



Pictured here is Ian Gatt, left, the new President of the SFF, with outgoing President Alex West, right, and chief executive Bertie Armstrong. Full story page 2.

New Government pledges to work closely with the industry

Following the Scottish Parliamentary Elections there are real indications that a new era of co-operation between Government and industry is on the verge of being created.

It was a manifesto pledge of the new Cabinet Secretary with responsibility for fisheries, Richard Lochhead, that industry representatives will be seconded to ministerial teams participating in international negotiations to ensure that fishermen are listened to and are able to provide expert advice.

While the details and procedures remain to be developed, the first stage of this process has already happened with SFF chief executive Bertie Armstrong attending the

recent EC Fish Council in Luxembourg as part of the support party. Fact gathering in the margins of Councils of Ministers was always available, but this first attendance with the new Scottish government indicates a new and closer liaison.

Speaking straight after the Council, Mr Armstrong said: "My presence here represents the first steps in closer co-operation between the industry and the process of its management. These are welcome first steps that have been made in creating the future framework of a closer working relationship between fishermen and the Scottish Government."

Another manifesto commitment is for the Scottish Government to seek the lead role in

EU fisheries negotiations, given that two-thirds of the UK industry is based in Scotland. Whilst this is still under discussion, it certainly signals the determination of the new Scottish Government to raise the priority of fishing.

Likewise, the commitment to look with the Commission at the effects of the CFP on Scotland highlights the growing recognition across the European industry and the Commission that regional solutions are the way forward.

Mr Armstrong said: "We are encouraged by the Minister's determination to have a stronger voice for Scottish fishing and for industry to have a bigger say."

● See page 5 for an article from the new minister.

Fishermen's Federation introduces new minister

Richard Lochhead, centre, flanked by Bertie Armstrong and Alex West at Fishing 2007



The SFF had the opportunity to formally introduce new fisheries minister Richard Lochhead to industry representatives and the media at the recent Fishing 2007 exhibition in Glasgow.

The SFF was hosting a seminar – The Trouble with Scottish Fishing – and at the invitation of the Federation, this provided the perfect opportunity to hear from the Minister his priorities for Government.

One of the major issues on the agenda is

the new Government's determination to raise the profile of Scottish Fishing – and therefore UK fishing overall - and to take the lead role in fisheries matters.

Mr Lochhead reassured fishing interests south of the border that such a strategy would benefit the whole UK industry because the new Scottish Government would place fishing much higher up the policy agenda.

This is something the SFF agrees with, believing it more to be an issue of proper representation of UK fisheries, rather an

Anglo-Scots issue.

"Most of the main priorities are common throughout the industry, north and south; the last thing we want is a situation where unnecessary internal feuding diverts attention away from the real issues affecting fishing," says chief executive, Bertie Armstrong.

"We have been arguing long and hard for more appropriate representation of UK fishing as a whole by giving proper weight to the part played by the Scottish industry."

Ian elected as new president

Ian Gatt has been elected as the new President of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, succeeding Alex West who has retired from the role after three years at the helm. Formerly the SFF vice-president, Ian has over 30 years experience in the industry, 23 of which have been as a skipper and owner. He brings a wealth of experience across the spectrum of



commercial fishing from langoustines to deep water species.

Ian said: "It is a real honour to be elected as President and I look forward to meeting the challenges of my new role. An immediate priority will be the forthcoming discussions that will lead to the final decisions on catching opportunity for next year."

The Federation has also elected two new vice-presidents – James Brown of the Fishsaler's Association (Scotland) Ltd, and David Shiel, chairman of the Anglo Scottish Fishermen's Association.

Bertie Armstrong, SFF chief executive, said: "I am delighted at these appointments as they bring real experience and knowledge to the Federation across a breadth of fisheries.

"I would also like to pay special tribute to Alex West for his excellent stewardship of the Federation over the past three years."

● See page 3 for an overview of Ian's priorities as president.

The key role of SFF Services



John Watt of the Federation gave an overview of the work of SFF Services at the Fishing 2007 exhibition in Glasgow.

