

Impact Report 2024

WildFish



Contents

CEO foreword	1
Our unique proposition	2
A year in numbers	4
Sewage scandal challenge: Our biggest win in 2024	5
Our work streams	6
SmartRivers	8
Water Action	12
Salmon farming	18
Communications	23
Meet the team	24
Our funding: where it comes from and where it goes	25



CEO Foreword

Our mission is to protect wild fish populations and their waters. This is no ordinary challenge – it is a critical fight for survival. Wild fish populations are plummeting: their habitats are being destroyed, most of our rivers fail to reach ecological targets and all fail basic chemical standards. We have lost 90% of our wetland habitats in less than 100 years, some 13% of fresh water species are threatened with extinction and the Atlantic salmon, arguably the best indicator of aquatic health, is now endangered in UK waters.

These wild salmon and their ancestors have been present in many of our rivers for over 100,000 years, probably the oldest population of wild animals in the UK. Their catastrophic decline is a warning of the parlous state of our natural heritage.

We use the power of science, the law, education and the widest possible citizen engagement to hold the government and polluters to account and drive change. No other NGOs work quite like we do and we will not accept any funding which compromises our work. We focus on what matters.

We are the only wild fish charity to oppose open net salmon farming lock, stock, and barrel. Our leadership in this is acknowledged and undisputed. The evidence is clear: you can have wild salmon or farmed salmon but not both.

Likewise with sewage, we are focused on enforcing the law which will drive the investment to stem the flow of raw sewage in our rivers. The Office for Environmental Protection has agreed with us about the law. It is a question of regulation, not ownership.

This report sets out what WildFish's dedicated, passionate, and hardworking team achieved in 2024 across a wide range of issues in England, Wales, and Scotland. Though, as our history shows, we have been delivering over decades – not just the last year.

I hope it inspires you to join and support us to restore the plentiful supplies of clean, free-flowing, barrier-free water wild fish crave. But it is not just about the fish. If we fail, we are in peril too.

Nick Measham, CEO
March 2025



**“If a river is fit for salmon,
it is fit for anything.”**

Nick Measham, CEO, WildFish

Our unique proposition

WildFish is the UK's only independent, environmental charity working to protect wild fish and their waters.

We use scientific evidence, the law, and citizen engagement to confront the growing challenges facing wild fish. We identify and document ecological damage to rivers through SmartRivers sampling, providing solid evidence to push governments and regulators to take action against the decline in wild fish populations. Our aquaculture initiatives highlight the harm open-net salmon farming causes to wild fish populations, a critical issue following the 2023 reassessment of Atlantic salmon as endangered in UK waters. If we fail to act now, more species will follow.


We work locally to empower communities with the knowledge and skills they need to protect wild fish populations. Through targeted training initiatives, we strengthen the capacity of individuals and organisations to take meaningful action. At the same time, we amplify awareness

of the critical challenges facing wild fish, addressing these issues at both local and national levels. By combining grassroots efforts with broader advocacy, we aim to foster a network of informed and engaged stakeholders committed to safeguarding the future of wild fish and their ecosystems.

'...we amplify awareness of the critical challenges facing wild fish, addressing these issues at both local and national levels.'

WildFish is a small charity with a big footprint and a long and proud history. We are completely independent and take no government or polluter funding, which would compromise our work, allowing us to operate where we can have the biggest impact. We work enthusiastically with other NGOs where it makes sense to do so and where it is consistent with our aims and values.





"There's an urgency, an informed passion, a clarity of purpose about WildFish that I trust. Our threatened waters and all that swim in them need such friends."

Mark Wormald, Author of
The Catch: Fishing for Ted Hughes

A year in numbers

SmartRivers

To date, SmartRivers monitoring has covered

 **129**
rivers

and in 2024 alone monitored

 **228**

sites across England, Scotland and Wales

We have delivered over

 **5,750**
volunteer training hours



Salmon Farming

It is a coalition campaign supported by

 **60**

NGOs and community groups in the UK and worldwide

 **300**

The number of chefs and restaurants supporting Off the table

More than  **50**

Scottish community groups and businesses supported our national campaigning work in 2024

 **100K**

signatures on our petition calling for Wagamama to take farmed salmon off its menus



Water Action

 **992**

of you wrote to the Secretary of State in 2024 demanding action to protect wild fish from sewage pollution

 **784**

of you wrote to Southern Water supporting our calls to stop damaging abstractions on precious chalk streams (Southern Water only received 1,100 in total!)

 **12**

Drafted amendments to the Water Special Measures Bill tabled by peers in the House of Lords



Comms

Total media coverage  **142**

pieces (including the BBC, The Guardian, Financial Times, Daily Mail, The Telegraph)

Email database

 **10,953**

Website visits

 **54,000**

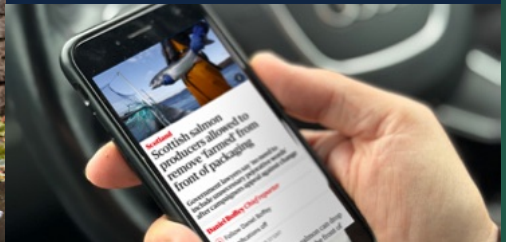
Total online community

 **40,619**

Facebook: 18,641, X: 12,715
Instagram: 7,972, LinkedIn: 1,291

Total advocacy actions

 **7,517**



Sewage scandal challenge: Our biggest win in 2024

We achieved amazing results across all our work streams, including building on our position as the leading wild fish NGO wholly opposed to salmon farming and growing and using SmartRivers monitoring. But 2024's stand out impact is on sewage. The Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) upheld our complaint – the first ever it received – that Ofwat, the Environment Agency and Defra have all failed for decades to implement the law on sewage. Doubling down on our 2023 judicial review, the OEP agreed with us and is now demanding that they must all ensure that water companies only discharge raw sewage into rivers in exceptional circumstances.

