

	<p><b>Council</b></p> <p><i>Special Session on Successful Actions: UK - Scotland</i></p>	<p><b>CNL(25)36</b></p> <p><b>Agenda item:</b> <b>6.g(ii)</b></p>
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***Special Session on Successful Actions: UK - Scotland***  
***Marine Directorate, Scottish Government***

Atlantic salmon is an iconic species that is important to the rural economy, biodiversity and cultural heritage of Scotland. Official catch statistics dating back to 1952 report that 2023 was the lowest rod catch for salmon in Scotland.

**Scotland’s Wild Salmon Strategy and Implementation Plan**

In recognition of the declining populations of wild Atlantic salmon in Scotland and beyond, the Scottish Government published the [Wild Salmon Strategy](#) (January 2022), forming a framework for coordinated action to tackle pressures and protect wild salmon. The Strategy’s vision is that Scotland’s wild Atlantic salmon populations are flourishing and an example of nature's recovery, achieving this through the application of best-practice science and management. The accompanying Implementation Plan (published February 2023), identifies collective action for wild salmon across government, business and charitable sectors and sets out actions to be taken over a five-year period to increase protection of wild salmon populations.

Progress on delivering the actions in the plan is overseen by a Delivery Group, made up of a wide variety of partner stakeholders. A Science Advisory Board brings together experts from a range of organisations, providing the Delivery Group with a best consensus view on scientific knowledge and evidence, but also identifying where evidence gaps exist and targeted research is required. To date, the Board has provided advice to the Delivery Group on reducing angling at high temperatures and restoration stocking, including smolt-to-adult supplementation. Work planned and currently in progress includes harmonisation of monitoring, impacts of predation, addition of large wood structures within rivers and review of pressures.

**Successful Actions - examples**

Habitat restoration:

- Through the removal and easement of barriers to migration, through River Basin Management Planning, 1400 kilometres of previously inaccessible habitat has been opened up.
- Restoration of 75,000 hectares of degraded peatlands contributes to regulating the quantity and quality of water courses and bodies.

Pressures:

- A new risk assessment framework, developed by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, was introduced in February 2024, to manage the impacts of sea lice from farmed fish on wild salmonids.
- The retention of all salmon in coastal waters continues to be prohibited, until the conservation status of salmon improves sufficiently.
- Vulnerable spring sub-stocks are protected through statutory conservation measures to ensure that no salmon is taken in Scotland before 1 April each year. Beyond this time period, rivers are re-assessed annually to manage exploitation by the rod and line fishery. Salmon caught in poor conservation status rivers are not allowed to be retained and there

is a now well-established culture of catch and release (approx. 96% of rod-caught salmon in Scotland are released).

Funding support:

- Scottish Government's Marine Fund Scotland (MFS) has awarded £2.2 million since 2021, to projects which benefit freshwater fisheries and wild salmon.
- The Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS) grant scheme supports projects that shape and grow the use of private investment and market-based mechanisms to finance the restoration of Scotland's nature, with a number of projects focusing on river and catchment areas, crucial for Atlantic salmon spawning and juvenile development.