

Press release: Sea change for migrating smolts

The Environment Agency has carried out underwater sonar surveys to check for young salmon using a new route across the Tees Barrage gates.

And the results show the juveniles – known as smolts – successfully making their journey from spawning grounds upstream out to sea.

It follows changes to the operation of the Tees Barrage in 2015, which means on every tidal cycle the gates are lowered to allow fish to pass both upstream and downstream.

Surveys have shown the barrage gates are the main route for salmon migrating upstream and the automation of the gates has resulted in an extra 1,500 hours per year of fish passage for returning adult salmon to reach their upstream spawning grounds.

It's in addition to the other routes that salmon use including the Barrage's navigation lock, the Denil fish pass, the fish pass in the white water rafting centre, and the main canoe slalom.

Downstream migration improved

Phil Rippon, Fisheries Technical Specialist at the Environment Agency, said:

As well as improving the routes for returning adult fish we are also looking to improve the downstream migration of these precious fish and maximise the number of smolts reaching the North Sea.

By lowering the main barrage gates at set times, it means that as well as providing an additional upstream route for adult salmon we are providing a much easier route for the young salmon moving downstream as well. It is known that the sooner the smolts reach the sea the better their survival chances are, resulting in more returning adult fish.

Our recent work using an underwater sonar has shown large numbers of smolts using the gates to pass successfully downstream. It's really positive to see yet more evidence that salmon are spawning upstream and these youngsters have been living in the river for up to 3 years before they move out to the sea.

Every year smolts, which are between 1 and 3 years old, leave the river to start their feeding migrations to the sea – travelling as far as Greenland – where they will spend up to three more years as an adult salmon before returning to the river to spawn.

Smolts are vulnerable throughout their migration and only around 5% of those that leave the river will return to spawn the next generation of salmon.

[Underwater sonar footage of River Tees smolts crossing the Tees Barrage](#)

Steering group

The Tees Barrage Fish Pass and Operation Steering Group, made up of Tees Barrage owners the Canal & River Trust, the Environment Agency, Angling Trust, Salmon & Trout Conservation Trust, Tees Rivers Trust, Industries Nature Conservation Association and Tees Barrage International White Water Centre, oversees the monitoring and research of fish and seal populations and carried out action to improve fish passage.

Research to understand the preferred routes through the barrage for fish and how to make it easier for them while reducing seal predation has been the focus of recent surveys.

Last year also saw the use of an acoustic deterrent device (ADD) to deter seals from entering the navigation lock, which showed promising results. Phil added:

We're working really hard together with our partners to understand how fish naturally try to pass through the barrage and then to make it as easy as possible for them. We've changed the way the main gates and navigation lock operate to allow more fish passage, and we'll be using an acoustic deterrent device again this summer.

We want as many fish as possible to make it upstream to their spawning grounds to ensure the River Tees continues to improve.

[Press release: Fruit retailer fined after failing to meet marketing standards](#)

Appearing at Sunderland Magistrates on 11 June, Marc Philip Farnsworth, owner of M Farnsworth, in Bede Precinct, Jarrow, was found guilty of displaying and offering for sale fresh fruit below the minimum standards permitted.

The court fined Mr Farnsworth £1,000 and ordered him to pay full investigation costs of £2,826, prosecution costs of £620, and a £100 Victims Surcharge – making a total penalty awarded of £4,546.

The case was brought following an investigation by the Rural Payments

Agency's (RPA) Horticultural Marketing Inspectors (HMI). The inspectors are responsible for the enforcement of the EU marketing standards for fresh fruit, vegetables, salad crops, nuts and cultivated mushroom, throughout England and Wales, wherever fresh produce is grown, imported, exported, bought or sold. These standards will continue to be enforced after we have left the European Union.

Several visits were made to the Jarrow store, during which inspectors found it was selling apples that were severely bruised— making them unfit for human consumption. Rotten figs and bruised and rotten peaches were also for sale.

Mark Buckle, regional manager for HMI, said:

On visiting the store our inspectors found apples that were so badly bruised they should not be eaten – let alone placed for sale. Repeated attempts were made to engage the store's owner in addressing the issues, but he failed to take action and it was necessary to progress this through the courts.

We will do all we can to ensure unsatisfactory produce is kept off the market. The fine received here should serve as a warning to others that if they are not labelling products correctly, or selling fruit and veg that is of an unacceptable quality then action will be taken against them.

