

## **CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**

### **MR LOCHHEAD'S SPEECH TO 5<sup>TH</sup> SCOTTISH FRESHWATER FISHERIES FORUM ON 30 APRIL 2009**

- 1. Good morning and may I extend a warm welcome to you all to this the 5<sup>th</sup> Freshwater Fisheries Forum. It is a great pleasure to be here today. I am also delighted that so many have made such a great effort to attend as I realise that some of you have travelled a considerable distance to be here.**
- 2. I see many well known faces in the audience as well as some I have yet to meet. I hope we have the opportunity to meet in the future when I can learn more about how you see us seizing the challenges and opportunities facing our salmon and freshwater fisheries.**
- 3. It is a refreshing change for me to attend the Royal Highland Centre today and meet an audience that is not exclusively made up of the farming community. Although I am equally pleased that there are a number of overlapping interests. I will be back here in a few weeks for the Royal Highland Show. Apologies I do have to leave immediately after my speech anyway by 11 am.**

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- 4. I see today as a great opportunity for the sector to meet and discuss current issues concerning all those involved in the freshwater fisheries sector who are after all an important part of the wider rural community.**
  
- 5. The days of the early developments of the Freshwater Fisheries Forum Steering group where people sat round a table understandably concentrating on their own sector's interests are thankfully behind us.**
  
- 6. Fortunately as we all move forward, we have all come to realise that partnership working is fundamental to ensuring we protect, promote and develop our fantastic natural resource.**
  
- 7. Your programme for the day looks very interesting and offers excellent opportunities for learning from others.**

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- 8. Callum Sinclair of RAFTS, who I must thank for the sterling work he and the trust network have put into helping develop Fishery Management Plans for all Fisheries Trusts in Scotland, will chair the morning session on 'Excellence in Fisheries Management'.**
  
- 9. So I encourage you all to participate in that debate and express your own views on what this means to you at the local level.**
  
- 10. You will then hear from Dr Neil McCarry of the Scottish Anglers National Association on the World Fly Fishing Championships this summer.**
  
- 11. I was absolutely delighted on learning SANA had secured such a prestigious event and would be bringing this to Scotland. As a 'homecoming' event which I will be attending, I see this as a great opportunity to tell the world about the high-quality fishing opportunities in Scotland.**

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- 12. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate SANA on your behalf on what I am sure will be a hugely successful event.**
  
- 13. Following this you will have an update on Marine Scotland, the newly created delivery Directorate that brings together all those within Government with an interest in the marine environment and on freshwater fisheries.**
  
- 14. Dr Trevor Hastings, Director of the Freshwater Laboratory within Marine Scotland Science will chair the first afternoon session on 'Excellence in Fisheries Management Science'.**
  
- 15. Finally you will end the day with presentations and panel discussion on the work being undertaken on the Strategic Framework for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries. Our framework I am sure you will agree sets out an ambitious and compelling shared vision of the future for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries.**

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### **Scottish Government's purpose and its fit with freshwater fisheries as an economic driver**

- 16. I am confident that you share with me recognition of the importance of our freshwater fisheries to our local economies and how this sits well with this Government's overarching purpose.**
  
- 17. Our purpose is to focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increasing sustainable economic growth.**
  
- 18. This means that we need to look wider than the traditional salmon fisheries. We all should look towards ways of involving young people and others that would enjoy and benefit from being able to participate in angling in Scotland. As well as those with an interest in maintaining and enhancing the natural resource that is our salmon and freshwater fisheries.**

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**19. But these are challenging times for Scotland, in common with the rest of the world. I strongly believe that it is through a true partnership that we will be better able to convert challenges to opportunities for our freshwater fisheries.**

**20. The current exchange rate between sterling, the dollar and the euro may offer us one such opportunity to make a fishing holiday in Scotland even more affordable and attractive for our overseas visitors. And as I have said before regardless of what happens to exchange rates we have an everyday opportunity to ensure that every visitor and every angler has a great experience of our freshwater fisheries when they come to Scotland.**

### **Homecoming**

**21. As I referred to earlier I am delighted at SANA's success in securing the World Fly Fishing Championships for the first time in Scotland, particularly in this year of Homecoming where we as**