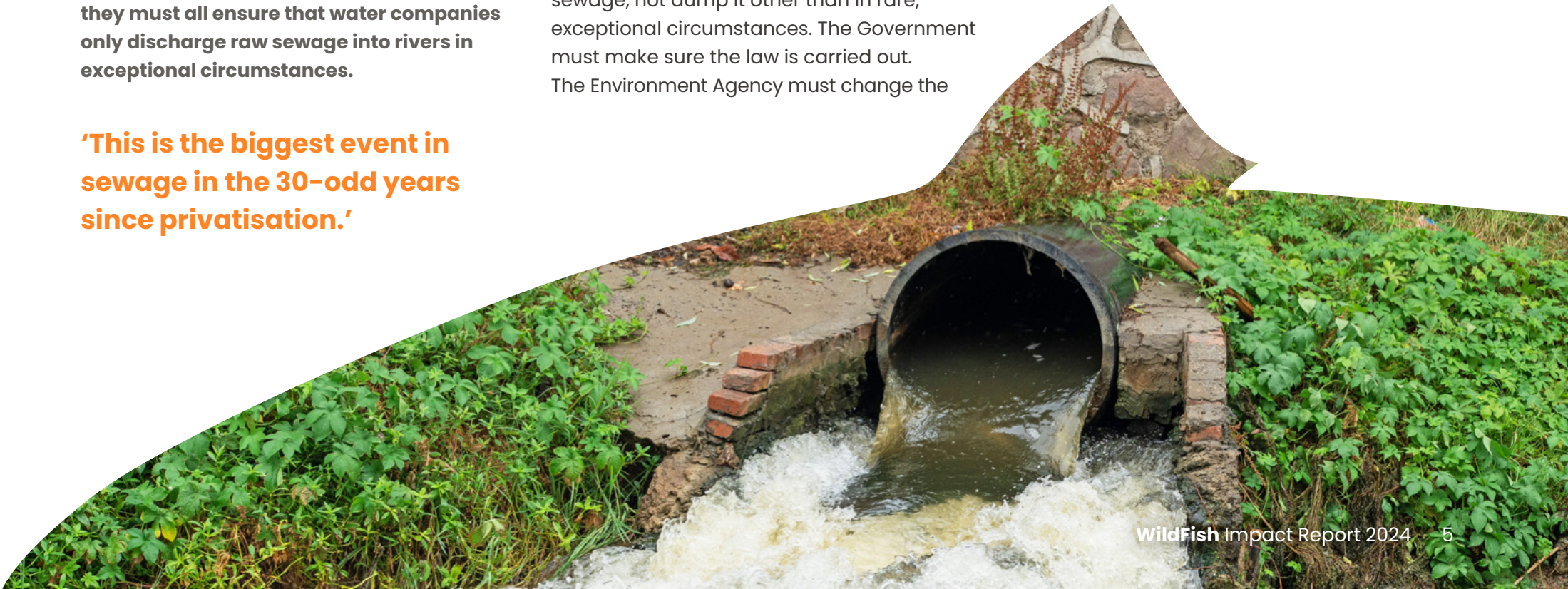
'This is the biggest event in sewage in the 30-odd years since privatisation.'

We and others – notably Feargal Sharkey, our own vice president, Peter Hammond and Ashley Smith of Windrush Against Sewage Pollution and Matt Staniek of Save Windermere amongst others – have exposed the problem. Now, thanks to the OEP, we have a clear route to stopping using our rivers as sewers. This is the biggest event in sewage in the 30-odd years since privatisation.

The Government, Ofwat and the Environment Agency must all act to ensure water companies invest in new capacity to treat sewage, not dump it other than in rare, exceptional circumstances. The Government must make sure the law is carried out. The Environment Agency must change the

water companies discharge permits to make it illegal to discharge raw sewage in anything but exceptional rainfall – and enforce the change. Finally, Ofwat must ensure water companies invest in the capacity to treat and not dump the sewage.

It is now a matter of when, not if, this is done. It will take a decade to carry out the investment, but it is the beginning of the end in the sewage dumping story in this arena. Our focus will now switch to the even more serious threats of abstraction and agriculture.



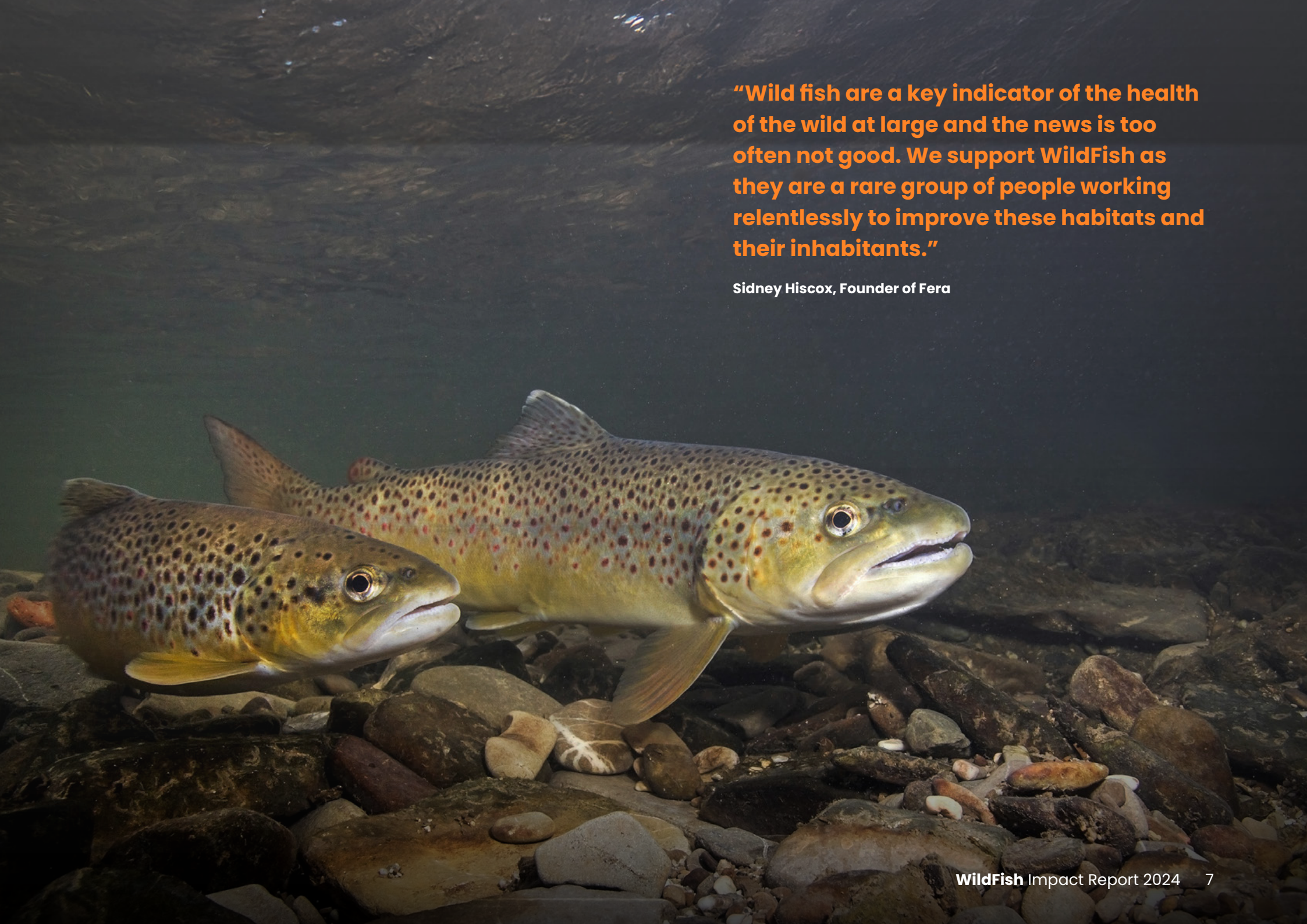
Our work streams

Wild fish face many threats. Their challenges are complex and inter-linked, but we currently focus on these issues: over-abstraction, pollution, industrial fish farming and barriers in rivers.