[News story: 2018 Appointments to IRP](#)

For more information and to apply please visit the Public Appointments website at: [Cabinet Office](#)

For alternative formats please call Julia Peters on 0113 254 5350 quoting the reference A17-62.

The closing date for applications is midday on 5th July 2018.

[News story: Reduced limit for North Sea nephrops fishing explained](#)

The Marine Management Organisation and Defra are providing advance notice of

a reduction in the quarterly catch limit for North Sea nephrops for quarter 3 only. This is being reduced from 20 tonnes to 4 tonnes per vessel. The changes are part of a package of measures to cut fish mortality in the Farne Deeps and help long-term recovery of the stock.

Vessels fishing against the under 10 metre and over 10 metre pool allocations for North Sea nephrops will be subject to the new limit from 1 July to 30 September 2018.

The change is happening because the Government believes it is fair that all sectors should contribute to the reduction in overall fishing effort on Farne Deeps nephrops and to developing a sustainable nephrops fishery that will secure future stability and profitability for local fishermen.

In 2015 ICES advice showed that the Farne Deeps nephrops stock was in danger of collapse and recovery measures were introduced from 1 April 2016. ICES advice published on 30 June 2017 demonstrated that stock abundance was increasing but that catches were still notably above the stock's maximum sustainable yield (MSY).

Nephrops fishing activity in the Farne Deeps is usually highest in the winter period, however Cefas analysis identified a pattern in the last two years of unusual and significant effort targeting nephrops in quarter 3 when the inshore fleet usually engage in a mixed fishery.

The planned catch limit (20 tonnes) for the fourth quarter, when the recurring winter nephrops fishery begins, is not affected.

[Speech: Shaping the future of food and drink](#)

It's fantastic to be with you today here at the British Museum.

If you asked someone on the street, 'what's the best-known item in this building?', some might mention the mummies, some might name the Elgin Marbles...

But I think some would say the Rosetta Stone.

Found by one of Napoleon's Lieutenants during his Egypt campaign of 1799, it was undoubtedly a great discovery.

Yet – just a few years earlier – in 1795 Napoleon was at the centre of what I think was an even greater discovery.

That year, Napoleon offered a prize of 12,000 francs to anyone who could solve an age-old problem and give his army an edge over his enemies.

Not a new weapon to outfight them.

Or new tactics to outsmart them.

But the ability to outlast them by keeping his army's food fresher for longer.

In just over a decade a confectioner named Nicolas Appert had found the answer.

Through his method of heating, boiling and sealing food in airtight glass jars.

The same basic elements which keep canned goods fresh today.

It just goes to show that when political leaders create the right conditions for individuals and businesses to innovate the results can be astounding.

And I truly believe that when government and business work together in the right way we can do things we could never do on our own.

So today – I want to talk about how, through our [Industrial Strategy](#), we are working with all of you in this room to help this amazing sector do even more.

Impact of sector

I've always appreciated the importance of this sector.

I was born and raised in the food and drink business with my father and grandfather's dairy delivery round supplying our neighbours in Middlesbrough with fresh Yorkshire milk 7 days a week.

I know this same dedication exists all across the country.

Food and drink is the most geographically dispersed industry there is.

The FDF's Ian Wright has a great fact, that there's a food or drink manufacturing plant, with more than 50 employees, in every single UK constituency apart from Westminster.

From Scottish salmon farmers on the Isles of Mull and Harris in Scotland...

To workers in McVities' Stockport factory, which makes 2 billion Jaffa Cakes a year...

The food supply chain employs nearly 4 million people.

The food and drink industry is the biggest manufacturing sector in the country, larger than automotive and aerospace combined.

And in the last 10 years UK food and drink exports have skyrocketed growing by well over 50%.

Every year, I hear these statistics at conferences like these.

But, ultimately, these statistics, and the impact they demonstrate, need to translate into respect and engagement.

Simply put – you deserve the same level of engagement, with all parts of government, that other successful industries, like automotive, aerospace, life sciences and financial services, have come to expect.

One way we're putting this right is through the [Food and Drink Sector Council](#).

I really think this is the beginning of something important.

Bringing together government departments, farmers and growers, food and drink manufacturers, the logistics industry, the hospitality industry, and others with a stake in this flourishing sector.

Everyone sitting around one single table agreeing one single set of goals and working together to achieve them.

The FDF has played an absolutely pivotal role in bringing this council to life.

And we'll need your support to build its credibility.

So I'd encourage all of you here today to engage with its working groups. Make your voice heard and help transform the sector.