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**a nation celebrate the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns.**

**22. The Championships will take place in June in Drymen. 26 countries from across the globe will be participating, which I am told is the highest number to date.**

**23. With up to 150 competitors taking part this will undoubtedly attract a huge amount of media attention which will not only serve to boost the local economies who are hosting the event but also I am sure will showcase Scotland as a premier place for fly fishing.**

### **Economic value of fishing to Scotland**

**24. Salmon and freshwater fisheries are an integral part of Scotland's heritage and play a major role in contributing to the national economy. Game and coarse angling is worth over £100 million a year to the Scottish economy and helps sustain around 2800 jobs.**

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- 25. Adding to this I was absolutely delighted to hear from the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards that they estimate the total capital value of salmon fisheries in Scotland as worth nearly half a billion pounds.**
- 26. In their first annual review I also see that the Association estimate that there were in the region of 545,000 salmon fishing days in Scotland. This very positive statistic reflects their estimates of continuing buoyant catches.**
- 27. Again as some of you will have already heard, I welcome reports that bookings for the Aberdeenshire Dee were 20% up at the opening of the season and that some of our rivers experienced continued buoyant catch levels for last year.**

### **Role of freshwater fisheries in the community**

- 28. This upbeat picture only serves to show how our fisheries help support jobs in our fragile rural communities. There are many roles that freshwater fisheries play in the community that I see as being equally important.**

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- 29. Encouraging participation and attracting young people and new entrants into fishing is an investment in the future.**
- 30. I know SANA, the Fisheries Trusts and the Scottish Federation of Coarse Anglers have put a lot of effort and work into developing educational programmes which I wholeheartedly welcome and hope can be rolled out right across Scotland.**
- 31. This will involve many partnerships within Government and throughout the various sectors of the angling community.**

### **Marine Scotland**

- 32. Reflecting this the establishment of Marine Scotland will, I believe, lead to developing an even closer partnership between Government and all stakeholders and increase our ability to deliver a more clearly defined focus on sustainable seas and freshwater fisheries. At the same time this mirrors very closely my own view.**

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- 33. Closer cooperation on the ground will also be enhanced by involving other government agencies of course such as SEPA and SNH. I realise, and I am sure that you will understand, that this year will be one of transition for Marine Scotland and its staff.**
- 34. However I am sure we can all contribute to making Marine Scotland a success and together we can all work towards delivering sustainable economic growth on behalf of the people of Scotland.**

### **Strategic Framework for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries**

- 35. When I launched the Strategic framework for Scottish Freshwater Fisheries on the 4 July last year I was delighted at the reaction it received.**
- 36. As I travelled throughout Scotland over the past year the reaction of those I spoke to confirmed the importance of that shared vision set out in the framework.**

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- 37. People have told me that they are 100% behind the vision, that they see the important parts of the strategy as the management of all our fisheries and the need to take a more inclusive approach to all our fisheries. This mirrors very closely my own view.**
- 38. Progress in developing a strategy for the management of Mixed Stock Fisheries and the Code of Good Practice for all species management is taking place through a wide ranging working group approach.**
- 39. I am expecting reports from these groups towards the end of the year. I note you are to hear more from David Crawley, the Chairman of the mixed stock fisheries working group later and I thank him and his colleagues who are contributing from their knowledge and experience to the development of a strategy for our mixed stock fisheries.**
- 40. Reaching agreement on the way forward will be challenging but very worthwhile in support of all our fisheries.**

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### **Fisheries Management Planning**

- 41. Vital to the work of the Strategic Framework is the role that Fishery Trusts have to play. As I am sure you are all aware I had the pleasure of launching last week in Moray, in my own constituency, the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust. That was the 23<sup>rd</sup> Fisheries Trust to be founded in Scotland.**
- 42. At the last Forum in November 2007 I committed £1.2 million over 3 years, £400,000 for each of those years – to develop the management and structures of freshwater fisheries in Scotland.**
- 43. Following that I attended the RAFTS conference last month and was very pleased to hear that in addition to the 1<sup>st</sup> year of Scottish Government's investment, a further £1.4million was levered in from Trusts, boards, other public sector bodies and charities through the joint Scottish Government - RAFTS Fisheries Management Programme for 2008/09.**

