

MINUTES OF WRASFB ANNUAL PROPRIETORS' & PUBLIC MEETINGS

HARBOUR CENTRE, GAIRLOCH	PRESENT: Bill Whyte (BW) Chair Rosie Nicoll (RN) Donald Rice (DR) via Skype Barry Blake (BB) Peter Cunningham (PC) Peter Jarosz (PJ) Clerk	John Mackenzie (JM) Gordon Crawford (GC) Brian Fraser (BF) Ian Lindsay (IL) Dave Barclay (DB) Mary Gibson (MG)
DATE: 21 July 2016		
OPENED AT:15.00 CLOSED AT:17.00		

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Stephen Bate, Hugh Whittle, Archie MacLellan and Duncan Mackenzie.

2. Comments

There were four proprietors attending the annual meeting, two invitees and two members of the public.

3. Annual Report 2015-6

The Annual Report 2015-16 had been circulated by email three days earlier. The main item for discussion was the new ScotGov requirements regarding wild salmon conservation that includes a ban of the killing of salmon in all category 3 rivers. Salmon caught in category 3 rivers must be returned to the river. The categorization of the rivers in Scotland had been previously designated by Marine Scotland. In Wester Ross all the rivers are category 3 rivers with the exception of the two Gruinard and the Carron rivers which are category 2 rivers. In these category 2 rivers it is the owners of the fishings who can determine the quotas.

All those present expressed their approval of the report and of the work that the board had achieved within the year.

4. Accounts 2015-6

PJ reported that copies of the WRASFB accounts (2015-6) had been forwarded to all proprietors by email on 14th July 2016 for their perusal.

In the time between the accounts being sent out and the date of the annual meeting, there were no queries or questions from proprietors regarding the accounts.

PJ then talked through the contents of the accounts, highlighting the fact that the Board had for a second year had an exceptional cost in the 2015-16 accounts that had exceeded our budgeted expectations. Various legal advice costs in relation to the on-going attempts of the Scottish Salmon Company to have the time-limited condition removed from their planning permission resulted in an one-off raise in the levy rate for this year's levy invoices. As well as the additional legal costs, the time spent by the clerk of the board reflects the increased amount of work that has been necessary for the responses to the Sgeir Dughall DPEA appeal (number 2), detailed responses challenging the Ardessie CLEUD approval as well as the planning applications for all the hydro schemes submitted in the past twelve months. Of the two annual subscriptions that we pay (Fish Legal and ASFB), the latter has been significantly reduced (from

previous years) as the ASFB's support to Boards has been less due to their involvements with the formation of FMOs. Following the increased levy rate of this year, the budget intention is to maintain the contingency fund at the previously agreed figure of £10K at the end of the financial year. Should the contingency fund be greater than the agreed £10K at the year-end, the levy rate for 2017-8 could be set to compensate for this. It is important to note that when the board is dissolved any remaining assets need to be re-distributed and these will include the board's ownership of the Slaggan netting rights bought in 2004.

Those present at the meeting, after receiving answers to a number of questions on the accounts (see above), pronounced their approval of the accounts.

5. WRASFB's Legal Expenses for Planning Applications

Whilst there was general approval of the exceptional costs, the board had incurred, involving specific planning issues advice from legal experts, there was concern from a number of proprietors as to the control of pursuing lines a legal argument through to higher levels (such as judicial reviews and court of session hearings). These legal options have costs that can escalate into six figure sums if a case is contested and won by the other party. Clearly WRASFB has not the finance to be directly involved in these legal levels but that does not preclude other bodies, that do have the adequate resources, taking up these cases on our, and wild fish, behalf. There is a need for guidelines/criteria for the WRASFB as to when to get involved and how far to go in these legal matters.

6. FMO

It is now almost certain that the FMOs will have a statutory remit for wild salmonids in the planning process. The only uncertainty is just how the remit will be given to FMOs. The FMO statutory function will also cover education as well as the conservation of all fish. The green paper was intended to go before the Scottish Parliament this October but there is a possibility that, because of the need of Parliamentary time for previously unplanned legislation (due to the Brexit vote), the green paper for the Fisheries Review may be put back into 2017.

Our preferred option is the amalgamation of the WRFT and the SFT thus keeping the FMO local where we have shared issues and considerable voluntary support/help with existing plans and strategies for both now and the future. With the MSS Shieldaig station located within this preferred FMO option, would some form of collaboration/contribution by Shieldaig station be possible with our FMO? This West Coast FMO view contrasts starkly with the RAFTS/ASFB proposal on an east/west amalgamation that is less likely to work for the west. The Trust will keep WRASFB up to date on all progress and discussions including the outcome of a imminent proposed meeting with our local MSP.

7. WRFT Biologist's Report

PC stated that the WRFT Annual Review 2016 was now published quoting from the review on the scientific work that WRFT had done on behalf of the board in 2015-6 and mentioned some of the key issues from the review:

- The catches for 2015 were generally higher in the north of the area with the south of the area noticeably lower – especially for grilse. There is possibly a relationship of these results with aquaculture's sea lice figures where, in general, the north of our area has seen better fish farm sea lice control than in the south. Wester Ross

Fisheries have done well controlling their sea lice over the past 18 months by a reduced biomass and the use of wrasse cleaner fish. The story in the south has been contrastingly bad with most fish farms well over the CoGP figures – some as high as 20 times over the CoGP guideline figures.

- 2016 reported catches of sea trout indicate very few returning sea trout to date in our rivers but those caught have had few lice attached and are a good size. This could mean that most sea trout are still at sea. It should be noted that there are exceptions to this general picture with sea trout caught in Loch Alsh/Loch Long with high numbers of sea lice on them. One fish had over 250 sea lice attached to it indicating, again, that in many cases sea lice numbers are linked to the fish farm cycles.

Signed by the Clerk to the Board:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Jamieson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'P'.

Dated: 28 July 2016