We group our work into four workstreams. These workstreams are pieces in a jigsaw where the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

- **SmartRivers** – collecting real evidence.
- **Water Action** – using the evidence to deal with pollution, abstraction, and barriers.
- **Salmon Farming** – challenging one main threat to wild salmon which we can do something about.
- **Off the table** – influencing consumers to stop eating farmed salmon.



An underwater photograph of two brown trout swimming over a rocky riverbed. The fish are positioned in the lower half of the frame, with the larger one in the foreground and a smaller one behind it. Both fish have characteristic brown and black spots on their golden-brown bodies. The background is dark and slightly out of focus, showing the texture of the water and the riverbed. The lighting is soft, highlighting the details of the fish's scales and fins.

“Wild fish are a key indicator of the health of the wild at large and the news is too often not good. We support WildFish as they are a rare group of people working relentlessly to improve these habitats and their inhabitants.”

Sidney Hiscox, Founder of Fera

SmartRivers

What is it?

We are working to fill the monitoring gap in UK rivers through high quality citizen science.

To date, SmartRivers monitoring has covered 129 rivers and in 2024 alone monitored **228 sites** across England, Scotland, and Wales. Click [here](#) to see the 2024 SmartRivers progress report.

We have delivered over **5,750** volunteer training hours.

We are working with the Environment Agency and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to determine how SmartRivers data can be integrated into local decision-making.

The crisis: why it matters

- Compared to 2019, in 2022 the Environment Agency reduced the number of water quality samples they took by almost a third.
- No monitoring means no evidence. Monitoring underpins the inspection and enforcement needed to protect rivers.
- Independent data is at the heart of all we do. SmartRivers is one main source of information about the pollution pressures our rivers and fish face. SmartRivers gives us evidence for action.



Our work

Case study

Chemical pollution: Alyn (Welsh Dee)

The Welsh Dee Trust established a SmartRivers hub in spring 2021. They initially signed up to monitor the River Alyn, but have since expanded to cover the River Ceiriog and various brooks in the Aldford Brook catchment. They joined SmartRivers to build long term datasets on the condition of the rivers while various schemes are undertaken to improve water quality and flow in the area.

The data collected so far has shown consistent chemical pressures throughout much of the catchment, particularly in the autumn samples.

We used this data as evidence in a request to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to see records of pesticide applications by farmers. The HSE refused our request, but the Information Commissioner has ruled in our favour. We hope to be able to use these records as the basis for regulatory reforms to protect our rivers from pesticide and other chemical abuse.

Case study

Chalk stream protection: Avon (Wiltshire)

In 2019, Wiltshire Fisheries Association set up a SmartRivers hub. They initially covered the rivers Avon and Wylde, but have since included the Nadder and Till.

The hub joined over concerns the Avon was declining in quality in front of their eyes and was a shadow of its former self, but no action was being taken because the river was still classified as 'good'.

The SmartRivers dataset has resulted in regular workshops and meetings with the local Environment Agency, to share data and investigate opportunities to improve the state of this once flourishing chalk stream. An example of how this collaboration can work is at the Ham Hatches site on the Avon, where the Environment Agency commissioned additional sonde monitoring to investigate concerns raised from our results.



SmartRivers data is now collected at 12 sites twice a year on the Avon – a higher spatial and temporal resolution than the Environment Agency. It is showing that the Avon has increasing chemical stress exhibited by the invertebrate communities in autumn and declining invertebrate numbers overall. The data is being used to investigate the impact of fish farms and sewage treatment works on the river.



Case study

Monitoring the success of in-river work: Beverley Brook

Barnes Common are conducting various in-stream habitat works on the Beverley Brook. They established a SmartRivers hub in 2023 and have chosen to use SmartRivers monitoring to do a before and after study to see how the river responds to their interventions.

The 'before' water quality scores on the Beverley Brook indicate moderate to very high impacts across most of our monitored stressors. This is a heavily impacted urban river.

We will continue to monitor the river to assess the impact as work progresses.



Legal action

Notify the Environment Agency under the Environmental Damage Regulations 2015: Cunsey Beck

Thanks to SmartRivers data we've been able to write to the Environment Agency to notify it under the Environmental Damage Regulations 2015 for damage to Cunsey Beck.

In 2023, Matt Staniek, Director of Save Windermere, founded a SmartRivers Hub in the Windermere catchment. Matt was concerned by the lack of independent monitoring being conducted in the catchment downstream of United Utilities' assets, therefore the Hub's sample sites are primarily selected to assess the impact sewage treatment works are having on the rivers that flow into the lake.

SmartRivers data in 2023 showed that the health of every river sampled in the Windermere catchment was impacted by United Utilities' assets. The abundance of

pollution sensitive riverfly species was found to be lower below United Utilities' wastewater treatment works when compared with above.

This is not the first time WildFish and Save Windermere have been involved in the issue of Cunsey Beck pollution. In 2022, a serious incident, which an Environment Agency report said killed "100%" of the fish and invertebrates in the stream, was poorly investigated by the Environment Agency. It was put down to an algal bloom and not sewage. A subsequent WildFish information request uncovered a series of errors and inadequacies in the Environment Agency's handling of the investigation and these findings have since been exposed nationally in BBC Panorama's episode 'The Water Pollution Cover-up'.

"SmartRivers data is the currency local groups like us can use that regulators will actually take notice of. It's our best hope to drive improvements for our river."

David Holroyd, Wiltshire Fishery Association SmartRivers hub lead





“The toxic pressures on our waterways have never been greater, but it is not impossible nor too late to improve this situation. WildFish is committed to doing everything possible to make a difference and is fighting for our seas and rivers on many levels: in the political arena, in law and in the wider court of public opinion.”

Matthew Wright, Television Personality

Water Action

What is it?

Water Action is about driving change.

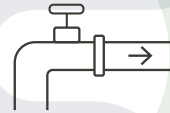
We use the evidence from SmartRivers, the wider scientific community, and the law, to underpin our campaigning work to tackle the issues of water supply, pollution from sewage and farming, barriers to migration and other threats.

The crisis: why it matters

Fish need abundant, unpolluted water and freedom of movement whether they are migratory salmon and sea trout, or resident grayling and roach. Delivering water quantity means reducing abstraction by water companies and farmers. Tackling pollution means tackling the sources: sewage, agriculture, industry, and ordinary road run-off.



The many threats to our rivers



Over abstraction

Sewage pollution



Agricultural pollution

Barriers



“Really clear from the Office of Environmental Protection – it is an important step forward in cracking down on illegal activity. WildFish have been brilliantly relentless in their campaign to enforce the law...”

Dr Rose O’Neill, CEO of the Campaign for National Parks



Abstraction

- Parts of England are projected to **run out of water in the next 20 years**. The UK's water supply is forecast to drop 7% by 2045 due to climate change.
- Nearly a quarter of English rivers are at serious risk from **unsustainable water abstraction**.
- On average, a person in the UK uses **150 litres** of water a day. Residents of Copenhagen use less than 110 litres per day.
- **700 million litres** of water per day are from unsustainable sources.

