



PRESS STATEMENT

Date: 30th April 2009

The Seal Protection Action Group (SPAG) has been campaigning against the slaughter of thousands of seals every year by the Scottish salmon industry. We have also been calling for the replacement of the outdated Conservation of Seals Act (1970), which merely prescribes how seals can be killed, with legislation that fully protects our globally important seals populations.

Recently scientists reported a 'frightening', decline in the common seal population. Rather than implicate this decline with indiscriminate shooting, the Scottish Government has gone so far as to suggest it may be due to competition with grey seals, and even suggested it may be due to predation by orcas (killer whales). We believe these statements lack scientific credibility. We also believe that whatever the causes of the decline, all seal shooting should be stopped.

SPAG is aware that the Scottish Government intended to introduce a licensing system rather than the complete ban on the killing of seals we seek. We will of course be contributing our views on the Bill to the Rural Affairs and Environment Committee review over the coming five weeks or so, seeking to strengthen these inadequate proposals. With the above in mind, Campaign Director Andy Ottaway would like to react to the draft Bill with the following statement:

'The Seal Protection Group welcomes stronger legislation to protect Scotland's wonderful marine environment and its amazing diversity of wildlife. This wildlife, including seals, is of incalculable value to Scotland's economy through tourism. We are, therefore, extremely disappointed that the Scottish Government has spurned this opportunity to ban the deliberate killing of seals, especially by the Scottish salmon industry.

The Scottish salmon industry, worth hundreds of millions of pounds, can and must invest in strictly non-lethal methods to deter seals that are attracted to farms, or move farms away from seal habitats. We do not believe a licensing system for killing seals is desirable, realistic or enforceable. Unless the law is changed, the culture of killing seals in Scotland will continue leaving an indelible stain on the international image of both Scotland and Scottish salmon products.

For further information please contact Andy Ottaway on 01273 471403 Mobile 07855 666069