

Fisheries Innovation Scotland nets new executive director

Kara Brydson is the new executive director of Fisheries Innovation Scotland (FIS), which brings together fishermen, scientists, government and other stakeholders to support Scottish fisheries. **Kelvin Boot** reports

Less than two months into her new job, Kara Brydson spoke to *Fishing News* about what attracted her to the role, and what her hopes are for the future of this unique organisation.

Kara Brydson brings a wealth of relevant experience to her new role, having held positions at the Scottish Organic Producers' Association and the International Fund for Animal Welfare before taking up the mantle of head of Scottish marine policy at the RSPB for 11 years. In 2015, she was appointed as programme manager of Seafish's Responsible Fishing Scheme.

Her combined 20 years of working in the marine sector have ensured that she has a broad knowledge and experience of fisheries, where she has worked with NGOs, government, industry and scientists, at EU advisory council level through to marketing and inshore fisheries groups. While managing the Responsible Fisheries Scheme she had the opportunity to work with fishermen, processors, retailers and fisheries organisations – indeed the whole fishing supply chain.

"Being executive director of FIS is a natural culmination of the past 20 years of my working life," she said.

"FIS brings together some of the real big hitters from across the Scottish fishing industry, to lead a programme of problem-solving science to support the fishing industry and its supply chain. It's a brilliant organisation, and I am delighted to be joining it.

"FIS engages lots of influential people with a genuine interest in the success of Scottish fisheries. It's not just the board and the technical advisory council, but all those from across the industry who come up with ideas, provide feedback, and take an active part in Scottish fishing's future."

One size cannot fit all sectors of the industry

It is this participation that makes FIS unique, and that particularly attracted Kara Brydson to a job that brings all of her experience together.

"People tend to think of Scottish fishing as one industry, a homogeneous group all doing the same thing, facing the same challenges and gaining the same rewards. Often, what's misunderstood is the vast amount of expertise, innovation and knowledge that goes into fishing. I'm from a farming family, and I know there is no such thing as a typical farmer; I also know there is no such thing as a typical fisherman.

"The media often portrays the industry as a single type of fisherman following a generalised form of fishing. The reality is that the fishing industry contains a surprising variety of fishing, fishermen, and the infrastructure and supply chain they support. The industry is a collection of businesses where one size cannot possibly fit all; a solution for one sector might

be a challenge for another. FIS wants to expand understanding of the fishing industry, especially in Scotland, and it's not just politicians and the media who need educating – even between seafood sectors, there can be misconceptions."

As Kara points out, much of the conversation around fisheries at the moment concentrates on the consequences of the landing obligation and Brexit, but there are many other issues facing fishermen and the supply chain.

Accessing crew, ensuring that fishing is seen as a career with a future, and crew welfare are topics dear to the hearts of many across the industry. Then there are ongoing business concerns about the costs of quota, equipment, fuel and bait.

Market access is a growing worry as the political landscape changes, and at a local level are the social and environmental issues that impact on fishermen on a daily basis.

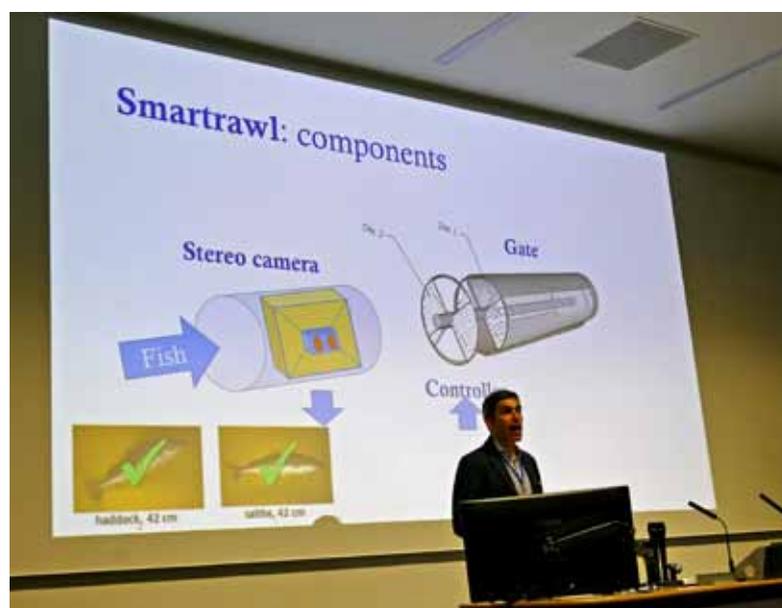
Uppermost in Kara's mind, and a message she wants to spread far and wide, is that, "Fishing is not just about fish. It's about food, of course, but also health, technology, jobs and communities, and this is where FIS fits in. The big picture, the political aspects, are of course important, but these other societal issues are fundamental, and we all need to get to grips with them."

FIS has an excellent track record over the few years since it was set up in 2014. By the end of 2019, it will have delivered more than 20 peer-reviewed projects, with an overall spend of more than £1.5m

The projects include investigations into novel in-water selectivity, Nephrops survivability, fisheries resilience to climate change, industry self-sampling, and management in



▲ The Bi-Annual Scottish Fishing Conference brings a wide range of stakeholders together.



▲ Developing new technologies for in-water selectivity has been a major focus of FIS projects.

shared seas.

These projects are not only about collecting vital data, they are about informing real changes in technology, management and fishing methods.

Kara does not see the fishing industry as inward-looking and, as well as wanting to hear ideas from within the industry – which is already full of innovators and early adopters – she is keen to look beyond to other industries that may have technologies and practices that would benefit fishing by increasing profitability

and sustainability.

"Fishing is a global industry, and FIS is already in contact with colleagues around the world," she says. "We can learn a lot from other fishing nations, and we certainly punch above our weight in Scotland, so we have much to give as well. It is so exciting to be part of that success."

John Goodlad, chair of FIS, is delighted that Kara has taken up the position of executive director. "Kara brings a wealth of relevant experience to FIS that can only take the organisation to new levels. Working alongside our board to unearth the challenges facing the Scottish fishing industry across the entire supply chain, and by guiding scientific approaches to solving those challenges, Kara's previous track record at many levels and across many topics will be a tremendous asset. I look forward to working with Kara to provide knowledge and ideas, through our commissioned projects, to continue to contribute to the success of Scottish fishing and those that work in the industry."

Further information about Fisheries Innovation Scotland and details of current and past projects are available at: fiscot.org

► Kara Brydson brings a wealth of experience to her new role as executive director of Fisheries Innovation Scotland.



▲ The fishing industry is a complex of different businesses, each with its own challenges.



▲ Explaining the importance and value of Scottish fishing to a wider audience is a key role for FIS. Chair John Goodlad talks to BBC Alba.