

Foreword

by Lord Seafield

We approach the May elections to the Scottish Parliament and possibly a new-look Scottish Executive after that. Therefore, while taking the opportunity in this Review to look back at just some of what we have done over the last 12 months, it is also an ideal opportunity to lay out our priorities for Scotland's countryside and for rural business through the next Parliamentary term.

Seafield Estates was a founder member of the Scottish Estates Business group (SEBG) which comprises a number of Scotland's larger, progressive landholdings. Since the forming of this group, we have provided, with other rural organisations, a shared voice to impress on those who frame our legislation, that modern family businesses such as ours have an important part to play in the fabric of rural Scotland and its future success.

Scotland is famous for its high quality produce - some of our best fish, beef and game comes from managed estates. We would like to see future Government support for locally sourced produce, the public sector procurement process favouring local food sourcing, and more local food in schools.

Scotland's estates offer an integrated, long-term approach to land management and conservation, but among other measures we would welcome business rate reductions as environmental incentives and a more structured carbon trading network to attract small, private timber growers.

Estates have an important role to play in future energy solutions as we are doing at the Boyndie wind farm, but we need a clearer strategic view from Government and local authorities on sites for wind power, and support and intervention by Government on biomass to establish a supply chain.

News Review

Boyndie veteran opens windfarm



William Heller (left) of Falck Renewables with Paddy Lyttle who performed the official opening duties.

The £15 million, seven turbine windfarm at Boyndie Airfield on Seafield Estate near Banff was officially opened in October 2006. The official duties were carried out by 92 year old Paddy Lyttle, who was a member of the RAF maintenance ground crew at the wartime airfield in 1945.

He performed the opening by smashing a bottle of whisky against one of the turbine masts, with a Tornado from 15 Squadron RAF Lossiemouth also performing a flypast.

Work began on the windfarm project in 2001 which is estimated to have a life of 25 years, and produce enough energy for 8500 homes - the equivalent of all the properties at Banff, Whitehills and Portsoy and the surrounding area.

It is owned and operated by Boyndie Wind Energy Limited, a subsidiary of Milan-based Falck Renewables.

Estates are significant providers of affordable rented accommodation in rural areas, but we could do more through rural exception sites (making sites not on local plans available for development), and shared equity housing.

On the agriculture front we would like to see a Government commitment to establish a new entrants' scheme, greater flexibility for new agricultural tenancies to stimulate new lets, and assistance with succession planning for existing farmers.

Launch day turbine tour.

Boyndie is the first windfarm community scheme to exist in Scotland. Falck made a £750,000 stake in the project available through a share offer in 2006, with investors able to invest a minimum of £250 and a maximum of £20,000 in £1 shares in the venture. The offer, which closed last August, was fully subscribed. Aimed primarily at local people, this means that they are benefiting directly from the siting of the windfarm in their locality.

Falck Renewables' Business Development Director, Charles Williams, praised the local community's support for the scheme, and expressed his enthusiasm for Boyndie as the first co-operative of this type in Scotland.

Regarding rural jobs and businesses, red tape must be reduced and more flexible support from enterprise organisations given for business start-ups.

Finally, on tourism, we recognise that estates have an important part to play in Scottish tourism in the future. The next Executive must recognise this also. We know the tremendous value of sporting shooting, deer stalking and fishing to Scotland. These are world-class products, and to fulfil their potential should be promoted as such - worldwide.

Kinveachy deer larder

A new deer larder has been designed and constructed at Kinveachy to handle up to 1000 deer carcasses produced each year on the estate. This, the third generation of deer larders to be built on the site, reflects state-of-the-art design in modern handling techniques, and also complies fully with the latest 2006 hygiene regulations.

Ease of handling has been the design priority. The deer come in at one end, are weighed and processed in the preparation room, slide through on rails into the chill, and pass from the chill directly into the game dealer's vehicle.

The modern preparation area means that a number of deer can be processed at any one time by staff members working together before being transferred to the chill unit.

The larder also has staff facilities and an office area for storage of larder records and health and safety information.

The chill can hold up to 50 deer at any one time, and ensures that carcasses are chilled to the correct temperature in the shortest time possible after coming off the hill. The larder was jointly designed by estate staff and surveyor Alasdair Ramsay. The main contractor was Colin Lawson of Grantown-on-Spey, with support from Paneltech and Allan Brown, electrician.

