

31 October 2012 Last updated at 16:34 ET

Shetland fish farm moves to protect stock from seals

A Shetland fish farm is investing nearly £100,000 in a project designed to protect stock from seals.

Balta Island Seafare Ltd is to install two new electronic seal scarers and introduce stronger nets at its sites off Unst.

It said the move would give better protection to salmon stocks.

The company operates a total of four marine farming sites off the coast of Unst.

The project is being supported with funding by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and the European Fisheries Fund.

Christopher Ritch, from Balta Island Seafare, said: "We have had some success deterring seals with electronic scarers, and these new scarers should exclude seals from an even bigger area around the cages.

"Together with the stronger nets, I think this will go a long way towards allowing us to farm in harmony with the local nature and keep the company growing."

David Priest, from HIE, said fish farming was a major part of the Shetland economy.

He added: "The loss of stock from seals not only damages the business but escaped farmed salmon can also cause environmental damage by threatening the wild salmon population.

"The new nets and equipment installed by Balta Island Seafare will protect these wild stocks while also increasing the profitability of the business."

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