



**Embargoed until 00:01 on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> January 2020**

### **Saving our Wild Salmon: Making Salmon Conservation a National Priority**

Leading figures in salmon conservation will meet key politicians at the Scottish Parliament today (Tuesday, January 7) to address a looming crisis in wild stocks.

Environmental change, and a range of human impacts across the Northern Hemisphere are placing salmon at risk across their natural range. Today's event will explore what can be done to reverse this trend and ensure a healthy future for Scotland's iconic salmon. It will take the form of a roundtable discussion and evening reception, sponsored by Michelle Ballantyne MSP. A range of other national stakeholders will also take part in the event, seeking agreement on the collective efforts required to save the species.

Dr Alan Wells, Chief Executive of Fisheries Management Scotland said, "Salmon catches in Scotland have reached the lowest levels ever recorded, and nature is sending us some urgent signals about what could happen next. Official catch figures for recent years, confirm this iconic species is now approaching crisis point.

"Some of the factors impacting on wild salmon stocks may be beyond human control. But Scotland's Government and regulatory authorities now have a historic opportunity to do everything in their power to safeguard the species in those areas where they can make a difference.

"Put simply, salmon conservation must become a national priority. Our leaders will be judged by their actions in meeting that challenge."

Karen Ramoo, Policy Adviser at Scottish Land & Estates said, "Scotland has world renowned fishing which significantly contributes environmentally, socially and economically. The environment and the rural economy are at risk if we do not act now to tackle declining salmon numbers. We must aspire to maintain and improve our rivers and lochs to provide good breeding stock whilst a sustainable harvest can be made. Mechanisms to conserve these vulnerable stocks and encourage sustainable economic growth must be encouraged and it is imperative that the right balance is struck between conservation and the interests of those whose livelihood relies on fishing for salmon.

"It is important that we recognise current positive management already taking place and seek to build on this while allowing reasonable steps to be taken where stocks are considered unsustainable."

Michelle Ballantyne MSP said, "As LINK species champion for the Atlantic salmon, I am honoured to be able to sponsor this event in Parliament in the hope of contributing to the conversation on solutions to the threats facing Scotland's most iconic fish.

"With wild salmon stocks approaching crisis point it is now more crucial than ever that we, as politicians, listen to the experts and have a constructive conversation about what can be done to protect and replenish stocks.

"Much work is still needed, but by raising awareness of the scale of the challenge, and by bringing together organisations and stakeholders from across the country for this roundtable meeting, we are turning our attention to what can be done legislatively to support wild salmon."

Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform said, “to add

**Notes to news editors:**

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Please note that due to the nature of the event there will be limited opportunities for interviews on the day.

**Fisheries Management Scotland** is the representative body for Scotland’s network of District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFBs), the River Tweed Commission and Rivers and Fisheries Trusts. We work to promote and ensure the protection, preservation, and development of Scotland’s wild salmon and freshwater fish, along with their fisheries and the wider environment on which they rely. Fisheries Management Scotland contribute to a wide range of workstreams and working groups covering a range of pressures faced by our iconic Atlantic salmon and sea trout.

2019 was the focal year of the [International Year of the Salmon](#) with research and outreach continuing through to 2022. The International Year of the Salmon aims to bring people together to share and develop knowledge more effectively, raise awareness and take action.

Declining rod catches have a knock-on effect on fragile rural economies and reduce the ability of managers to raise money to support management and restoration activities. The most recent Scotland-wide [economic impact assessment](#) of wild fisheries indicated around £135m of angler expenditure, 4,300 full-time equivalent jobs and £79.9m Gross Value Added (GVA) in 2014 – the monetary value of the contribution to the economy made by an industry.

**About Scottish Land & Estates**

Scottish Land & Estates (SLE) is a membership organisation for landowners, rural businesses and rural professionals. At SLE we promote the wide range of benefits land-based businesses provide: tourist attractions, leisure facilities and landscapes enjoyed by the public, as well as, housing, employment, tourism & enterprise and farming opportunities.

For more information, visit [www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk](http://www.scottishlandandestates.co.uk) or follow us on twitter [@ScotLandEstates](https://twitter.com/ScotLandEstates).



## Wild Salmon Strategy

The current Programme for Government commits to developing a Wild Salmon Strategy by September 2020. This reflects our determination to protect and conserve Scottish wild salmon populations.

### Background

The strategy will aim to draw together in an accessible form all of the strands of work which we are undertaking, and set out our priorities going forward.

It will be based around the 12 pressure groups that impact on wild salmon at national level which were identified by Marine Scotland with partners last year. Work has started more recently with Fisheries Management Scotland on the identification of pressures at local level. The purpose of this project is to provide fisheries managers with a common platform for identifying and quantifying the primary factors limiting wild Atlantic salmon production in Scotland. Outputs from this process will be available for use by local managers to inform and target management action, but it will also be important evidence more widely: the new local and the existing national information as well as results from new research studies will be used identify a programme action required at local and national level to protect wild salmon populations.



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**A wide range of policy areas and stakeholders will need to work together to deliver actions to support wild salmon.** Important policy areas include for example the water environment (through barriers removal and water quality improvement) and forestry (through tree planting in the riparian environment). It is likely therefore that the strategy will take an outcome based approach, with enables the emphasis to be on impact rather than merely inputs or processes. Defining specific outcomes allows focus for activity and can promote collaboration across different sectors, agencies, local government and Scottish Government. It also encourages long term thinking.

Lines to take

- Scottish Government takes the issue of our declining salmon stocks very seriously.
- Actions required to protect and enhance wild salmon population are required from a wide range of stakeholders and policy areas.

- The development of a Wild Salmon Strategy provides an opportunity to work even closer with all stakeholders to develop a programme of work to tackle the threat to salmon at national and local level.
- Work on the development of the strategy will start soon, and we look to a close involvement of stakeholders.

# SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT

## ORAL ANSWER

**16 January 2020**

Index Heading: Office of the First Minister

**Peter Chapman (North East Scotland) (Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party):** To ask the First Minister what measures the Scottish Government is taking to address the reported crisis in wild salmon stocks.

S5F-03858

**Nicola Sturgeon:** This is Scotland's year of coasts and waters. Last week, the Scottish Government announced £750,000 of funding for a project to investigate the migration of wild salmon on the west coast. That builds on an on-going programme of research and monitoring, which includes the Moray Firth tracking project. The project will help to develop a body of evidence on the complex challenges that salmon stocks face in Scotland.

In addition, we committed in the programme of government to the development of a wild salmon strategy. Working with key stakeholders, we will continue to do everything possible to safeguard the future of Scotland's wild salmon.