Lower volumes of water mean that fish are less able to migrate up and down rivers and to complete their life cycles. In these smaller volumes of water – because of the lack of dilution – pollutants in the water become more concentrated, and increased sediment clogs up rivers. Less water also reduces shelter and food for wild fish, and as water temperatures increase, oxygen levels decrease.



Pollution

- **40%** of diffuse pollution is caused by poor agricultural practices.
- **3.6 million hours** worth of untreated sewage was released into rivers and streams in 2023.
- **350,000** regulated chemicals are in use. Our rivers are currently only checked for **52** of these.

Almost everything we do on land has an impact on our waterways and the wildlife they support. Today, our rivers and oceans are being destroyed by pollution. Untreated sewage is pumped illegally into our rivers across the UK daily. Sewage reduces the quality of water by stimulating the growth of algae which starves freshwater species, like Atlantic salmon, of oxygen. Excess sediment, nutrients and chemicals run off farmland and straight into our rivers, lakes, and streams. Chemicals leach into the water from sewers, roads, and the land. Chemical pollution can cause lethal harm to river life and this harm is further compounded by the impacts of climate change.



Barriers

- There are on average **0.75 barriers per 1km** of river in the UK.
- At least **62,235** barriers are officially recorded in the UK – but the true number is likely to be far higher.
- Due to artificial barriers, only **3.3%** of the total river network of Great Britain remains connected and would allow unrestricted movement of aquatic fauna.

In-stream barriers affect the migration and movement of diadromous fish to and from spawning and rearing habitats. Barriers can prevent movement and migration of fish altogether. When there is no way for fish to traverse the barrier successfully it can lead to localised extinctions upstream of the barrier. Barriers delay fish on their migrations, and this can affect the timings of fish spawning and lead to lower chances of egg survival due to climatic and hydrological conditions. Barriers can also limit the number of fish being able to move between these habitat types, creating genetic bottlenecks in smaller localised populations. Even with accessibility interventions at barriers, such as fish passes, the number of fish being able to successfully traverse the obstacle is limited as they do not provide 100% passability.



Our work

Tackling sewage pollution

In December 2024, in response to our formal complaint, the Office for Environmental Protection agreed with us that Ofwat, the Environment Agency and Defra have all failed to implement the law on sewage treatment, allowing water companies to pollute English rivers unlawfully for years. This is the biggest breakthrough in protecting our rivers from sewage since privatisation some 30-odd years ago.

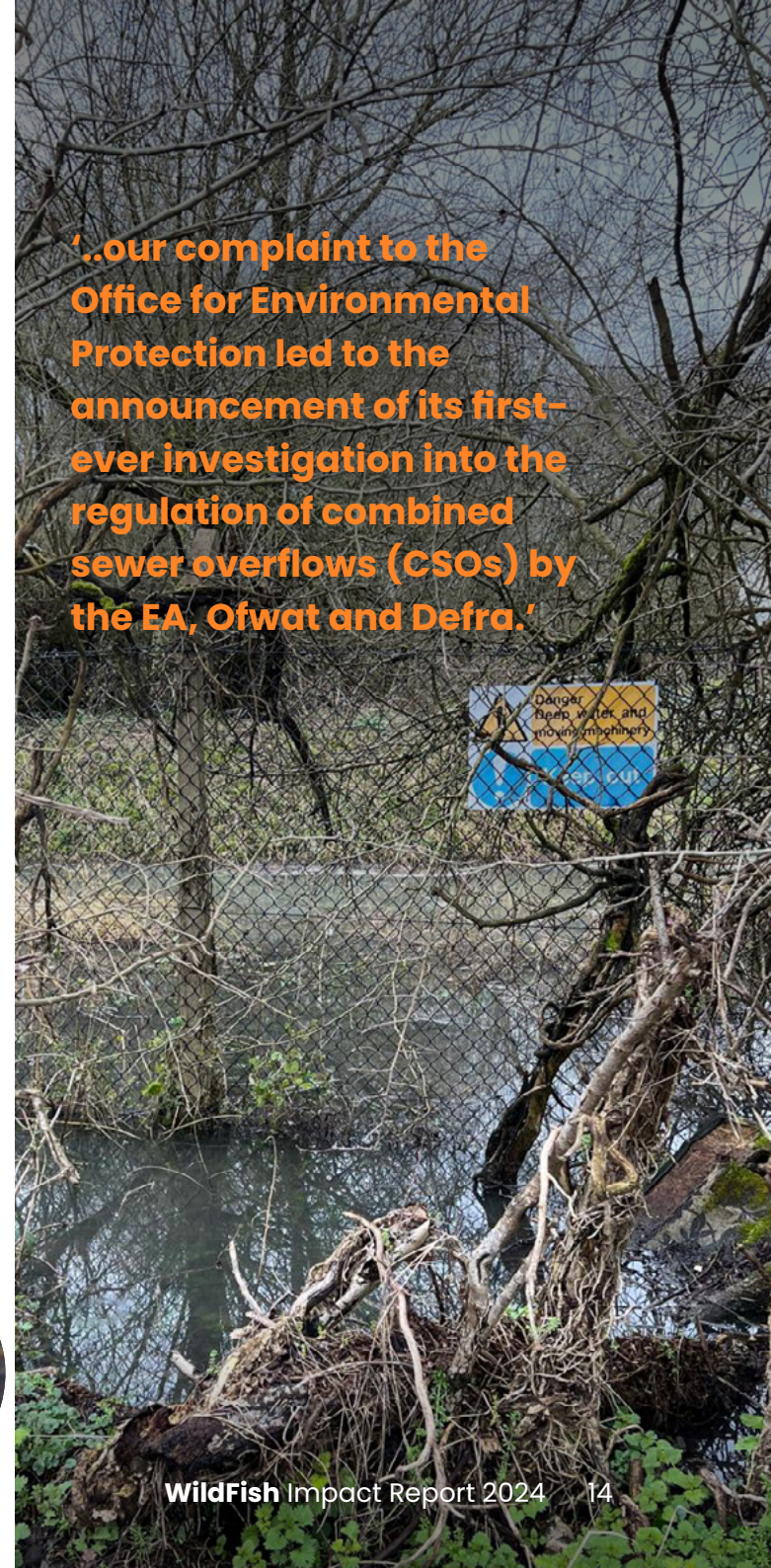
We made history in 2021 when our complaint to the Office for Environmental Protection led to the announcement of its first-ever investigation into the regulation of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) by the Environment Agency, Ofwat and Defra. Three years on, in December 2024, the OEP upheld our complaint. It has issued formal Decision Notices to each of the Environment Agency, OFWAT and Defra, concluding that they have broken the law on sewage pollution – as WildFish said they had been – and requires them each to spell out within two months how they will now comply with the law.