He pointed out that the activities of the offshore energy sector meant that there were numerous potential hazards for fishermen. For example, there are around 250 suspended wellheads and 40,000km of pipeline in the North Sea.

In addition, there is likely to be more infiltration into traditional fishing areas by the wind, wave and tidal power industries.

Mr Watt said that with these new forms of power generation on the horizon, the only way the industry could meet such future challenges is through dialogue and working together with the energy operators – as is currently happening with the oil and gas sectors.

Communication is the key

Ian Gatt, president of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation, outlines his priorities in his new role

One of my biggest priorities will be to keep in close contact with all the constituent associations of the Federation. Recently, I visited most of the association ports so that I could hear the views of local industry representatives and get a feel for the main issues of concern.

This has been very useful to me, and in my tenure as President I intend to keep this going by visiting all the principal ports at least once a year. I also recently went on a trip on the pelagic vessel, *King's Cross*, so as to gain a working insight into the operation of that important sector of our industry.

I don't feel the Federation is in any need of a radical shake-up because there has been a major reorganisation in the last couple of years and we are now reaping the benefits of this. For example, the appointment of Jane Sandell as Inshore Fisheries Policy Officer and Rory Campbell as Science & Environment Policy Officer gives us cover and experience in these two crucial areas, enabling us to respond quickly and effectively at all times.

The greatest asset of the Federation is its wealth of knowledge and this is why we are determined to draw upon this valuable resource at all times. For example, the creation of Whitefish, Pelagic and Nephrops Working Groups has already proved its worth and will long continue to do so into the future.

It is essential to involve as many members as possible because there is now such a wide spectrum of stakeholder involvement in marine issues that it can be hard to keep pace. There are Regional Advisory Councils, consultations with the ERAD Marine Group, DEFRA, coastal state and environmental issues, and of course the continual dialogue with the European Commission and associated bodies. It is a daunting amount of work, but it is, nonetheless, essential that the Federation is well represented in all these areas so that we can help safeguard the livelihoods of fishermen.

Inshore fisheries will become a major issue later this year once the new Scottish Government finds its feet and has a closer look at reviving the inshore fisheries groups. This is an area the Federation will be closely involved in.

Finally, I would like to give due recognition



Ian with Alex Wiseman on a recent trip on the *King's Cross*

to our two new Vice-Presidents. James Brown has a huge amount of experience in fishselling, and his administrative and political knowledge will be a major asset. Similarly, Davie Shiel has been an inshore fisherman all his life and this experience will prove crucial, especially since inshore fisheries are likely to dominate the agenda over the coming months.

The Federation will continue to be a solution-based organisation. We are employed on all fronts and our immediate priority will be to secure satisfactory catching opportunity for 2008. At least this year we have received the initial scientific advice earlier than before, and it is vital that we use this extra time wisely and to good effect.

The next round – fishing opportunities for 2008

By Bertie Armstrong

It is early days for predications about exactly what form the final package for next year will take, but the governing factors are starting to emerge. The first step by the Commission towards 'frontloading' – making the process of arriving at the annual package more transparent and giving stakeholders more opportunity and time to participate in the debate – came last year with the publication of the Commission's policy statement for catching opportunity for 2007. This year we have the policy statement for 2008 a little earlier, and some of the stock science has also been produced earlier – see back page article. Next year we will see a further development of the process, with most of the science appearing in the first half.

Regarding the governing factors, all the Scottish Nephrops and demersal fisheries have the shadow of cod recovery hanging over them in one form or another. TAC decisions for individual stocks will at least start with scientific assessment, but

association with a cod catch will have a potential influence on both TAC and effort for each fishery. The Commission policy statement views the overall effort reduction achieved as contributing less to recovery than had been hoped: "This shows that the contribution of the days-at-sea limits to stock recovery is not yet sufficient. The system has also proved difficult to manage by both Member States and the Commission. It has been criticised as overcomplicated, non-transparent and difficult to monitor."

