

# Seaweed policy Statement Consultation 2013

## SCOTTISH WATER RESPONSE FORM

### DRAFT SEAWEED POLICY STATEMENT 2013

#### 1. Do you agree with policies 1-6?

Policy 1 – agree

Policy 2 – agree

Policy 3 – agree

A collaborative approach is proposed in the consultation 'Integrated approach to shellfish waters – next steps' to identify the areas within Shellfish Waters Protected Areas (SWPA) most suitable for shellfish harvesting (Section 5.4, option 2) The collaborative approach to information sharing between Food Standards Agency (FSA), SEPA and Scottish Water would also be useful for the seaweed sector in identifying sites for seaweed cultivation for human consumption.

Policy 4 – agree

Policy 5 – agree

Developers should consider the location of SW infrastructure and outfalls when considering where to site their cultivation area not only in relation to Policy 3 but also in terms of ongoing activities such as mooring, storage and access facilities onshore. Interaction between the two sectors during e.g. harvesting may result in costly damage to assets.

Policy 6 – do not agree

There is a presumption against further finfish aquaculture on the North and East coast of Scotland to assist in the protection of significant salmon rivers. There will be very few SWPAs along the north and east coasts, so the level of protection for harvesting products for human consumption is not available. The same level of detail on water quality will not be available from agencies.

Section 1 of the draft Seaweed Policy Statement (SPS) states the Scottish Government (SG) does not intend to use the presence of seaweed cultivation as a sole justification for improvements to water quality.

Scottish Water is funded to achieve or maintain good status under the Water Framework Directive, once the Shellfish Directive has been subsumed by WFD, disproportionate cost assessment will apply to determining where our investments are allocated. This means that cultivators should consider the existing condition of water quality at their potential development site, and should recognise the risks associated with this, particularly when the cultivation is for human consumption.

**from the water body the seaweed is to be grown in? YES/ NO**

YES – Scottish Water policy is to comply with regulations/guidance relating to the spread of non-native species (NNS). A holistic approach with other sectors is required to prevent the spread of existing NNS and the entry of NNS to new areas.

Adoption of this policy would minimise the risk associated with introduction of non-native species of sea-weed. However, we believe that there is some scope for further consideration in this area. Legislation on non-native species does allow for exemption on certain sites e.g. on agricultural farms where the cultivation and harvest of non-native species provides huge benefit. This would have to be weighed against the long term management of the farm and the possibility of introducing seaweed species that may become invasive or inadvertently introducing associated species or diseases.

**3. Do you agree with policy 7? YES/NO**

YES – We note that Policies 2-6 also apply to medium scale development and we agree that this should be the approach. In addition we agree that mitigation measures and how these will be delivered must be considered to prevent adverse environmental impacts. At this point we would ask if there will be a requirement to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)?

**4. Do you agree with policies 8 and 9?**

Policy 8 – Scottish Water agrees in principle with the development of IMTA, however we suggest their development should be restricted to designated areas. The developer then has certainty of water quality in as far as it is influenced by our activities.

Policy 9 – agree

**5. Do you think that the size scales (shellfish (small), medium, and extensive), are appropriate?**

Small – supportive but regulatory consideration, for human consumption  
Medium – potential negative environmental impacts, for human consumption  
Extensive – large scale biofuel

Scottish Water considers that mitigation measures should be required to avoid environmental impact. Given the discussion on regulatory regimes and scale in Section 2 : Consenting, option 3, we consider it difficult to form a judgement given that the consultation document implies that the industry is not in the position to develop such sites. Perhaps an approach to assist development such as research sites would be appropriate rather than a definition based on size.

**6. Which consenting option would be most appropriate for seaweed cultivation?**

Scottish Water does not have a preferred option. It would seem sensible to have all aquaculture activity regulated by one regime. Whichever option is chosen we would consider it prudent to consult us on our activities in the area proposed for development.

We note that the consultation 'Planning Scotland's Seas – draft circular' states under Planning for Marine Aquaculture item 76, that fish farming framework plans are associated with terrestrial planning for the time being. Item 77 expresses an aspiration that all aquaculture will move to marine planning in future.

**7. Should guidance be developed for the harvesting of wild seaweed? If not, what (if any) alternative arrangements would you suggest?**

Scottish Water notes that currently harvesting is commonly undertaken by hand, but that mechanised harvesting does exist. At current levels this does not appear to be having any adverse environmental impacts. It seems likely that as the sector expands, individuals or developers will seek to make an income from wild seaweed, and wild harvesting will increase. Scottish Water considers that Good Practice guidelines should be developed, including

- awareness of the risks to water quality from sewage discharges,
- the potential impact of harvesting equipment on Scottish Water assets
- consideration of the proportion of wild seaweed to be harvested so that existing benefits/habitats are not impacted

**8. Should the 1997 Act should be amended to provide the flexibility to farm other species or specifically named species? YES/NO**

YES Since existing aquaculture businesses are seeking new species for cultivation as a way of expanding their businesses, and SG policy is to help the aquaculture sector expand then it seems sensible to amend the Act to provide this flexibility. In line with Policy 2, we suggests that only native species are considered.

**9. Do you have any comments to make on the BRIA content?**

Scottish Water has reviewed the BRIA content. We welcome inclusion of the costs and benefits section which concludes that seaweed cultivation will not negatively impact water quality. We would take this opportunity to emphasise that cultivators should contact us for information about out assets and discharge locations at the planning stage. We do not anticipate any investment by Scottish Water to support the development of the seaweed industry and suggest that any proposed investment should be subject to cost benefit analysis.



**Seaweed Policy Statement Consultation Document  
Environmental Report August 2013**

Overview

*General Comments*

Scottish Water welcomes the opportunity to respond to this consultation. In general we support the objective of developing the seaweed industry.

