottish Reg. Charity No: SC017447

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