

## MINUTES OF WRASFB BOARD MEETING

<b>HARBOUR CENTRE, GAIRLOCH</b>		<b>PRESENT:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>04 March 2015</b>	<b>Bill Whyte (BW) Chair</b>	<b>Stephen Bate (SB)</b>
<b>OPENED AT:</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>Hugh Whittle (HW)</b>	<b>Donald Rice (DR)</b>
<b>CLOSED AT:</b>	<b>15.40</b>	<b>Philippa Cliff (PCI) [Iain Russell's mandate]</b>	
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>		<b>Rosie Nicoll (RN)</b>	<b>Iain MacFadyen (IM)</b>
<b>Peter Jarosz (PJ))</b>	<b>Mary Gibson (MG)</b>	<b>Frank Buckley (FB)</b>	
<b>Dave Barclay (DB)</b>	<b>Peter Cunningham (PC)</b>	<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	
		<b>Jamie Crawford (JC)</b>	<b>Gordon Crawford (GC)</b>
		<b>Ray Dingwall (RD)</b>	<b>Brian Fraser (BF)</b>

#1 The "Declaration of Interest" book was passed around the meeting for all board members to check and, where necessary, update their entries in the book. Two proprietors updated their entries.

### 1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Jamie Crawford, Gordon Crawford, Brian Fraser and Ray Dingwall.

### 2. Approval of the minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> November Meeting

The minutes of the 11<sup>th</sup> November 2014 were accepted as a true record of the proceedings of that meeting, proposed by HW, seconded by SB and approved by the board.

### 3. Matters Arising

- BW reported that recently there had been more correspondence from Protect Wild Scotland that had been replied to - with no information being divulged and a firm statement that no further engagement, on the subject matter that had been raised by PWS, will be entered into.
- BW also reported that emails, sent directly to the WRASFB by Don Staniford suggesting a combined effort using his FOIs and Board data, will not be followed up.
- BW further reported that Wester Ross Fisheries Ltd have stocked the Ardessie site with fish, possibly from their Corrie site. Currently Highland Council (HC) are seeking legal clarification from Marine Scotland (MS) regarding the status of the Ardessie planning permission before their own legal department makes a decision on the action HC may have to take. The Eilean Darach Estate has engaged legal representation and is making a case about the impacts of the operations by Wester Ross Fisheries Ltd on the estate's assets. As a result, WRASFB only needs to keep up to date on developments as they occur.

### 4. Draft 2014-5 Accounts – current status / year end projections

This financial year saw an extra-ordinary cost for site-specific legal advice from a solicitor specialising in planning law for the board's response to both the Sgeir Dughall S42 planning application and the resultant DPEA appeal. Together these two pieces of advice cost the board £2.3K but resulted in both the S42 planning application and the DPEA appeal being refused. Additionally the reporter's decision contained a most important endorsement of the board's point that Marine Scotland does not hold any statutory remit with regard to the impact of sea lice on wild fish.

To date some 90% of the board's income has been spent with the remaining 10% already ring-fenced for contributions to both WRFT educational projects and an on-going sea trout survey project on Skye.

## **5. 2015-16 Budget and Levy**

Looking ahead and considering issues that in all probability may arise, there is a need to increase the core budget for 2015-6. With our work budget also likely to increase, because of the additional work required for monitoring the fish farms with a ten-year term condition, the board needs to consider whether an increase in the levy rate would best meet this likely increase in expenditure. An alternative to an increase in the levy rate would be to rely on the contingency fund to support any increase above our budgeted amounts for 2015-6.

Either way, we need to fully cost our monitoring protocols and explore just what external funding there may or may not be available through the SG interactions pilot. Firstly however, we need to agree and finalize the protocol and ideally have it endorsed by MS. A detailed budget will be presented to the treasurer and board in the next few days for their consideration.

