



# Media Release

2nd April 2009

## Sussex based seal charity on BBC 'Countryfile' this weekend

Lewes based charity the Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) will feature on BBC One's flagship rural affairs programme this Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> April at 7pm.

The show, to be screened at its new prime time teatime slot of 7pm, will highlight the charity's campaign to stop the shooting of seals by the Scottish salmon industry, is presented by veteran broadcaster John Craven.

"Many people in Sussex are appalled by the mass slaughter of seals in the Canadian seal hunt which resumed last month", said Andy Ottaway, Campaign Director at SPAG, "Yet few realise that the mass killing of seals also takes place around the UK coast all year round, and we estimate 5,000 seals are slaughtered by the Scottish salmon industry alone every year".

The UK is home to two globally important seal populations: grey and common seals. Just recently scientists revealed what they described as a 'frightening decline' in common seals. Common or harbour seals are a welcome sight for lucky Sussex residents that occasionally spot them off our coast, including at Peacehaven and even in the River Ouse at Lewes!

Surprisingly, these popular marine mammals are not fully protected under UK law. Under the Conservation of Seals Act (1970) it is still perfectly legal to shoot seals to 'protect' fishing equipment or stock. SPAG is leading calls on the UK and Scottish Governments to provide the full protection our seals need and the public demand.

"I wholeheartedly support the Seal Protection Action Group in calling for an immediate ban on the shooting of seals", said Dr Caroline Lucas, South East MEP and Leader of the Green Party, "it is vital that measures to better protect our seal species are introduced at the earliest opportunity".

Lewes MP Norman Baker said "It is disgraceful that so many seals are still subject to this annual slaughter. The current legislation is woefully outdated and it is vitally important that we immediately amend the law so that seals get the protection they deserve. The government must act."

SPAG is appealing to Sussex residents to support our campaign by refusing to buy Scottish salmon unless their retailer can guarantee that producers do not shoot seals.

"We believe dead seals is too high a price to pay for Scottish salmon", said Andy Ottaway, "People can help our threatened seals by telling retailers to insist that their suppliers of Scottish salmon stop killing seals, and supporting our campaign for a change in the law to protect them".

**-ENDS-**

**P.T.O**

### **Photographs:**

A photograph of SPAG's Campaign Director Andy Ottaway with Countryfile TV presenter John Craven can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/sealprotectionactiongroup/3406112927/>

### **Contact:**

For further information or interviews, please contact: Andy Ottaway on 01273 471403 or 07855 666069.

### **Notes for Editors**

- The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) is a registered charity (SC017447) based in Lewes and is dedicated to protecting seals and their environment worldwide [www.sealaction.org](http://www.sealaction.org).
- SPAG is a founder-member of the Seal Protection Groups coalition: [www.protectourseals.org.uk](http://www.protectourseals.org.uk)
- Scottish salmon farms have been implicated in several incidents involving the shooting of seals, most recently reported in the Independent on Sunday on May 25th 2008 <http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/nature/tough-new-rules-brought-in-to-curb-scottish-seal-killings-834035.html>
- Scientists from the Sea Mammals Research Unit (SMRU) have reported a “frightening” decline in common seals in the UK. [http://www.smru.st-andrews.ac.uk/documents/SCOS\\_2008\\_v1.pdf](http://www.smru.st-andrews.ac.uk/documents/SCOS_2008_v1.pdf)
- SPAG is calling on the UK and Scottish Government to provide seals with the full protection they deserve. SPAG is also calling on major UK high street retailers such as Tesco and Waitrose to insist their Scottish salmon suppliers stop killing seals. [www.sealaction.org/campaigns/scotland](http://www.sealaction.org/campaigns/scotland)

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**Scottish Reg. Charity No: SC017447**

**The Seal Protection Action Group is dedicated to protecting seals and their environment worldwide.**