It is now clear that Ofwat has a duty to directly enforce the law on sewage treatment standards for water companies that dates back to 1994, which it has failed to do over decades.

The Environment Agency also has to secure compliance with that 1994 law by tightening the terms of the permits it issues to water companies under the Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016. As WildFish has been pointing out, most permits issued to water companies do not currently restrict raw sewage overflow discharges to exceptional weather.

Where works can be carried out, which would not require excessive costs, the Environment Agency is under a clear legal duty to amend permits, and in effect to require those works to be carried out. In 2025 and beyond, we will be watching.

‘...our complaint to the Office for Environmental Protection led to the announcement of its first-ever investigation into the regulation of combined sewer overflows (CSOs) by the EA, Ofwat and Defra.’



Amendments to the Water Special Measures Bill

We were very successful in tabling amendments to the Water (Special Measures) Bill as it passed through the House of Lords in autumn 2024. Many relevant amendments were tabled by peers from all political parties, as well as cross-benchers, on behalf of WildFish. One tabled by Baroness Rosie Boycott, would, if it had become law, have required water companies proactively to publish effluent and sewage treatment data and ensure that water companies always remain 'public authorities' for the purposes of the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. Others addressed sewage pollution, over-abstraction, planning matters and the roles of the Environment Agency and Ofwat. Our amendments received strong support from Conservative, Labour and Liberal peers as well as crossbenchers.

'We demanded that the UK Government and devolved administrations review their conservation policies for metapopulations of wild Atlantic salmon.'

Extra protection for salmon in rivers neighbouring SACs

We demanded that the UK Government and devolved administrations review their conservation policies for metapopulations of wild Atlantic salmon. This came after an Environment Agency report showed that the same population of salmon exists across the rivers Itchen, Test and Meon, while only the salmon entering the Itchen are afforded protection under law as a designated species in the Itchen Special Area of Conservation (SACs).

This move would have the effect, at a stroke, of greatly increasing the number of rivers throughout the UK that are covered by the strictest legal protections for salmon. Specifically, WildFish believes that the UK Government must now, at the very least, designate the Test and Meon as SACs, but more widely, all the governments of the UK must now consider other locations where similar metapopulations of salmon are spread across several rivers, all of which will then need stronger legal protection.

Tackling barriers and improving fish passage

We challenged the new Secretary of State to pass much delayed Fish Passage Regulations to protect and restore populations of all migratory species of fish. These draft Regulations have been promised many times by the government but have not yet made it to the statute book. We have also made a parallel referral to the Office for Environmental Protection on the failure to pass these draft Regulations and the implications that this has for the UK's compliance with the Water Framework Directive (now assimilated law in the UK).



Tackling unsustainable abstraction

We have been very active in tackling abstraction particularly in relation to Southern Water's abject failure to reduce Itchen and Test abstraction. On the back of this and in the light of the new Government's emphasis on housebuilding, we have written to English planning authorities, questioning if they require there to be evidence of sufficient water resources and consideration of the impacts of abstraction on rivers, as well as sufficient sewage treatment capacity, when considering granting planning permissions for new housing developments.

'...we have written to English planning authorities, questioning if they require there to be evidence of sufficient water resources and consideration of the impacts of abstraction on rivers...'

Using sound science to challenge policy

We challenged the role of Integrated Constructed Wetlands (ICW) to ensure that they will actually deliver the promised reductions in pollution wherever they are used. There is a paucity of scientific evidence to show ICWs are able to provide nutrient removal, contribute significantly to nutrient neutrality and to catchment nutrient management. Yet they are growing in popularity and are being put forward as solutions in many locations without their efficacy being proven. We are working with academics and urging organisations responsible for nutrient mitigation to rethink their use. It is vital to be clear about what these constructed wetlands can and cannot deliver.



Legal case study

The River Wye has been suffering from pollution from intensive poultry units. In 2024, we sought clarification from Powys Council, in whose area this falls, as to whether it was now taking into account such pollution rather than leaving it to other regulators when granting planning permission for new units. This follows the Supreme Court decision in *Finch*, which, when applied to the poultry industry, requires a more detailed consideration to be given by councils to the end point for chicken manure disposal and pollution risk.





“Finally wild fish have found a voice. It is a voice of authority and independence, a voice free of the tawdry shackles of water industry and government funding. A voice that has already proved it can hold both legislators and regulators to account. It is a voice for the future and a voice that has my full and enthusiastic support.”

Feargal Sharkey, Singer and Campaigner

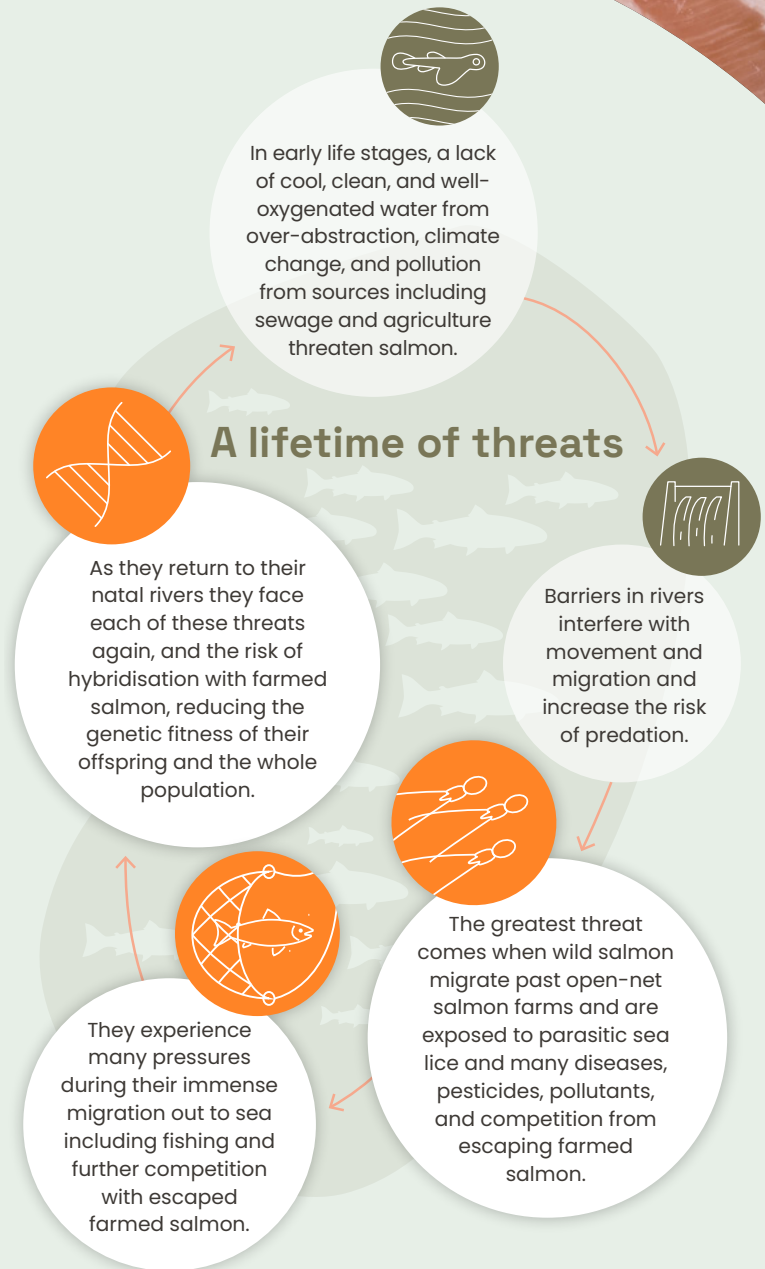
Salmon farming

What is it?

