



Save the Spring April-May 2025 Update



The River Dee



■ International Scientific Advisory Group established, a busy smolt monitoring season, plus
Save the Spring featured on BBC Springwatch.

Save the Spring is a partnership between the River Dee and Atlantic Salmon Trust,
supported by the University of Stirling and UHI Inverness.

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International Support

- **Save the Spring team establishes new Scientific Advisory Group to enable knowledge sharing and support from key international partners.**

We are pleased to report the formation of a new Scientific Advisory Group (SAG) which has been established to help Save the Spring reach its ambitious goals for the upper Dee catchment. This group of leading international experts includes:

- Jaakko Erkinaro – Research Professor, Natural Resources Institute, Finland.
- Jonathan Grey – Professor, Lancaster Environmental Centre, UK.
- Hannah Harrison – Assistant Professor, Marine University, Canada.
- Rasmus Lauridsen – Chief Scientist, Six Rivers, Iceland.
- Patrick Martin – Director General, National Wild Salmon Conservatory, France.
- Nathaniel Mtunji – Policy & Government Relations Advisor, TNC, Kenya.
- Faizal Parish – Global Peatland Expert, Malaysia.
- Ken Whelan – Adjunct Professor, University College Dublin, Ireland.
- Yumiko Yasuda – Water Governance Specialist, Japan.

The group was also joined by Dr Colin Bull, Senior Lecturer at the University of Stirling Institute of Aquaculture, who has been instrumental in the development of the conservation translocation element of the programme from its outset.

In addition to the teams from the River Dee and Atlantic Salmon Trust, this group represents a significant advancement for Save the Spring in working collaboratively with global conservation partners, ensuring that restoration strategies, and the evidence which underpins them, is aligned with international habitat recovery efforts.

The SAG will meet with our team twice per year and we look forward to updating you in the future about how this international support network is feeding into and enabling targeted action on the ground in the upper River Dee catchment.

From across the UK and Ireland, France, Finland, Iceland, Canada, Kenya, Malaysia and Japan, international experts are now supporting Save the Spring.



This group includes Atlantic salmon experts, as well as those working in landscape ecology, peatland restoration, government policy and water resource management.

Year Two Smolts Enter Programme

This April the River Dee team was busy monitoring the smolt run on the River Muick - a key Save the Spring priority area and the location of our ongoing conservation translocation 'smolt-to-adult supplementation' pilot. As a reminder, this involves trapping a small number of wild smolts and rearing them to maturity with our partners at the University of Stirling's Marine Environment Research Laboratory (MERL). The plan is to release fish as mature adults back into the Muick later this year to help support wild spawning in this important tributary, and then carefully monitor the effect of this intervention to ascertain whether this method is a viable one to support critically low wild salmon populations.

Our last update touched on the growth and progress of the fish caught as smolts in 2024. This year, during what seemed like a very strong smolt run of several thousand of fish from the Muick, the team successfully captured and brought in another tranche of 100 smolts into the facility at MERL. The team also performed a wider smolt enumeration exercise, as well as taking smolt measurements, to allow us to calculate the total smolt output from the Muick this year and, over time, how this changes in response to our restoration efforts.



A second cohort of 100 smolts is safely captured and transported to MERL to enter our smolt-to-adult supplementation pilot programme.



Catch us on BBC Springwatch

Raising awareness of Save the Spring, and wild Atlantic salmon recovery more widely, is essential if we are to meet our ambitious long-term vision for a resilient and thriving upper Dee catchment with recovering spring salmon populations. We were delighted therefore to welcome the team from BBC Springwatch to the catchment in April 2025 to spend two days with the River Dee and Atlantic Salmon Trust teams, covering both the habitat resilience and conservation translocation elements of the programme. The segment was first shown on BBC Two on 28th May in Episode 3 of this year's series, and can be viewed on catch up via BBC iPlayer.

Featured in the episode was River Dee Operations Manager, Edwin Third, and Professor Melanie Smith, Research Director at the Atlantic Salmon Trust. We'd like to thank the team from the BBC for helping to get the wild salmon message out to a huge national audience, as well as the Balmoral and Glenmuick Estates, and University of Stirling's Marine Environment Research Laboratory (MERL) for their generous support in enabling filming to take place.



Filming with the BBC took place in April 2025 during this year's smolt run, and featured interviews with Edwin Third (River Dee) and Professor Melanie Smith (Atlantic Salmon Trust).



Riverside woodland springs back to life



Spring is a great time to see how the riverside woodland is springing back to life along the River Muick - a combination of native broadleaf trees planted by the River Dee team, and natural Scot's Pine regeneration.

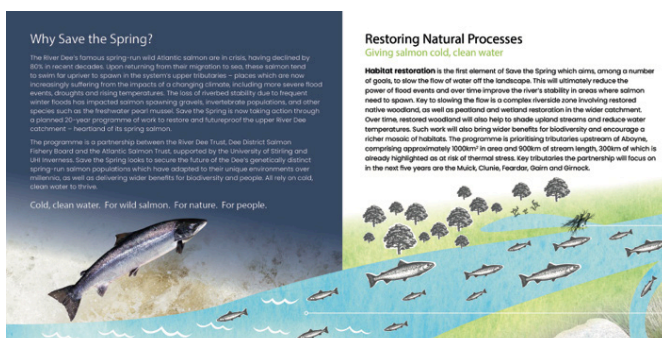
In time, these restored woodlands will provide a wide range of benefits to the aquatic environment.

How you can help Save the Spring For wild salmon, for nature, for people

Save the Spring needs your continued support if we are to expand the programme and achieve our long-term vision. Contact us to donate as an individual, organisation or business.

Want to help spread the word?

Contact us at info@riverdee.org to arrange a delivery of our new Save the Spring information leaflets - perfect for fishing huts, hotels and businesses.



SUPPORT US

Individuals

To support Save the Spring as an individual, contact the River Dee team at info@riverdee.org

Corporate support

Find out how your business can play a positive role in shaping the future of the catchment, aligning with your own environmental and sustainability strategy.

Contact the Atlantic Salmon Trust's Corporate Ambassador, Mark Cockburn, at mark.cockburn@atlanticsalmontrust.org

Spread the word

Follow and share our **#SaveTheSpring** social media posts to help us reach an even wider audience.