The larder was commissioned on 1 October 2006.



Photo: Jimmy Simpson

Carcasses hanging in the new deer larder.

Tahitian

Another pedigree Limousin bull has recently been purchased directly from France by the Cruikshank family, the tenants of Mains of Clury farm near Dulnain Bridge. This new arrival, named Tahitian, brings to three the number of French bulls which now form the basis of the pedigree herd which has been successfully bred on the farm, starting back in 1998 when the first Limousin cow was bought at the Carlisle sales.

The cows now number 30. The policy is to retain most of the heifers for breeding and sell the best young bulls at pedigree sales.

The prefix 'Clury' has become increasingly established in the pedigree world, as reflected in one of the top prices achieved at the Carlisle sales in May 2006, when 21,500 guineas was paid for the young bull 'Clury Vanityfair', sired by the bull 'Sultan' out of the cow 'Clury Penance'.

Brain Pack talks to Estate tenants

Continuing the series of talks for farming tenants, the Estate was delighted to welcome Brian Pack, Chief Executive of the ANM Group, to the Cullen Estate office in December.

Through his management of the range of enterprises forming the ANM Group, from auctioneering and food processing to catering, Brian was able to give a broad business oversight on the many factors which now impact on agriculture.

The Estate is very grateful to Brian for providing such a comprehensive and entertaining commentary.



Photo: DCS

The visit to Kinveachy with DCS could not have been on a wetter day!

Broodstock Capture

Autumn was a busy time for the Spey Fishery Board staff with the annual collection of broodstock for the hatchery. The adult salmon are captured using two methods - rod catch and electro-netting. The electro-net was purchased with a 50% grant from SNH in 2004 and allows the Bailiffs to collect fish from targeted areas more efficiently than in the past. However, the process still requires considerable manpower and the Board are grateful for the assistance provided by ghillies from Castle Grant and other beats on the River Spey.

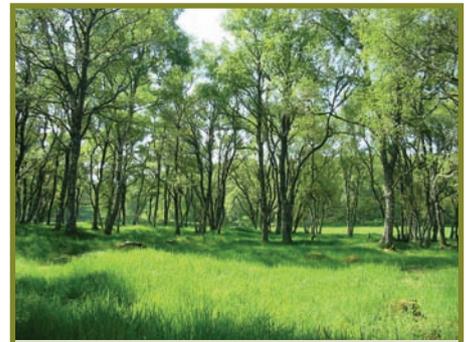
Broodstock capture and stripping was completed by late November and the target of two million eggs successfully achieved. These eggs have been carefully

nurtured over winter and the resulting fry released into specific areas of the Spey where juvenile surveys indicate low or no salmon are present.



Photo: Spey Fishery Board

Three generations of the Cruikshank family, with Tahitian.



Delliefure Burial Site

The joint venture between the Reidhaven Estate and Native Woodland Ltd, specialists in natural burials, is now up and running following the designation last year of a ten-acre site outside Grantown-on-Spey as a burial ground.

The site, which consists of seven glades, three in silver birch woodland and four on open ground running down to the river, will be able to accommodate 6000 burials. All coffins used for the burials must be made out of biodegradable material such as wicker, bamboo or cardboard, and there will be no gravestones - instead, an indigenous tree can be planted on the open site, or a rough-hewn stone placed in the groundcover in the woodland.

The popularity of natural burial sites is increasing - there are now 214 natural burial sites across the UK, and the Natural Death Centre forecasts that natural burials will account for more than 10 per cent of all burials by 2020.

Lord Seafield commented:

"The burial site is both beautiful and tranquil - a wonderful setting. The natural, minimal approach to marking the burial plots and sensitive management of the site will ensure that these qualities remain."