The next steps

One of the Council's early tasks is to propose a [Sector Deal](#) to drive forward each aspect of our Industrial Strategy as it reflects food and drink.

I take this personally.

Michael Gove and I will jointly lead for the government on negotiating this.

And I'd like to thank Ian Wright and Tim Rycroft for the crucial co-ordinating role the FDF has played.

I want this to be a totemic deal that establishes the food and drink sector as an essential part of this country's economic future.

Building on some big opportunities, which I know this sector is already seizing.

New technologies like AI and robotics are at the very heart of our Industrial Strategy.

And they're already transforming this sector.

For example, a potato processing company is already using AI to work out

which spuds would work best for chips and which for crisps.

Cutting waste and saving money.

While in Milton Keynes, The Co-op is using robots to deliver up to 10kg of shopping to homes within a 2-mile radius.

With the company's 10 robots despatching around 1,000 orders since the app went live a month ago.

And – through our Industrial Strategy – we're already supporting this sector in adopting new technologies.

Back in February, I announced £90 million of Industrial Strategy money, bringing together AI, robotics and earth observation to improve supply chain resilience in the agri-food sector.

This includes support for 'innovation accelerators' charged with exploring the commercial potential of new tech ideas at pace.

And alongside new technologies the deal should also have a strong focus on new markets.

With just 1 in 5 food and drink companies exporting there's a big opportunity here.

Of course, many British brands are already renowned.

Ask people from around the world what food and drink they most associate with the UK and I think Scotland would come out on top.

Scotch whisky. Or Scottish salmon, for example.

And the way that Scotland has blended food and drink with tourism and hospitality is a great British success story in its own right.

Yet – increasingly, the world is taking interest in British brands from south of Greta Green.

Last year, London Popcorn firm 'Propercorn' was the fifth fastest-growing independent business anywhere in Europe.

Within 6 months of launching in Germany they were stocked in 1,000 locations.

And are now the number 1 premium popcorn brand anywhere in the country.

While in the South West, Wyke Farms are encouraging dairy farmers within 50 miles of their Bruton dairy to partner with them to satisfy the growing demand from a Cheddar-hungry global middle-class.

We need to look at how we can help other firms tickle customers' taste buds the world over.

Staying competitive

But let's not forget that 7 of your top 10 export destinations are in Europe.

And Brexit is one area, where it's so important that we not only listen to your concerns, but act on them.

After all – you are the ones who, day in – day out – actually live the million complexities which make up the reality of food and drink trade.

I know that this morning you heard from Michael Creed from the Irish government.

And last month, I travelled to Belfast to hear from companies, including food and drink firms whose supply chains span the border between Northern Ireland and Ireland.

One of those companies was Diageo who make Bailey's Irish Cream.

Bailey's manufacturing process works on an all-Ireland basis.

With ingredients and packaging materials crossing the border multiple times.

Milk travels from Northern Ireland to Ireland for processing into cream, some of which is sent back to Northern Ireland.

Whiskey goes from south to north, and back again, while bottles go from north to south.

With such highly integrated supply chains it's no surprise that companies like Diageo are concerned about the delays and costs that could be created by new customs processes.

And as we negotiate our new relationship with the EU, securing continued frictionless trade between Northern Ireland and Ireland, while avoiding hard border infrastructure, will be paramount.

I know that many of you are also concerned about the potential challenges of 'Rules of Origin' rules which determine a product's economic nationality.

This issue was raised in a recent, insightful report commissioned by the FDF and the National Association of British and Irish Flour Millers which I read with great interest.

One case study in the report features a loaf of wholemeal bread sold under a household brand in the UK and exported to Ireland, an EU member state.

The wholemeal and white flour it contains is milled in the UK from a blend of grains from growers in Canada, the US and the UK reflecting both global price and harvest quality.

Yet in one post-Brexit scenario, the use of UK-milled flour, including any quantity of wheat grown outside the UK, would automatically disqualify the

loaf of bread from preferential import tariff treatment into the EU single market.

We need to take concerns like this into account, avoiding any unnecessary barriers to trade, including from 'Rules of Origin'.

Conclusion

Ladies and gentlemen, I truly believe that – together – we can do more.

And our Industrial Strategy offers so many opportunities to do just that.

From the Sector Council bringing together the whole 'farm to fork' industry like never before...

To agreeing an ambitious Sector Deal...

And listening to you as we negotiate a new relationship with the European Union.

This is a sector which has lived through change before and – indeed – has driven change before, and I believe that – together – we can do that again.

Thank you for inviting me here today.