

From: Willie.Cowan@gov.scot
To: George.Burgess@gov.scot; Ahearn.Terry@gov.scot; Neil.Ritchie@gov.scot
Cc: Wells.Mark@gov.scot; Alastair.Mitchell@gov.scot
Subject: RE: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO
Date: 10 August 2016 13:32:13
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Thanks Terry / George; happy with that.

Willie

Willie Cowan

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Aquaculture Europe - Edinburgh
Food For Thought
20-23 September 2016
<http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00433571.pdf>

From: Burgess WG (George)
Sent: 10 August 2016 13:21
To: Ahearn, Terry; Cowan WJ (Willie); Ritchie N (Neil)
Cc: Wells, Mark; Mitchell A (Alastair)
Subject: RE: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

Perhaps lose the “over this period” in penultimate sentence – begs the question “what period?”

George

From: Ahearn, Terry [<mailto:terry.ahearn@sepa.org.uk>]
Sent: 10 August 2016 13:19
To: Cowan WJ (Willie); Burgess WG (George); Ritchie N (Neil)
Cc: Wells, Mark; Mitchell A (Alastair)
Subject: RE: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

How about:

"In response to this new evidence, SEPA is intending to change the way in which SLICE is permitted, tightening restrictions on the use of the medicine. These arrangements will be continually monitored and reviewed. At the same time, the sector will carry out further research to confirm or confound the apparent link between SLICE and possible environmental effects. SEPA, itself, will also be undertaking further analysis and monitoring. The priority over this period will be to agree long-term viable solutions to sea

lice. This will focus on a number of possible solutions and, depending on the additional research and analysis, could involve the phasing out of SLICE."

Sent with Good (www.good.com)

-----Original Message-----

From: Willie.Cowan@gov.scot [Willie.Cowan@gov.scot]
Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2016 12:46 PM GMT Standard Time
To: Ahearn, Terry; George.Burgess@gov.scot; Neil.Ritchie@gov.scot
Cc: Wells, Mark; Alastair.Mitchell@gov.scot
Subject: RE: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

Thanks Terry

We still have real concerns re para 5 which continues to quote a 2 year timeline albeit the language on making a compelling case has been softened. I appreciate that (at this time) this is for internal consumption but it is likely that we will require to comment publically at some point – so advice should reflect what we would say too. In that regard, if you could nuance the defined 2 year ticking bomb (as the industry see it), shifting the onus to a timeline dependant on the needs of the required research to determine further evidence of impact then that would be preferable. That does not, of course, preclude you from doing that within 2 years.

Willie

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From: Ahearn, Terry [<mailto:terry.ahearn@sepa.org.uk>]
Sent: 10 August 2016 12:33
To: Cowan WJ (Willie); Burgess WG (George); Ritchie N (Neil)
Cc: Wells, Mark
Subject: RE: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

All, proposed briefing for Cabinet Secretary. Terry.

Regulation by SEPA of the use of the sea louse medicine SLICE by Scottish fish farms

Briefing for Cabinet Secretary 10 August 2016

There are a number of methods of controlling sea lice in marine fish-farms, including the use of authorised medicines either as a bath, or an in-feed treatment such as Emamectin Benzoate (the active ingredient in SLICE). The use of these treatments is regulated by SEPA through fish farm licence conditions, set using the best available evidence, with the aim of ensuring that the residues in the environment are within independently derived safe environmental standards and environmental impacts are within acceptable levels.

Monitoring has generally not shown significant impacts on marine animals in the wider marine environment, but SEPA is aware of anecdotal claims that sea louse treatments might be having an unexpected adverse environmental impact at this scale. In response, SEPA has undertaken a more detailed study into the seabed in the Shuna Sound area, in which there are a number of fish farms which have used in-feed sea louse treatments. This study has confirmed a more extensive spread within the marine environment of low levels of the residues arising from the use of the sea louse treatment Slice, than had been expected when the medicine was first authorised, or had been predicted by detailed modelling.

SEPA also invited the Scottish Aquaculture Research Forum (SARF) to commission research to determine whether there is compelling evidence of the environmental impacts suggested by the anecdotal claims. This analysis identified a subtle but detectable, and unexpected, association between impact on the marine environment and the use of Slice.