WildFish is the only wild fish conservation charity in Scotland and the UK campaigning to close the open-net salmon farming industry. We work with local community groups to oppose applications for new salmon farms in Scotland's coastal waters. We work with national partners to hold the industry, Scottish Government, and regulators to account for environmental damage caused by open-net salmon farming. We use the law to highlight where the national legislation and regulation is inadequate or not properly enforced. Our work includes the hospitality campaign *Off the table*, calling on chefs and restaurants to stop serving open-net farmed salmon in the UK and globally. More information about our salmon farming campaigning can be found [here](#).

The crisis: why it matters

- The numbers of wild salmon returning to spawn in Scotland's rivers have declined by 70% over the last two decades.
- One of the major threats facing wild fish populations in Scotland – and in particular the iconic wild Atlantic salmon and sea trout – is the rapid expansion of open-net salmon farming in the west Highlands and Islands including the Northern Isles.
- There is an extensive and historic body of evidence that supports the fact that open-net salmon farming harms wild Atlantic salmon and sea trout populations.
- **Negative impacts** arise from the proliferation and spread of sea lice parasites and disease from farmed to wild salmon and the impact of escaped farmed salmon on genetic fitness.
- Impacts also arise on the surrounding aquatic environment through the use of chemicals toxic to marine life.



Our work

Publications

In August, our peer-reviewed statistical analysis of current sea lice counting requirements was published in Aquaculture Journal. This paper found that salmon farming operators should be counting sea lice on more fish. More information about this paper can be found [here](#).

In September, we published a modelling paper which indicates that there may be a risk to wild Atlantic salmon (and sea trout) smolts migrating from east coast rivers from sea lice farms in the Northern Isles.

Also in September we published an **updated literature review** of the latest research on environmental impacts of salmon farming.



Off the table

Launched at the end of 2022, Off the table is a hospitality-focused campaign that calls on chefs and restaurants to stop serving open-net farmed salmon. It is a coalition campaign supported by 60 NGOs and community groups in the UK and worldwide, and seeks to raise awareness of the huge environmental, welfare, and sustainability issues associated with the salmon farming industry.

The number of chefs and restaurants supporting Off the table doubled in 2024, from 150 to more than 300. The campaign is now running in a number of countries internationally, including United States, Canada, Australia and Iceland.

In July, The Championships at Wimbledon were entirely free of farmed salmon. New supporters to the campaign include The Pig hotel group, The Bull Inn in Totnes, the Fish Shop in Ballater and the Scottish Food Guide. In August, the campaign was featured in a documentary on ARTE, a leading European news channel that airs in France and Germany, with commentary from WildFish as well as one of our Off the table supporting chefs.

One area of focus across the year was a focused campaign targeting high street chain Wagamama, run in partnership with Feedback, a food systems NGO supporting OTT. We launched a petition on the platform EKO in January, which garnered 100,000 signatures. In July, Chris Packham lent his support to the campaign and publicly called on the chain to stop serving farmed salmon, and has since requested to meet with the CEO on our behalf. In August, more than 500 WildFish supporters wrote directly to Wagamama, calling on them to support our campaign and stop serving farmed salmon.

“Eating Atlantic salmon from open-net salmon farms is the wrong choice for our health and the health of our environment. Responsible consumers should avoid these inhumanely, un-sustainably raised fish.”

**Douglas Frantz and Catherine Collins -
Salmon Wars**

Community action

In 2023, WildFish played a key role in objecting to a new farm application for North Kilbrannan, on the Mull of Kintyre, on account of potential impacts on wild fish populations in Endrick Water, a recognised feature of the legally protected Special Area of Conservation (SAC). While we were able to significantly delay approval, the farm was granted planning permission in November 2023.

Across 2024, WildFish continued to provide support and advice to community groups and individuals advocating for stronger marine protection and objecting to new farm applications within their waters. Objections submitted and supported include:

- Shetland
- Orkney
- Gigha
- Skye
- Ullapool



We submitted a detailed response to a consultation on Orkney Council's new marine plan in October, in collaboration with local partners. We also held an event in Ullapool in March, bringing together members of the community concerned about the expansion of the salmon farming industry, both locally and nationally.

'More than 50 Scottish community groups and businesses supported our national campaigning work in 2024...'

More than 50 Scottish community groups and businesses supported our national campaigning work in 2024, including through signing on to our open letters to the Soil Association in January and the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands in November, as well as submitting objections to Salmon Scotland's PGI application. We work closely with a number of community umbrella organisations in Scotland, including Coastal Communities Network (CCN) and Our Seas.

Community engagement and support will be a key part of our work in 2025.





'We continued to call for the RSPCA to end its certification of farmed salmon through the RSPCA Assured scheme...'

Greenwashing and certification

Exposing greenwashing tactics used by the salmon farming industry to promote farmed salmon as a sustainable fish has been a key component of our work over the past two years.

At the end of 2023 we submitted a detailed formal complaint to the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) as part of its investigation into greenwashing in relation to consumable goods, including food, focusing on claims of sustainability made by the Scottish salmon farming industry trade body, Salmon Scotland.

Across 2024, we continued to highlight the shortcomings of certification schemes for farmed salmon, and the role these play in the greenwashing of the industry. This advocacy work built on our 2023 report, **Responsibly Farmed?** Investigating the certification of Scottish farmed salmon, which highlighted serious shortcomings in certification standards, including a lack of enforcement when standards are breached.

In January 2024, WildFish coordinated an open letter to the Soil Association, calling on the organisation to stop certifying farmed salmon as 'organic'. This was co-signed by 30 community groups and NGOs, from Scotland, the wider UK, and internationally and achieved media coverage in the Guardian, The Times and The National.

After publication of the letter, and a subsequent meeting with the Soil Association, the organisation confirmed it would be conducting an urgent internal review into its organic aquaculture standard, with findings due shortly.

We also continued to call for the RSPCA to end its certification of farmed salmon through the RSPCA Assured scheme, providing commentary to the national press in August when it emerged that Loch Duart, one of the first salmon farming companies to achieve RSPCA Assured certification, was leaving the scheme.

ESS complaint

In 2024, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)'s sea lice regulatory framework came into force. In September 2023, WildFish coordinated an open letter to SEPA, co-signed by a number of environmental and community groups in Scotland and published in the Herald, which highlighted the shortcomings of this framework.