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- 44. I hope this determined focus and investment continues to grow as we press forward with the next year's programme.**
  
- 45. I am also pleased to support the work done by Trusts in expanding the Salsea Merge Project on Genetic Analysis in building a genetic map for Atlantic salmon in Scotland.**
  
- 46. The results of this work I believe are at the cutting edge of fisheries management. It will enable Scotland to take a leadership role in the management of Atlantic salmon stock as we use the information on the genetic composition of our stock to promote a sound science base for local management decisions.**
  
- 47. I also very much welcome the trust network's work in developing fishery management plans in close partnership again with their local communities, public bodies such as SEPA, SNH, the Forestry Commission and others as well.**
  
- 48. I would particularly like to ask local proprietors to continue to support this work as part of a cohesive**

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**group working with Trusts and Boards to improve habitats throughout total catchments.**

- 49. A holistic and collaborative approach will help maximise the potential of this valuable work.**

### **Partners**

- 50. I also expect all public bodies to play their part in maintaining and enhancing the value of our freshwater fisheries to our communities.**

- 51. In this respect I am pleased to learn that Sportscotland and VisitScotland have been able to increase their focus and investment towards fishing opportunities over the last few years. This is very welcome and offers further scope to maximise value from their investment.**

- 52. The anglers among you will know very well that angling is a top 10 participation sport in Scotland. 3% of Scottish people participate in angling at least once a month.**

- 53. I am keen that angling remains a popular and inclusive pastime. To help achieve that none of us**

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**can afford to lose sight of the importance of quality provision and a welcoming approach.**

**54. I welcome Sportscotland's work with the sports governing bodies – the Scottish Anglers National Association and the Scottish Federation of Coarse Anglers- to develop a single approach for the freshwater angling sectors.**

**55. I am optimistic that Sportscotland's investment over the past 2 years of £63,000 across both governing bodies will help maximise value.**

**56. Once again I am pleased that the value to our fisheries from a cross-sectoral approach is well understood by the governing bodies and our anglers.**

**57. There are, however, particular challenges and pressures. For example the forthcoming 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and before that the 2012 Olympic Games in London will mean that Sportscotland and VisitScotland will have to pull together their fishing resources to contribute more effectively towards their strategic development.**

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**58. As I am sure you will have seen from the many flyers and posters VisitScotland have also been working closely with the Scottish Anglers National Association to promote and raise awareness of this summer's World Fly Fishing Championships based in Drymen and elsewhere in Scotland.**

**59. In the run-up to the championships I was very pleased to hear that VisitScotland invested £120,000 over the past 2 years into promoting fishing in Scotland. And I hope we will see a lasting impact of this investment in a global recognition of Scotland as a world class destination for fishing.**

### **Catch Statistics on salmon and sea / Catch and Release**

**60. To ensure Scotland continues to be able to offer a world class experience, we all must ensure Scotland has healthy, thriving, sustainable stocks. Absolutely there can be no room for complacency.**

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- 61. The catch statistics produced by Marine Scotland Science (formerly FRS) and the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards tell us that trends in catches are encouraging – with some beats on the Tweed having their best reported catch for 10 years in 2008 for instance.**
- 62. I was also pleased to hear that the River Annan estimates its 2008 rod catch to be possibly the highest on record.**
- 63. These good news examples from the Tweed and Annan are supported by encouraging news on catch and release in 2008. Provisional figures provided by Marine Scotland Science indicate that the proportion of salmon released from the Rod & Line fishery in 2008 was similar to the 2007 figure.**
- 64. 63% of the total reported rod catch of salmon in 2008 was accounted for by catch & release. The River Dee alone returning over 98% of its rod catch in 2008.**

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- 65. The Scottish Government attach great importance to catch and release as it has a vital role to play in reducing mortality and conserving the stock, particularly for sea trout.**
- 66. I am aware that many of you share or desire to see improvement in our sea trout stocks and many of you are doing more in this area.**
- 67. For example I understand that ASFB is, as a matter of urgency, taking a view from its members as to what conservation measures are currently underway to protect salmon and sea trout stocks in their catchments. The ASFB will then be formulating a policy on sea trout conservation for 2009, and will be publicising that widely.**
- 68. I also understand that this issue figured prominently at the recent AST sea trout symposium in Edinburgh earlier this month.**

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### *Gyrodactylus salaris* (Gs)

[ANNOUNCE ISSUE OF NEW SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT GS DVD.]