SEPA is also aware, and are concerned, that in many cases the frequency and dose of Slice treatments have regularly exceeded what was expected when the current licence framework was developed. The new treatment patterns may reflect the fact that the treatment is becoming less effective, probably as sea lice become more resistant to the medicine.

In response to this new evidence, SEPA is intending to change the way in which SLICE is permitted, tightening restrictions on the use of the medicine. These arrangements are likely to remain in place for a period of two years, allowing the sector to carry out further research to confirm or confound the apparent link between SLICE and possible environmental effects. SEPA will also be undertaking further analysis and monitoring during this period. If, during the next two years, no compelling case is made to support the continued use of the product, it is likely that the ability to use SLICE will be phased out by SEPA.

The next steps will be a good example of how SEPA's new Regulatory Strategy will be implemented.

We have informed fish farm operators of SEPA's views. We are working in partnership with the industry, including the Scottish Aquaculture Innovation Centre (which Scottish Government has supported with £11m over 5 years, to be match-funded by the industry), to explore the potential for the development of alternative means of controlling sea lice, which minimise the risk to our marine environment. The challenge of controlling sea lice in fish farms is not unique to Scotland, and the development of alternative means

represents an opportunity for Scotland's aquaculture sector.

Alternative medicinal treatments are a matter for SEPA/Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in DEFRA. A new in-feed treatment is being trialled elsewhere, although SEPA does have concerns about its impact and is wary of allowing a trial in Scotland. In reality, whilst biological solutions such as cleaner-fish, and mechanical ones such as thermolicers, are now beginning to be mainstreamed, medicinal back-up is still required and SLICE is one of the very limited options, alongside hydrogen peroxide. The industry is also exploring an improved operating model which designs out much of the sea lice issue at first principles by moving to higher energy waters and utilising larger smolts which reduce the marine phase of the salmon's life and consequently reduces the potential for disease, and sea lice and interaction with wild fish.

The SEPA Chief Executive is strongly involved in these discussions with CEOs in the sector. This high-level engagement will continue to ensure the proper management of SLICE and momentum is maintained to develop alternative methods of controlling sea lice.

The SARF report has been published today. Neither SEPA nor the industry are proposing to undertake proactive communications at this stage, but SEPA has prepared for possible enquiries around the subject once the report is published. SEPA will include reference to its decision in its next Chief Executive's report to the Agency Board, on 26 September.

Sent with Good (www.good.com)

-----Original Message-----

From: Willie.Cowan@gov.scot [Willie.Cowan@gov.scot]

Sent: Wednesday, August 10, 2016 09:50 AM GMT Standard Time

To: George.Burgess@gov.scot; Neil.Ritchie@gov.scot; Ahearn, Terry

Subject: FW: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

George / Neil / Terry

See below - Ms Cunningham has asked to be fully briefed on this issue by mid-morning. I note below some suggested text covering our interests in the specific questions she raised yesterday but I wonder whether she needs a couple of paras of background on SEPA's position as regards the research and its response to it?

Given all this is in relation to SEPA's position on a bit of research it asked for, I think the response to RC is better coming from you or Terry.

Happy to discuss.

Willie

- The draft release is silent about what the industry is expected to do as an alternative – would have expected to see something about how industry will be supported in consequence of this change – is there anything that can be added in that regard?

The news release is SEPA's response to the scientific study and is being substantially revised this morning [– to the extent that the industry's key concern about having a specified date for the possible withdrawal of Slice being removed – TERRY?]. The revised SEPA note will reference their willingness to continue to work with the industry to consider new and innovative operating models that could enable the industry to grow without unacceptable environmental impacts. Not for the note, but related to the last point on new operating models and innovation, the SG has supported the SAIC with £11m over 5 years to be match-funded by industry.

In terms of alternative medicinal treatments this is an issue for SEPA/Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD) in DEFRA. We know, for example, that a new in-feed treatment is now authorised in Chile and is being trialled elsewhere (wouldn't be a panacea) and may eventually be introduced here though, thus far, SEPA have been sufficiently concerned about its benthic impact to be wary of allowing a trial in Scotland. In reality, whilst biological solutions such as cleanerfish and mechanical ones such as thermolicers are now being mainstreamed (albeit slower than we would have liked), farmers/vets will always be looking for medicinal back-up and Slice is just about the only game in town currently alongside hydrogen peroxide.