Loch Vaa Boathouse

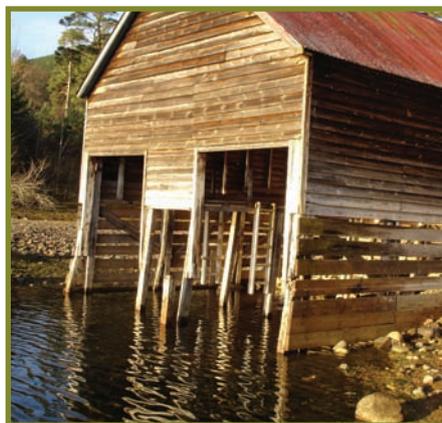
Major work has been completed on the renovation of the boathouse at Loch Vaa, near Boat of Garten. A boathouse has been on this site since the early 1900s, and although some remedial work has been carried out over the years, the main structural supports were in need of replacement.

The boathouse was originally built for use by the Seafield family while staying at Kinveachy Lodge, but more recently has been used by fishermen in Strathspey on a daily basis, fishing for brown and rainbow trout on the loch.

Loch Vaa is an SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), a local beauty spot, and is also popular with walkers and birdwatchers. In keeping with its surroundings and to avoid using treated timber since this might affect water quality, the Estate decided to use homegrown larch for the new construction. Larch trees from the Estate were selected and a mobile sawmill brought in to mill the timber to the exact sizes needed for the reconstruction.

Estate head ghillie Lionel Main supervised both the milling of the timber and repair work on the boathouse, with the assistance of ghillies Roddy Hastings, Simon Crozier, gamekeeper Fraser Gordon and other estate staff.

The first phase of work required a bund to be dug around the boathouse, with any water remaining in the bund being pumped back into the loch to allow new



Loch Vaa boathouse- before (above) and after. Photos: Lionel Main.

supports to be laid on the loch bed. With this work completed the bund was removed, the bed of the loch reinstated, and water allowed to flood back into the area.

Loch Vaa has been leased to Craig Ireland of Inverness Fish Farming who intends to open the loch as a high quality brown trout fishery. The works were completed in the closed season to cause the least disturbance to wildlife and fishermen.





Timber haulage – Lower Tomvaich

Tyre pressure control

The Estate has been involved in trialling the use of a timber lorry fitted with a system which allows tyres to be inflated and deflated, whilst moving, depending on the load being carried, the speed of the vehicle and the particular road surface.

The benefits to the forest owner could be reduced road construction and maintenance costs, along with reduced environmental impacts.

2007 Dates for the Diary

*Tuesday 15 May -
Ridge to River Walk*
(contact Neil Bremner, Aviemore
Walking Festival, tel: 01479 812384)

*Wednesday 30 May -
Strathspey Kinveachy Tour*
(contact Strathspey Estate Office for
more details, tel: 01479 872529)

From Ridge to River

Last May the Estate organised a seven mile guided walk from 'Ridge to River' starting from one of the highest points on Strathspey Estate, Sguman Mor in the Monadhliath Mountains to Sluggan Bridge over the Dulnain.

The walk was part of a continuing initiative to take visitors into the countryside and explain to them a little about how the Estate works. On the outing the walkers crossed grouse moor and stalking terrain, and the Estate's sporting manager Frank Law, explained about the management of heather moorland and the many species that this habitat supports.

Those on the walk saw, among many other species, ring ouzel, mountain hare, meadow pipets, red grouse, greylag geese and an osprey nest in the distance. A group of stags above Sluggan Bridge rounded off an informative and enjoyable day.

The Estate is planning a further guided walk in 2007 as part of the Aviemore Walking Festival in May. Keep an eye on the local press for details or visit www.aviemorewalking.com

The route of the Ridge to River Walk.



Photo: Stewart Blair

Extension to Bogtown Grainstore

Several thousand additional tonnes of grain will be able to be stored in a new extension to the Bogtown Grain Store. The new unit will extend to some 720 sq metres.

The estate is investing in additional grain storage to enable diversification into alternative crops, and bring further efficiencies with drying and storage being focused at a single location. The Bogtown store will allow the Estate to increase wheat production, supply the local milled oats market, and produce new crops for biofuels.

Extended storage will also allow crops to be marketed at the best time, with the ability to refocus on crops for which there are developing markets rather than those where there is already oversupply.

The new extension is being built to the latest Health and Safety guidelines, and will provide the best working environment for the Estate's farm staff. It is intended that work will be complete in time for the 2007 harvest.

Contact us

If you have any comment on the content of this news review, or wish to contact Seafield or Strathspey Estates on any relevant issue then you can write, or telephone our offices:

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