Detailed Response

**Specific Comments**

While we are supportive of this objective we are concerned that growth takes place away from our activities. This will ensure that our licensed discharges continue without an expectation that we will invest to improve water quality. It will also ensure that planting and harvesting activity does not cause any damage to our assets.

We have concerns that seaweed development may impact on coastal processes which currently provide some protection to our assets.

We support a collaborative approach with other agencies to identify areas with good opportunities for the industry to develop.

Section 1.1 – Section Title

1	To what extent does the Environmental Report set out an accurate description of the current environmental baseline (Please give details of additional relevant sources)?
<p>Scottish Water considers the Environmental Report is an accurate description of the environmental baseline.</p> <p>In particular we note the comments about the capacity of seaweed to absorb nutrients and pollutants, and its role in attenuating coastal erosion.</p> <p><b>Section 6.5</b></p> <p>Scottish Water considers that wild and commercial harvesting of seaweed for human consumption should take place in areas of good water quality at a distance from our licensed discharges. The collaborative approach to information sharing between Food Standards Agency (FSA), SEPA and Scottish Water, proposed in the consultation 'Integrated approach to shellfish waters – next steps' (Section 5.4, option 2) would also be useful for the seaweed sector in identifying sites for seaweed cultivation for human consumption.</p> <p>Scottish Water investment is directed towards meeting the regulatory requirements of the Water Framework Directive and other Directives to protect specific designations. We do not anticipate further designations associated with commercial seaweed</p>	



harvesting.

#### **Section 6.6**

The role of seaweed in attenuation of coastal erosion provides some benefit to our operational assets. We do not routinely inspect our outfalls for evidence of seaweed growth in the vicinity. Anecdotally we do not find excessive growth of seaweeds as a feature of our operations, i.e. growths of seaweed choking outfall pipes.

#### **Section 6.9**

We consider that setting equipment on the seabed for anchoring seaweed growing structures, and harvesting activities, may cause damage to our discharge structures. Outfall locations are set to meet SEPA dilution requirements. Therefore damage to outfalls can result in poor dilution of effluent, and aesthetic impacts. We suggest that cultivators should confirm the location of our assets and discharges and site their activities accordingly, to avoid this.

#### **Section 6.11.4**

In relation to our points about water quality and material assets above, we are supportive of the suggestion that 'no-go' areas should be considered.

2

Do you agree with the predicted environmental effects as set out in the Environmental Report?

#### **Section 7.2.2**

One of the main benefits proposed for Integrated Multi-Trophic Aquaculture (IMTA) is that it will mitigate the effects of aquaculture (finfish) and improve the sustainability of this industry. The outcome of this may be expansion of the finfish sector by utilising the benefits of IMTA without any real development of seaweed for human consumption. i.e. the placing and growth of seaweed adjacent to fishfarms will be a mitigation for the fishfarm, not a new industry developing.

#### **Section 7.2.29**

For large-scale developments, Scottish Water is concerned about how the effect of coastal impacts and changes to flow patterns will impact on our infrastructure. There is a sense that impacts will be assessed as the industry develops, not that industry will be encouraged to develop in a way that avoids certain impacts.

#### **Section 7.2.30**

At existing shellfish harvesting sites we are not aware of any impact on our activities associated with growing/harvesting equipment in the water. Therefore we do not expect that seaweed cultivation at this scale will be any different.

#### **Section 7.2.31**

Water Quality - discharges from the sewer network and treated sewage effluent are near-shore activities. Near-shore cultivation of seaweed will likely be at shellfish-scale. The SPS proposes that production for human consumption is sited in areas of very good water quality such as Shellfish Waters, and away from sources of pollution such as sewage discharges (Policy 3).

We consider the use of seaweed to improve water quality to be interesting. It may be worth considering seaweed as a mechanism for improving water quality for



cultivation of other species for consumption in areas impacted by diffuse pollution.

**Figure 7.3**

Scottish Water agrees that changes to coastal processes may lead to erosion or accretion of shorelines. This in turn could damage our discharge pipes, or lead to siltation and blocking of our pipes, causing discharges elsewhere within our network, including within customers property.

**Section 7.2.6**

Large scale development may impact on migration routes for seals, cetaceans, migratory fish etc. Migratory routes and the potential for large-scale cultivation are both unknown. ER advises that care should be taken to avoid known migratory routes. It may be advisable to assess migration routes prior to investment proposals being developed, to direct industry towards areas that are known not to be migration routes.

3	Do you agree with the recommendations and proposals for mitigation of the environmental effects set out in the Environmental Report?
---	--

The main form of mitigation appears to be that site specific measures will have to be assessed for each proposal as the industry develops. There is a clear assumption that shellfish-scale developments will have a minimal effect. There is uncertainty about how the industry will develop, and to what timescale.

We recommend that developers seek information on the location of our discharges and assets prior to investing. We also recommend that developers seek information on areas of good water quality.

Mechanised harvesting carried out in the area of Scottish Water discharge pipe works may cause damage. We recommend that information is sought on the location of our discharges during the planning phase. This will allow the farmer to assess the proposed site in terms of water quality and the location of our assets to be avoided.

Scottish Water considers that a best practice guide to harvesting should be developed to provide advice to potential harvesters to avoid damage to our assets.

Non-Native species – SPS proposes local species with known provenance should be developed (Policy 2). Care will need to be taken to avoid accidental colonisation by non-native species especially if the industry develops to a scale where seed stock/hatchery imports are required.

4	Are you aware of any further environmental information that will help to inform the findings of the environmental assessment (Please give details of additional relevant sources)?
---	--

Scottish Water has no comment to make on this section.