Ms Cunningham also recalls being told recently that Norway is also phasing this out – is this correct? If so, do they have alternatives in place and any evidence about their efficacy?

We are not aware that Norway are considering the withdrawal of Slice but SEPA/VMD may know more. But the Norwegians, and Canada, are watching SEPA's position very carefully given potentially knock-on implications for them if Slice were withdrawn. And their alternatives are also limited and pretty much the same as ours. Worth noting here that farmers (internationally) haven't helped themselves by using Slice to a point where the efficacy of the medicine in treating sea lice has been reducing rapidly thereby requiring more treatments to achieve the same effect – a vicious circle which may well see the medicine lose its value over the next few years.

As previously noted, we are encouraging the industry to reduce the risk from sea lice through moves to an improved operating model which designs out much of the sea lice issue at first principles by moving to higher energy waters and utilising larger smolts which reduce the marine phase of the salmon's life

and consequently reduces the potential for disease, sea lice and interaction with wild fish.

- Is there any time pressure for this release? Does it have to go tomorrow?

No time pressure for the SEPA release per se from our perspective but SEPA's position may well be requested today/tomorrow in any case following the publication of the Scottish Aquaculture Research Forum's (an independent charity) report on Slice scheduled for mid-day today. This timing is out-with SEPA's control.

Willie Cowan

Head of Performance, Aquaculture and Recreational Fisheries

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From: Miller D (David)

Sent: 09 August 2016 22:32

To: Mitchell A (Alastair); Higgins K (Kate); Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Smith K (Kate)

Cc: Director of Marine Scotland Mailbox; Cowan WJ (Willie); Ritchie N (Neil); Haddon P (Paul); Barber J (Jill)

Subject: RE: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

All

Ms Cunningham is keen to be fully briefed on this at the earliest opportunity. I'm grateful to Alastair for his intervention, but we still need to supply the information requested by Private Office.

Could officials provide an update by mid-morning please?

Best

DM

From: Mitchell A (Alastair)

Sent: 09 August 2016 17:25

To: Higgins K (Kate); Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Smith K (Kate)
Cc: Miller D (David); Director of Marine Scotland Mailbox; Cowan WJ (Willie); Ritchie N (Neil); Haddon P (Paul); Barber J (Jill)
Subject: Re: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

David/Kate - I've spoken to David M since and advised that we can stand him and the Cabinet Secretary down for now following further discussions with Terry A'Hearn. We believe, with Terry's help, that we can manage the issue now with some changes to the SEPA response. He is reviewing the SEPA lines and handling tomorrow morning and will keep us in touch with his thinking.

Happy to discuss.

Regards, Alastair

Sent from my BlackBerry 10 smartphone.

From: Higgins K (Kate)
Sent: Tuesday, 9 August 2016 17:19
To: Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform; Smith K (Kate)
Cc: Mitchell A (Alastair); Miller D (David); Director of Marine Scotland Mailbox; Cowan WJ (Willie); Ritchie N (Neil); Haddon P (Paul); Barber J (Jill)
Subject: Re: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

That's great. David leading but shout if I can help

From: Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
Sent: Tuesday, August 09, 2016 05:13 PM
To: Smith K (Kate); Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform
Cc: Mitchell A (Alastair); Higgins K (Kate); Miller D (David); Director of Marine Scotland Mailbox; Cowan WJ (Willie); Ritchie N (Neil); Haddon P (Paul); Barber J (Jill)
Subject: URGENT: Scott Landsburgh SSPO

Kate,

We have flagged this up with Ms Cunningham, who would be content to speak to Terry A'Hearn tomorrow morning (although we are struggling to get in contact with his office to confirm a time).

Ms Cunningham has some questions about the press statement:

- The draft release is silent about what the industry is expected to do as an alternative – would have expected to see something about how industry will be supported in consequence of this change – is there anything that can be added in that regard?
- Ms Cunningham also recalls being told recently that Norway is also phasing this out – is this correct? If so, do they have alternatives in place and any evidence about their efficacy?

- Is there any time pressure for this release? Does it have to go tomorrow?

Thanks,

David

David Johnston | PS to Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Land Reform and Climate Change |
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