In February, WildFish and Coastal Communities Network (CCN) submitted a complaint to Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) about the framework and a lack of compliance with the Water Framework Directive. ESS confirmed that the complaint was being taken on for investigation in the summer; we await news of the outcome of that investigation.

Scottish Parliament Inquiry

In June, the Scottish Parliament's Rural Affairs and Islands Committee (RAIC) launched a follow-up inquiry into salmon farming, looking at the progress (or lack thereof) made since the 2018 Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee inquiry and subsequent recommendations. WildFish was behind these original inquiries.

WildFish gave oral evidence at the first session of the inquiry, highlighting the lack of progress made by the salmon farming industry on a range of key environmental indicators, including sea lice numbers and reporting, chemicals use and escapes. Our complaint to ESS on SEPA's sea lice regulatory framework was referenced by a number of MSPs during the inquiry.

We also highlighted the lack of a comprehensive cost-benefit analysis that quantifies the net benefit of the salmon farming industry in Scotland, which can be found [here](#).

Linked to this, in November, WildFish coordinated an open letter to the Cabinet Secretary, signed by 54 Scottish businesses, charities, community, and conservation groups, calling on the Scottish Government to commission this vital research. The letter was covered in the Herald, and the Cabinet Secretary was questioned on the issue at her RAIC evidence session.

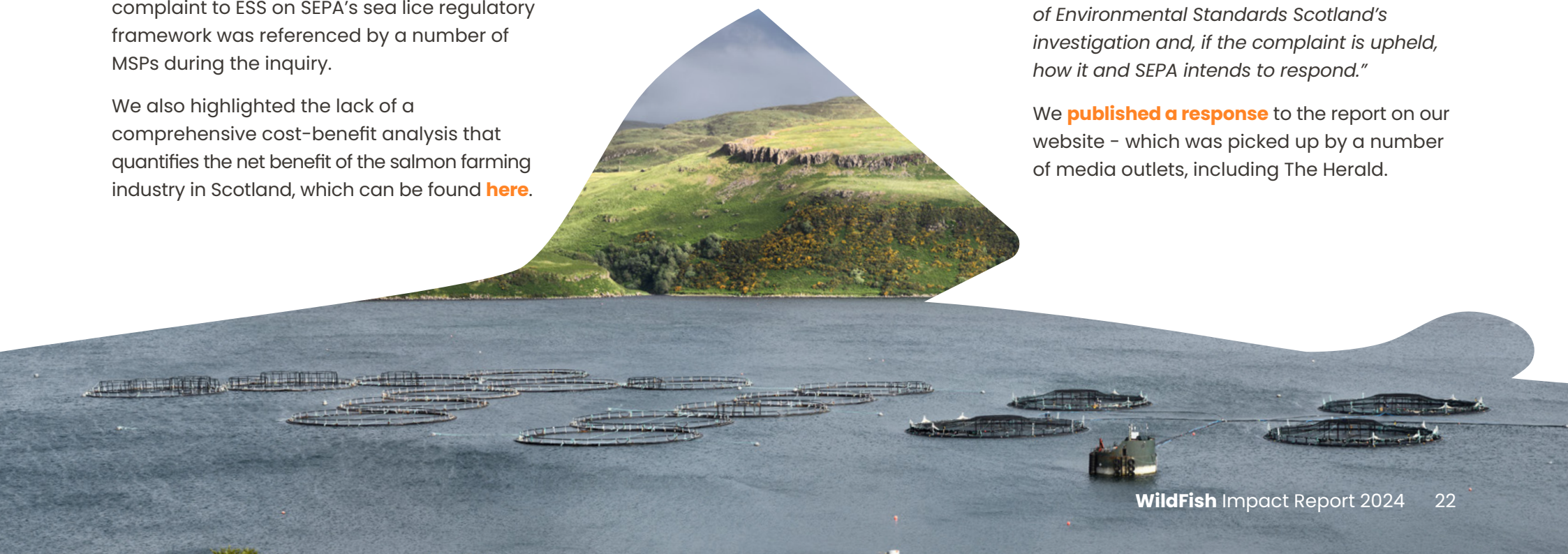
The RAIC published a report on its findings from the inquiry in January 2025.

WildFish was referenced numerous times throughout the report, highlighting our organisation's research on, amongst other

things, data gaps in sea lice reporting by the salmon farming industry, concerns around the increased risk of fish escapes at more exposed farm locations, and a lack of precaution by local authorities in relation to protecting wild fish populations when considering applications for new farms. Our ESS complaint was specifically referenced in Recommendation 237:

"The Committee notes the complaint made by Wildfish and the Coastal Communities Network to Environmental Standards Scotland about whether the SEPA sea lice framework is compliant with environmental law. The Committee requests the Scottish Government keep it informed of the outcome of Environmental Standards Scotland's investigation and, if the complaint is upheld, how it and SEPA intends to respond."

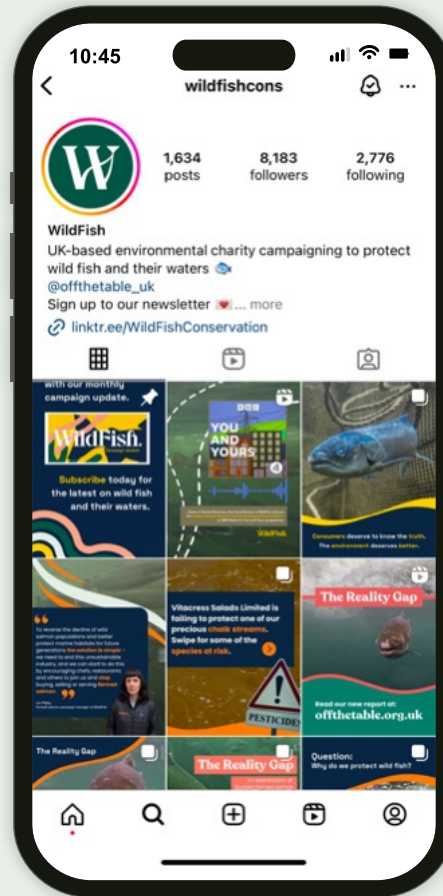
We **published a response** to the report on our website - which was picked up by a number of media outlets, including The Herald.



Communications

In 2024, our communications focused on keeping wild fish and the challenges they face at the forefront of public awareness. From exposing the threats of pollution and abstraction, to championing actionable solutions, our goal has been to make wild fish populations a top priority for individuals, communities, and decision-makers alike. Through compelling evidence, impactful campaigns, and consistent engagement, we've shone a spotlight on the urgent need to protect wild fish and their ecosystems for generations to come.

Across the media landscape, 2024 became a pivotal year for Atlantic salmon. Deservingly thrust into the spotlight after the IUCN species reassessment in December 2023 listed them as endangered in UK waters, Atlantic salmon became a symbol of the growing need for action. Our expanding email database and social media platforms proved invaluable in informing, empowering, and mobilising supporters to take meaningful advocacy actions.