There is much work for us to do with FRS, the national administrations, the RACs and the Commission during the time available. Specifically we must examine our own fisheries, discuss the art of the possible, refine the information, and present solutions. The cod TAC itself is, with the widely reported abundance being encountered, creating the conditions where the unavoidable level of discarding - accurately described as an eco/commercial disaster in the mixed fisheries - is causing real difficulty and not a little heartache for the men at sea. The central issue of what the present TAC level is actually

achieving and where we go now must be addressed before the start of the EU/Norway negotiations.

The North Sea and West Coast herring advice is available now, and does not make good reading. The principal forum for discussion of the best solution possible for this will be via the Pelagic RAC.

Although not a direct issue this year, the Commission initiative on discards will be something that will have an effect in the future. The Federation approach is to contribute fully to the process, aiming to influence the direction of travel towards practical realism, fishery by fishery. A series of discussions with the Marine Group is underway.

The process of deciding catching opportunity for 2008 has begun. Early engagement is essential and has begun also. We should find advantage in the closer relationship that we are determined to build between the three main components of the Federation as a key stakeholder, fisheries administrations and the new Minister, to fight for a sustainable, profitable year to come.

The Scottish Industry/Science Partnership

By Joyce Petrie of Fisheries Research Services

What it is

The Scottish Industry/Science Partnership was launched in May, by the new Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead, at Fishing 2007. The Scottish Executive Rural Affairs and Environment Department is funding research ideas, in this and succeeding financial years, to enhance the existing cooperation between the Scottish catching sector and fisheries science providers.

Ideas have been invited from a variety of sources including:

- individuals from the catching sector;
- fishermen's associations;
- NGOs;
- science providers.

Projects will be associated with the catching sector, relating to the main Scottish sea fisheries, and will generally involve biological or fisheries science but socio-economic suggestions will also be considered. Proposals selected for work will either cover new research areas or enhance existing themes, allowing them to be completed more quickly

or in greater depth than currently planned.

How it works

The deadline for submission of ideas for work this year has passed and a number of proposals have been submitted. In addition, several ideas were outlined at the January meeting of the Consultative Group, and others have been suggested since. These include:

- gathering extra observer data from monkfish trips;
- review of whitefish selectivity options;
- evaluation of cod populations;
- observer data gathering on deep sea species;
- enhancement of the mackerel egg survey;
- preparation of an industry environmental statement;
- investigation into the impacts of multi-rig *Nephrops* trawls.

Projects are being considered by the Consultative Group which is made up of catching sector representatives, fisheries science providers, processing and retail

representatives and NGOs who will advise on the purpose, priorities and operation of project proposals. The projects selected as highest priority will be opened up to competitive tender from Industry/Science Partnerships. Tender applications will be advertised in July on Fisheries Research Services (FRS) and SFF websites at www.frs-scotland.gov.uk/sisp and www.sff.co.uk/news.php.

Other Information

An FRS Liaison Officer will be appointed to each project and they will help and advise in the tendering process, with the preparation of reports and will monitor the progress of the project.

A workshop will be held each year to allow stakeholders to comment on past projects and suggest areas for future work.

Two pilot projects were undertaken in 2006 - 2007 and reports on these will be published as they become available.

In each issue, we profile an SFF constituent association

Association profile

Mallaig & North-West

Mallaig & North-West Fishermen's Association (MNWFA) was founded in 1947 "to allow fishermen of Mallaig and the North West Coast to make contact with other fishermen and Fisheries Boards and to have a voice in the affairs of the industry". (Extract from the original Minute recorded at the formation of the Association).

At that time membership was comprised almost entirely of local herring boats. With the subsequent demise in the 1970s of the West Coast herring fishery, boats in the 40-60 foot size range turned to prawn and whitefish trawling.

Today, MNWFA is one of the largest fishermen's trade associations in the UK. Membership of the Association is now comprised of all sectors of the industry from one-man creel boat operations through to large offshore whitefish trawlers. Equal attention is paid to the needs of all members.

The Association has a small full time administration team and is run by an elected General Committee of skipper/owners from which a Chairman and Vice-Chairman are also elected.

In addition, the Association has a limited company with an elected Chairman and Board of Directors, which administers the commercial aspects of the Association's work.