## **6. Planning Applications/Update on Aquaculture issues since the last board meeting**

- a) Although the Sgeir Dughall fish farm planning decision situation now seems to be accepted by the Scottish Salmon Company (SSC), they could re-apply, in two years time, using another S42 planning application to have the ten-year condition removed. It is considered that this may be unlikely, so the need to develop the monitoring protocols is crucial along with the need to collaborate with MS in the development process. To this end, contact has already been made with MS and we are in the process of setting up the first meeting.
- b) The board was recently asked by SEPA to respond to a CAR licence application by the Scottish Sea Farms (SSF) for their fish farm in Loch Kishorn. Following the board's response, the reply letter from SEPA raised the issue of MS's statutory remit for sea lice on wild fish. Subsequently the board wrote to the head of SEPA's aquaculture department explaining that the MS role for sea lice does not extend to wild fish and that MS are solely responsible for the sea lice on the farmed fish.
- c) The protocol for fish farm site visits has been agreed and 2 visits to SSF farms and 1 visit to Marine Harvest (MH) farm has recently been carried out. To date, SSC have refused all visits to any of their sites and WRF Ltd has not confirmed its participation in the project.
- d) Sometime in late 2014 a meeting did occur between HC and a fish farm company regarding the future use of Annat Bay. There is still two years of a fifteen-year Crown Estate lease remaining on the site but HC have confirmed that the site would require new planning permission prior to any commencement of fish farming.
- e) It is worth noting that all of the existing ten-year term planning permissions leave the onus on the operators to successfully demonstrate that their operation has caused no impact on wild fish or move to completely different fish farm techniques (such as close containment). With this in mind, Board and Trust need to keep on top of the following data:
  - Wild fish statistics in general.
  - Sea lice in coastal waters.
  - Catch figures in particular.

- f) The meeting watched a NINA video entitled “Salmon lice on sea trout and Atlantic salmon” that reported on the most recent scientific studies on the subject. Two points (though there were many more) are particularly worth noting:
- Sea lice can drift for up to 20 days before attachment to a host.
  - 0.1 sea lice per gram of fish body weight produces terminal problems for the fish.

## **7. Biologist’s Report**

Peter C projected a copy of the WRFT Annual Review and talked the meeting through some of the work he had been doing over the past twelve months. The WRFT review January 2015 can be found on the following link:

<http://www.wrft.org.uk/downloads/files.cfm?id=34>

## **8. Report on Board’s Work in 2014-15**

The board’s work 2014-15 is contained within the WRFT Review January 2015 that can be found on the above link.

## **9. Board’s Work Plan for 2015-16**

- It is vital that the electro-fishing surveys continue as well as all on-going projects.
- As the board now has its own public liability insurance and a nominal budget has now been set for educational and outreach projects, the board’s work plan for 2015-16 should now include education and young fishers/angling club projects – coordinating these efforts with WRFT where appropriate and cost effective. The meeting agreed that DR and DB should draft up a provisional programme for further consideration.
- There are a number of rivers within the board area that might benefit from habitat restoration projects but does this work fall to the board or to individual landowners? WRFT biologist will make a list of top priorities for the board to consider – this will be done jointly with DR.
- Migratory routes for both smolts and adult salmon need researching to establish their whereabouts in relation to where fish farms are situated – in the talks that WRASFB will be having with MS to establish links and collaboration with them, we will find out just what work MS may be carrying out on migratory routes in and around Torrion.

## **10. AOCB**

- MS have now “taken over” MIAP and overlaid further data sets – making it more comprehensive. All of which makes further funding for its development less certain. However, it continues to be important that further data is collected each year.
- MG provided information on the licencing arrangements for the control of fish-eating birds. The type and level of supporting information is still needed.
- With the advent of new netting licences, should the board, and those proprietors who hold netting rights, apply for netting licences and therefore secure part of the quota? This would effectively lower the quota for the working netting stations.
- There was a discussion regarding the possibility of making a donation to Fish Legal and to S&TA if funds allow.

- We need to set the date for the proprietors' and public meeting – a suggested date for which is 25<sup>th</sup> May 2015. We can check this out with a Doodle poll.
- We also need to set the date for the triennial election meeting – a suggested date for this is 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015.
- BW reminded the meeting that all requests for stocking approval by the board require the completion of the stocking request form as well as written justification of the intended stocking. The board needs to ensure that it has details of all stocking that is occurring within the board's area.
- Today two potential water bailiffs are sitting the bailiffs' examination in Inverness, if successful, these new bailiffs could help to police Loch Maree where there are currently a number of issues regarding the fishing beats.
- FB provided a report from the local anglers' clubs based on discussions he has had with individuals from each of the clubs. He also welcomed the possibility of bailiff policing of Loch Maree.

#### **11. Date of Next Meeting**

**The suggested date for the next board, public and annual proprietors' meeting will be determined after the results of a date poll – as will the suggested date for the triennial election meeting.**