'Our expanding email database and social media platforms proved invaluable in informing, empowering, and mobilising supporters to take meaningful advocacy actions.'



Total media coverage

142

pieces (including the BBC, The Guardian, Financial Times, Daily Mail, The Telegraph)

Email database

10,953

Website visits

54,000

Total online community

40,619

Facebook: 18,641,
X: 12,715
Instagram: 7,972,
LinkedIn: 1,291

Total advocacy actions

7,517

Meet the team



Nick Measham
CEO



Dr. Janina Gray
Deputy CEO



Rachel Mulrenan
Director, Scotland



Dr. Sam Green
Freshwater
Ecologist



Immy O’Keeffe
Communications
Manager



Guy Linley-Adams
Solicitor



Dr. Justin Neal
Solicitor



Lauren Harley
SmartRivers
Manager



Kim Sargeant
Operations
Manager



**Tanglewest
Douglas**
Business Development
and Fundraising



Daniel Nixon
Campaigns
Researcher



Ingrid Burt
Accounts and
Auction Manager

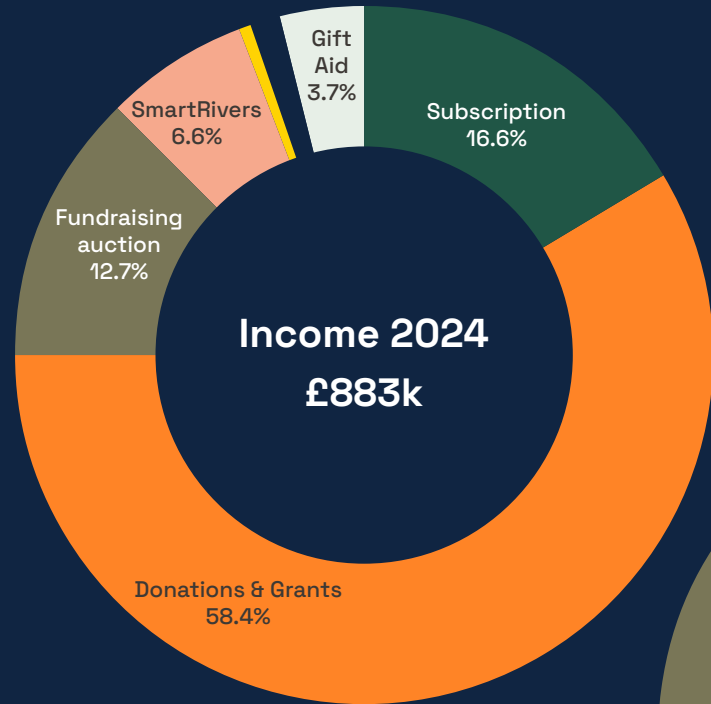


Ursula Lewis
Event Marketing
and Fundraising

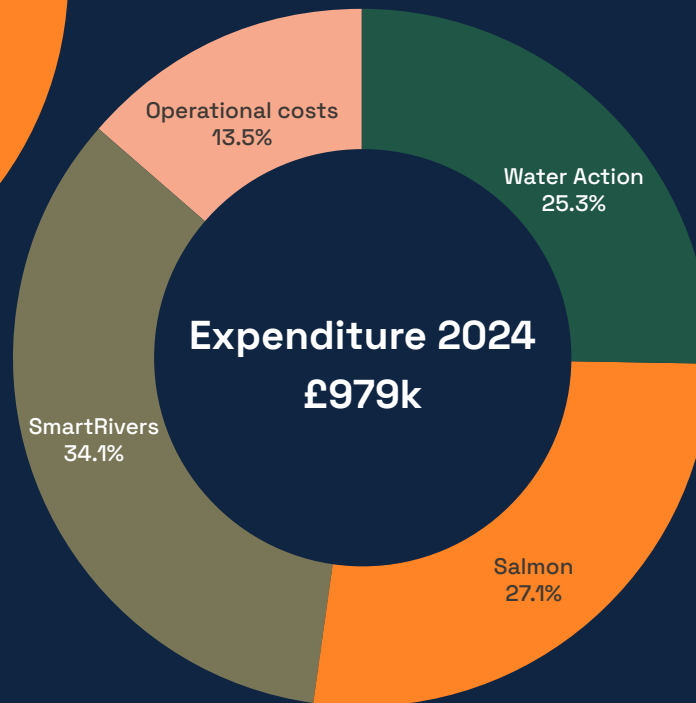


Lex Rigby
Farmed Salmon
Campaign Manager

Our funding: where it comes from and where it goes



WildFish is completely independent. We take no polluter funding or any other funding which would compromise our work.



We are extremely grateful to all of our donors. All matter, from the smallest individual to the largest organisation, some of which include:



WildFish operating principles

We strive to create a welcoming, diverse, inclusive, and adaptive environment. Staff, contractors, and volunteers are encouraged and supported to achieve their best. Our aim is for WildFish to be truly representative of all sections of society and our supporter base.

WildFish is unreservedly committed to being an equal-opportunity employer. This commitment includes organisation-wide training about our rights and responsibilities in equality, diversity, and inclusion. We help all staff and volunteers to conduct themselves in a way that encourages the organisation to provide equal opportunities in employment—to prevent bullying, harassment, victimisation, and unlawful discrimination.

We are six months into working with Wildlife and Countryside Link alongside Full Colour on the SEEDS Development Programme to create a practical framework for organisational change in WildFish's policy and culture. Our vision statement aligns with our new five year strategy:

“By December 2029, WildFish will have the foundations in place to build an inclusive and equitable workspace. We will embed, within our culture, the understanding of barriers to inclusion and the steps needed to remove them. Starting in January 2025 our goal is to create a fair workplace for all.”

Postal address:

PO Box 2412
Salisbury SP2 2QN

Registered address:

Kingsgate House
North Wing, Ground Floor
Newbury Road
Andover SP10 4DU

Charity information:

Wildfish Conservation is a registered charity:
England & Wales No. 1123285, Scotland No. SCO41584
WildFish is a company registered in England and Wales: No. 5051506.
VAT number: 564 4723 28

Contact us:

info@wildfish.org

Image credits

Cover: Niels – stock.adobe.com
Contents: Jon Ogborne
Page 2: Silviu Dascalu – stock.adobe.com
Page 3: Nick Measham
Page 5: kungfu01 – shutterstock.com
Page 7: Rostislav – stock.adobe.com

Page 10: Will Dartnell
Page 11: Jon Ogborne
Page 12: Nick Beer – stock.adobe.com
Page 12: Thomas – stock.adobe.com
Page 13: Bernd Brueggemann – stock.adobe.com
Page 14: Paul Jennings

Page 15: Steven Bramall – stock.adobe.com
Page 16: RW Jemmett – stock.adobe.com
Page 17: Jon Ogborne
Page 18: indigolotos – stock.adobe.com
Page 18: Richard Johnson – stock.adobe.com
Page 22: Reimar – stock.adobe.com