MNWFA was a founder member of the Scottish Fishermen's Federation (the political side of the industry) and some Association members are also members of the Scottish Fishermen's Organisation (the marketing side of the industry), which was partly funded by MNWFA. Through these bodies the association influences - as best it can - fishing policies, licensing, etc, relevant to its area. Several of



the members are also in the West of Scotland Fish Producers' Organisation, of which MNWFA were the instigators.

MNWFA is believed to be the first fishermen's association to have committed to Investors in People, as have several of its member vessels.

Responsibilities:

MNWFA is responsible for the political, commercial and pastoral interests of its members, on whose behalf it negotiates at local, national, and international levels. It runs a small pension scheme which distributes money at Christmas time to pensioners who were once Association members. It also has a small vessel loan scheme through which it offers interest-free loans to young skippers, who have previously been in membership of the Association for four years, when purchasing their first vessel. It also offers interest free loans for re-engining. It operates a bursary for members who are attending college and attempting to obtain mate/skipper's tickets etc. This arrangement also extends to engineering courses and Open Learning courses and the Association administers a Group Life Insurance scheme for all members who wish to participate.

Moving forward

In this article for SFF News, Richard Lochhead, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and the Environment, says he is proposing a new direction for Scotland's fishing industry



The new SNP Government promised at the outset that we wanted to see a new era for Scotland's fishing communities.

To illustrate our new direction, we will robustly promote Scotland's views within then UK and the European Union.

Secondly, we will seek to acquire greater influence for our fishing communities within these negotiations including securing the official lead for Scotland in the UK's negotiating team. Leading for the UK means not only a seat at the top table but full access to

the UK's negotiating apparatus. Providing Scottish Ministers with the lead role, who will always treat fisheries as a priority would be good for all of the UK's fishing communities. The Scottish Government can only work within the limits of devolution and such progress requires the support of the industry as well as the co-operation of the UK and other devolved administrations. However, we have already begun to explain our case to other Ministers and clearly in the coming months we will continue these discussions and negotiations.

Thirdly we will build a close relationship with everyone with a stake in the future of Scotland's fisheries to help us pursue the right path for Scotland both in terms of sustainability for stocks and our coastal communities. We are actively seeking ways in which we can work more closely with the industry and others in the run up to and at each EU Fisheries Council. We are also keen to build a new fisheries

conservation policy given the failures of the CFP. We have also announced a new industry-science partnership programme. It will build on existing links between fishermen and scientists but will deliver more in-depth research, more quickly, in those new areas identified by industry as the main priorities for additional research.

As you'd expect, it has been a hectic first four weeks for the new Scottish Government, but I'm not complaining because I think we really have made a very positive impact.

It was great to get out early on in my first week and meet so many people at the Fishing Exhibition at the SECC in Glasgow. Then came the serious business of meetings with UK Ministers and then EU Ministers. Attending my first EU Council, I couldn't help noticing the irony that there we were in landlocked Luxembourg discussing vital matters to Scotland's fishing communities when Luxembourg had its own seat at the table – next to Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Austria – yet none of these has a fishing interest, never mind on the scale that we have in Scotland.

We know that there are many tough challenges ahead not least in the run up to this year's annual negotiations. Fishing forms a proud part of Scotland's heritage and remains vital for the economic and social well-being of our fishing communities today. It is time for a fresh start so that they can reach their full potential as part of a vibrant, modern Scotland.

The new Scottish Government looks forward to a good working relationship with the SFF and everyone concerned with the wellbeing of our fishing communities and willing to work with us to achieve a sustainable and successful fisheries.



Pelagic group heads towards a sustainable future

A pioneering initiative will propel the Scottish pelagic industry to the forefront of sustainable, well-managed fisheries worldwide.

The project, which has a dual commitment to gaining both Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) and Responsible Fishing Scheme (RFS) certification for the pelagic fleet, seeks to demonstrate that both the pelagic fisheries and its practices are responsible and sustainable.

The North Sea herring fishery and Western mackerel fishery will be the first to go forward with the MSC programme. The fisheries will be assessed against the MSC standard by an independent third party certifier.

