

PRESS RELEASE ISSUED BY E-MAIL 16.00hrs Sunday 3rd April 2016 FROM: John F. Robins, Secretary and Campaigns Consultant, Animal Concern, Post Office Box 5178, Dumbarton G82 5YJ. Tel. 01389-841-111, Mobile: 07721-605521. E-MAIL: animals@jfrobins.force9.co.uk website: <http://www.animalconcern.org/> Animal Concern is a pressure group registered as a non-profit making Limited Company (Co. No. SC109126) incorporated in 1988 as Animal Concern (Scotland) Ltd. It incorporates the Scottish Anti-Vivisection Society which was founded in 1876.

Scottish Government Ministers have been asked to intervene in a controversial meeting planned for later this week between employees of Marine Scotland and representatives of Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd (Usan), which trades as the Scottish Wild Salmon Company. Usan has made the headlines numerous times in recent years over issues including numerous seal shooting incidents at their salmon nets and their guilty plea to criminal breaches of wildlife conservation legislation.

Last autumn, following complaints from John Robins of Animal Concern, Usan Director George Pullar was removed from the Stakeholder Reference Group established to advise the Scottish Government on proposals for new legislation on wild fisheries. Mr Robins had objected to Mr. Pullar acting as an advisor to the Government on wildlife conservation issues because Mr. Pullar had earlier admitted to 9 breaches of salmon conservation law. Forfar Sheriff Court fined Usan £7,000 for these serious wildlife crimes.

John Robins states;

“We do not know what is on the agenda for the planned meeting but we are very concerned that the Scottish Government is either going to give Usan carcass tags to allow them to continue netting and killing salmon at river mouths or is going to refuse to give them tags but instead use public money to compensate Usan for lost profits. We are especially worried that Usan will start netting salmon at the mouth of the River Ythan, an area which is home to many hundreds of seals. There would be carnage if Usan started shooting seals at the Ythan estuary.

It is extremely worrying that officials from Marine Scotland will be meeting Usan without the presence of any elected Government representatives, most of whom are busy trying to get re-elected in May. As well as those crimes Usan has been convicted of there are several others currently going through the legal system. At the very least we want Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment Richard Lochhead to postpone any meeting between Marine Scotland and Usan until the results of several pending legal actions are known.

The bottom line is this; Usan are guilty of breaching conservation laws. They are wildlife criminals. They should not be permitted to continue intercepting and killing salmon heading for their breeding grounds and they should not be given a penny of public money.”

EDITORS NOTES: Our e-mail to Richard Lochhead (copied to the First Minister, Environment Minister and several officials at Marine Scotland) is copied below. Attached is a statement from Jenny Green of the Hunt Saboteurs. For further info or comment please contact John Robins of Animal Concern on 01389841111 or 07721-605521 or Jenny Green of the HSA on 07505855392.

Sunday, 03 April 2016

Rt. Hon. Richard Lochhead MSP,
Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Environment,
The Scottish Government,
EDINBURGH

Copied to Environment Minister Dr. Aileen MacLeod, relevant staff at Marine Scotland and First Minister Nicola Sturgeon.

Dear Mr. Lochhead et al,

I write to you as Secretary of both Animal Concern and the Save Our Seals Fund.

Earlier today I learned that representatives of Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd, which trades as the Scottish Wild Salmon Company, are to have a meeting later this week with officials of Marine Scotland. I understand that among other things the meeting will address the situation regarding Usan using their rights to net salmon and seatrout at the Ythan Estuary as well as their netting operations at several other locations on the east and north coast of Scotland.

Many people had hoped that under the revision of legislation governing salmon fishing in Scotland your Government would have adopted the extremely sensible and most effective conservation method available and banned all commercial netting of wild salmon. This would allow many tens of thousands of fish to return safely to their birth rivers to breed and replenish wild salmon numbers. Sadly it the Scottish Government has chosen not to follow this course of action and has instead decided to allow east coast salmon netters to continue killing salmon, so long as those salmon are tagged at the time of killing, in river estuaries - the very places netting can cause most damage to salmon conservation efforts. I further understand that despite salmon netters making substantial profits from the fish they catch the tags are to be paid for from public funds and supplied by Marine Scotland to the salmon netters free of charge.

On the 21st of August 2015 I wrote to the Minister for the Environment concerning the untenable position of Mr. George Pullar of Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd. who was then a member of the Stakeholder Reference Group established to advise the Scottish Government on proposals for new legislation on wild fisheries. Mr. Pullar had previously admitted 9 breaches of salmon conservation laws and Forfar Sheriff Court had fined Usan £7,000 for these serious wildlife crimes. It was only after my intervention that Mr. George Pullar was asked to relinquish his position on the Stakeholder Reference Group.

I understand Police Scotland is currently investigating Usan over further alleged wildlife crimes related to salmon netting close times. The Scottish SPCA has also been investigation Usan over other possible wildlife crimes.

I have also been told that at least one Usan employee may have recently been charged with other criminal activity related to their job and that another employee is currently under police

investigation over further allegations of criminal activity related to their employment. In addition I have asked Police Scotland to revoke any firearms licences held by any employee of Usan who is found guilty of criminal offences.

I would strongly suggest that the Scottish Government ascertain the accuracy of these allegations prior to going ahead with any scheduled meeting with representatives of Usan.

Given that Usan have already pled guilty to numerous breaches of current legislation governing the netting of wild salmon I ask Marine Scotland to refuse to issue any salmon carcass tags to Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd or the Scottish Wild Salmon Company and to take any action available to revoke any licences they hold for the netting of wild salmon in river estuaries.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

John F. Robins
Secretary to Animal Concern and the Save Our Seals Fund.