

Scourge of the fish farms is heading north

An eco warrior visiting Nairn has warned the fish-farming industry to expect a wave of protests in the coming months.

Former Friends of the Earth spokesman Don Staniford was speaking on the latest leg of a global crusade to expose alleged environmental risks associated with salmon farms.

Campaigners from the UK and Norway – which owns most of the sector – are planning a demonstration and series of public meetings in the Highlands to highlight their concerns.

Salmon farmers have consistently refuted criticism of their business amid long running claims about its impact on human and marine life and alleged effects on the migration of wild stocks.

Mr Staniford, who stopped off for breakfast in Nairn last week, is however persisting with allegations that have twice landed him in the Canadian courts where he has faced writs for defamation.

The first case, stemming from comments he made in 2005, was quashed. The other ended a few weeks ago and he awaits the verdict.

The Liverpool-born campaigner has been a thorn in the side of the aquaculture sector for many years.

He has spent the past week gauging opinion on the northwest coast and delivered a petition from Canadian counterparts, telling Wester Ross-based Loch Duart Ltd that there is considerable opposition in Nova Scotia to its plans for expansion there.

Mr Staniford told the Nairnshire: "I'm meeting local communities and opponents of salmon farms and I intend opening a can of worms."

"The Green Warriors of Norway are spearheading a campaign that's going global."

"We're going to establish the 'Green Warriors of the World' and we'll focus on where salmon is farmed. The big four are Chile,

Norway, Canada and Scotland."

He continued: "The industry wants to expand in Norway, but is limited by Norwegian Government regulation. So they're seeking to expand in Scotland, Ireland and eastern Canada. That's where the new protests will come."

He described Nairn as "a microcosm of what's happened over the past 100 years, as the fishing industry shifted from fishing to farming".

Mr Staniford declared: "The letter I've delivered is a crystal clear message from the people of Canada that the Loch Duart expansion is not welcome because of the same concerns elsewhere – the waste impacts, the displacement of the wild fishery including lobsters and shellfish."

"The use of chemicals is a big issue in Canada where one company was caught using a banned substance which killed lobsters in an area with a high invest-



Don Staniford and Nairn's iconic Fisherwoman

ment in lobsters, so the fishermen are very concerned about the impact of expansion."

Loch Duart has not responded to the letter despite several approaches by the Nairnshire.

Auldearn-based fish-farmer Gilpin Bradley, who operates Wester Ross Fisheries declined to comment.

Asked if consumers should have any concern about Scottish farmed salmon, a spokeswoman for the Food Standards Agency said: "Scottish farmed fish must be produced in compliance with all relevant EU and UK food law and, where this is the case, the FSA would have no food safety concerns."

Medical practices will merge on April 16