69. You will all be aware of the importance we attach to the exclusion of the GS parasite (*Gyrodactylus salaris*) from Scotland.
70. Were it to be introduced into Scotland it would devastate our precious Atlantic salmon stocks. We know this because Scottish salmon have been tested in Norway, where the parasite has all but wiped out salmon stocks in about 40 of their rivers.
71. So I am pleased we have been able to make a short information DVD which demonstrates the Norwegian approach to GS eradication. The challenge for Scotland and all anglers and river users is to keep GS out.
72. The DVD which you will see shortly is designed to bring home to people the importance of keeping GS out of Scotland and the measures that can be taken by individuals and fisheries managers to prevent its introduction.

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- 73. We are also making a longer instructional DVD for fisheries interests, based on the Norwegian experience and which Boards, Trusts and Clubs will receive later this summer.**
- 74. In the past year I am pleased that the Scottish Government in partnership with Boards has been able to provide financial support for new warning signs at riverside and in communities as well.**
- 75. I have also asked my officials to re-energise the Home & Dry awareness raising campaign. I am delighted to see leaflets on display here at the Forum.**
- 76. We all know that increased awareness and vigilance by individuals, Boards, Trusts and proprietors will be of critical importance in keeping the very real threat of GS at bay.**

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### **Scottish Government Non-native species and SNH non-native plant species projects**

77. It is widely recognised that the unregulated introduction of non-native species poses a major threat to our biodiversity in Scotland.
78. In the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2007 we took additional powers to control the introduction of freshwater fish to our waters. These new controls came into effect on the 1 August 2008.
79. My simple message is - do not move any fish or any other flora or fauna without authorisation. At best, remediation, where possible, is extremely expensive. At worst the effects can be disastrous.
80. There is a very interesting example of remedial work in this area. The Scottish Government, SNH, SEPA and the Esmeé Fairburn Foundation, with the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland [RAFTS] has developed a nationwide Biosecurity Planning Project.

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**81. This project is closely linked to the GB Non Native Species Secretariat. In Scotland the project is being implemented through 20 local Rivers and Fisheries Trusts whose areas of operation cover over 80% of Scotland.**

**82. The project has a three-year lifespan, and aims to deliver local level action plans for each of the 20 trusts. Implementation of the plans will:**

- Raise awareness of the impacts of Invasive Non-Native Species and what can be done about them.**
- Establish local reporting and surveillance systems to detect the introduction and monitor the spread of Invasive Non-Native Species and report relevant information to national and UK based authorities.**
- Establish local rapid response protocols put in place to contain, control and eradicate new populations of selected Invasive Non-Native Species.**
- Identify and put in place control and eradication programmes where appropriate.**

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- **Finally but probably of most long term value the project will build local capacity to deal with issues associated with the prevention and control of Invasive Non-Native Species.**

**83. Although still in its early stages the project is in the process of completing pilot biosecurity plans for the Esk Rivers and Fisheries Trust, the Argyll Fisheries Trust and the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Fisheries Trust as well.**

**84. In addition a website to facilitate the project's work as well as raising awareness of selected Invasive Non-Native Species in Scotland will be available in May this year.**

**85. Two training courses on the identification and control of American Signal Crayfish and invasive aquatic plants will be held in the coming months. A further 11 Trusts will produce their biosecurity plans in the coming year.**

**86. Prevention is however always better than cure, and in this case successful implementation of the local action plans will hopefully free up time and**

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**capacity in the future to invest in the improvement of our fisheries.**

### **Concluding remarks**

**87. I wish you well for an informative and productive day and hope that you will join with me in reaffirming our commitment to achieving the shared vision that ‘Scotland will have sustainably-managed freshwater fish and fishery resources that provide significant economic and social benefits for its people.’**

**88. An ambitious vision but one that by working together we can achieve.**

**89. Thank you all**

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