The newly-formed group is to be known as the Scottish Pelagic Sustainability Group and draws experience and knowledge from the whole industry. Its members include pelagic fishermen, processors, fishermen's organisations and representatives from the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) and Seafish.

Derek Duthie, chief executive of the Scottish Pelagic Fishermen's Association and a key member of the group, said: "Consumers are increasingly demanding detailed guarantees that their seafood comes from healthy stocks and is caught responsibly. Achieving certification through both the MSC and RFS will give the assurances that they are seeking and demonstrate the commitment of the industry. We hope that the pelagic fleet will be Responsible Fishing Scheme-certified by the end of 2007, and the North Sea herring fishery and Western mackerel fishery certified to the MSC standard by 2008.

The group has also produced a detailed 'sustainable policy' for the sector. This document forms part of the overall management plan for the fishery and pulls together all the relevant elements, including the assessment against the MSC standard and RFS, that will deliver the sustainable results to which the sector has committed. Finally, the group has guaranteed the continuation of the triennial egg assessment survey, which is essential for stock assessment and fisheries management, by jointly committing the necessary funds.

Scientific Advice on North Sea Demersal and Herring Stocks 2008



By Rory Campbell, SFF science and environment policy officer

This is the first year that some stock advice has been given early and is part of the Commission's commitment to 'frontloading' – aiming to spread the load which used to preclude proper and complete discussion before the December Council of Ministers.

The number of stock forecasts published by ICES is down this year from 40 to 29, though scientists have still provided the same number of catch advices as previous years.

The number of stocks at risk is the same as previous years, with four out of five EU fish stocks currently remaining outside known safe biological limits. There are 13 stocks where a zero catch had been advised and this again includes Cod.

On a more positive note stocks of North Sea Haddock and Northern Shelf Saithe are both at full reproductive capacity and both are being fished at sustainable levels. Stock forecasts for other species are as follows:

The North Sea Cod spawning stock is assessed as still well below safe biological limits. Fishing mortality has shown some decline since 2000 but this has not been regarded as enough for the stock to recover. There are signs that the 2005 year class is better than previous years but this year class is still judged as being below average. Because of this ICES are again recommending the principle of a zero Cod catch, but in reality the management plan will set a quota of between 18,300 and 34,000 tonnes (current TAC is 20,000 tonnes).

North Sea Haddock stock is at full reproductive capacity and is currently being fished sustainably. The stock is still dominated by the exceptional 1999 year class and the 2005 year class, which is also estimated to

be above average. ICES are recommending a drop in TAC (15%) for 2008 as the above average 2005 year class has not fully recruited into the fishery yet. By dropping the TAC by 15% in 2008 it is expected that the stock size will increase in 2009 when the 2005 year class fully recruits into the fishery.

The current state of the North Sea Whiting stock is unknown and the science on the stock is shaky at best. There has been a declining trend in the stock since 1995 with very low recruitment since the 2002 year class. ICES are recommending a TAC of 5,000 tonnes (23,800 in 2007) which is based on the stock's poor recruitment levels and the declining spawning stock biomass.

The Northern Shelf Saithe stock is currently at full reproductive capacity and is being fished sustainably. ICES are recommending a TAC of 150,000 tonnes to be split 137/14 in areas IV and VI respectively.

The North Sea Herring stock is currently at risk of suffering reduced reproductive capacity and is at risk of being fished unsustainably. For the past five years there has been very poor recruitment to the stock which has been caused by environmental factors. The ICES recommendation for this stock is a TAC reduction of 50% (2008 TAC of 175,000 tonnes).

West of Scotland Herring stocks are currently fluctuating at a low level, with the 2001 and 2002 year classes being particularly weak. ICES are recommending a TAC of below 15,000 tonnes for this species.

Advice for the remaining stocks will be issued later in the year except Nephrops which is run on a two year management plan; 2008 is the next year of assessment.



Scottish Fishermen's Federation
24 Rubislaw Terrace,
Aberdeen AB10 1XE

Tel: +44 (0)1224 646944
Fax: +44 (0)1224 647058
E-mail: sff@sff.co.uk

www.sff.co.uk

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