

MINUTES OF WRASFB BOARD MEETING

HARBOUR CENTRE, GAIRLOCH		PRESENT:	
DATE:	11 April 2019	Bill Whyte (BW) Chair	Hugh Whittle (HW)
OPENED AT:	11.30	Stephen Bate (SB)	Rosie Nicoll (RN)
CLOSED AT:	15.30	Donald Rice (DR) – by Skype	Ray Dingwall (RD)
IN ATTENDANCE:		APOLOGIES:	
Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Peter Cunningham (PC)	Neil Morrison (NM)	Stuart Allison (SA)
Ian Lindsay (DB)	Claire Munday (CM)	Gordon Crawford (GC)	Ala Mackenzie (AK)
Julian Fox (JF)		Mary Gibson (MG)	

1. a) Introductions

BW welcomed IL, as chair of the SWRFT, to the meeting and introduced him the those present.

b) Apologies

Apologies were received from Gordon Crawford, Neil Morrison, Stuart Allison, Ala Mackenzie and Mary Gibson.

2. Approval of the minutes of the 6th April 2018 Meeting

The minutes of the 16th October 2018 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting being proposed by RN and seconded by RD.

3. Matters Arising

- Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) - BW sits on both the FMS Board and the FMS Enforcement Committee. This, very effectively, puts a West Coast input into forming FMS policies at all levels including carrying out the required enforcement duties, in our case, without full time bailiffs. Additionally, BW (WRASFB) and PJ (SWRFT) sit on the FMS Fish Farm Committee that is made up of representatives from all the Boards and Trusts in the Aquaculture Zone. The concept being that all these bodies inform/formulate the FMS policy on Aquaculture and present a united front to the whole of aquaculture in Scotland. FMS, advised by the Fish Farm Committee, has responded to both the ECCLR committee and the RAC Committee on the environmental impacts of Salmon Farming in Scotland.
- Currently WRASFB is working with the Argyll DSFB and Trust on a MOWI centered, generic EMP that will be rolled out to Boards and Trusts (in the aquaculture areas) once finalized and approved over the next week or two.
- Last year Lochaber Fishery Trust operated, for Crown Estate Scotland and Marine Scotland, an enhanced fish trap in Loch Linnhe to trap post smolt sea trout to establish lice burdens in a sea loch with 15 fish farms. For this year the project will be run again using 2 enhanced fish traps. Working with both MSS and FMS, BW has been contracted to deploy and operate a third enhanced fish trap at Ardnamuchan in the hope of trapping salmon smolts on their migration to sea after a week or two travelling through Loch Linnhe. Over the past few weeks BW has worked with MSS to refine the design of and form deployment protocols for this large salmon smolt trap. If this trap works in Lochaber, it is MSS's intention to deploy similar traps next year for further trials and refinement in Wester Ross before their deployment on Skye and the Outer Hebrides. RD asked how big is the net and where is it deployed. BW answered that the capture net is 5 metres

square with 25 metre wings and it is situated anchored to the bank of the sea loch and it has a top opening hatch – it is not situated in a river.

- Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) - AST initiated a new project (The Missing Salmon Project) for tracking salmon smolts on the East Coast. The east coast was chosen as c20% of all UK salmon starts their migration to sea though the Moray Firth. Through donations of £1,000,000.00, AST have purchased the acoustic arrays and tags for this project. Once the project is completed, AST will own the acoustic arrays potentially for follow up projects on the West Coast. This would involve arrays in Galloway, Mull of Kintyre to Ireland, Wester Ross to Skye, West Skye to Uist and Cape Wrath to the Butt of Lewis. Smolts would be tagged from all over the West Coast and tracked though the aquaculture zone. FMS funding streams are being sought from Scottish Government to cover the costs of tags for the future West Coast tracking projects (not likely to be until 2021).
- Scottish Government Funding - This is still on the cards but is awaiting Government responses to the ECCLR and REC reports and, of course, Brexit.

4. Initial draft 2018-19 Accounts

Having previously discussed the financial issues of 2018-19 accounts and 2019-20 budgets/levy rates with the WRASFB treasurer, PJ presented to the meeting an A4 sheet summary of the 2018-19 accounts showing an analysis of both income and expenditure in that financial year. This document led onto the next item of the agenda.

5. Draft 2019-20 Budget and Levy Setting

PJ then presented a draft 2019-20 financial budget based on the new rateable values that come into force for this financial year. The main increase in our expected expenditure for the coming year is the cost of renting the boat garage in which is stored the enforcement boat. BW has paid for the rent of this building in the two previous years but is not able to continue paying out for this. BW proposed that the Board make a 50% (£1250.00) annual contribution to the storage of our enforcement boat as well as to the fuel costs for the boat's use. With this in mind and for the purpose of setting the levy for 2019-20 PJ showed two draft budgets each with a different levy rate. The Board members decided to adopt the budget with the 90p in the pound levy rate. HW (our treasurer) said that he was happy to propose this levy rate.

PJ reported to the Board that there were two arrears of levy invoices and sought the Board's approval to write informing those proprietors that from the 1st June 2019 any outstanding 2018-19 invoice amounts will accrue a monthly compounded interest rate of 2% over the official base rate. The Board approved that request.

6. Update on Aquaculture Events since the last Board Meeting

BW reported on what had been happening on aquaculture events since our last meeting:

- Scottish Salmon Farms (SSF) has submitted a Scoping and Screening Application for Horse Island with the full planning application likely to be submitted late April or May 2019.
- SSF has also submitted a Scoping and Screening Application for Tanera and from rumours coming from Achiltibue it seems that SSF are now considering submitting Tanera before their Horse Island application, possibly due to the new

multi millionaire owner at Tanera, not wanting to see, from his house, a fish farm 100m away.

- Marine Harvest Scotland (MOWI)'s Bottle Island proposed fish farm appears to have stalled for now but will undoubtedly be into the system in the not too distant future.
- MOWI's Loch Ewe fish farm will be discussed as a separate topic later.
- The Wester Ross Fisheries (WRF)'s (SSC) Ardessie fish farm - despite our best efforts in supplying HC planning with all of the details and updates and advice on how to stop it, Ardessie B was put back in the water and stocked with fish.
- (WRF) Ardessie A & B - In August last year, both sites had a catastrophic mortality event with >50% losses. PJ and I recently met with Gilpen Bradley to discuss this and he put the mortalities down to an algae bloom. One bit of information did come out in that like all other fish farmers, WRF are looking to expand and they are looking again at Annat Bay. One bit of information that did come out was that, like all other fish farmers, WRF are looking to expand and are looking again at Annat Bay. BW and PJ have tried now for 4-5 months to arrange a meeting with the Highland Council Planning Department and have so far simply received acknowledgement of our request for a meeting. This will be followed up.
- The Scottish Salmon Company (TSSC) - Sgeir Dughall. The Board has still not seen the draft Environmental Management Plan (EMP) that they submitted to HC but it may be similar to the draft EMPs that they have submitted to Outer Hebrides, Argyll and to Aird in Loch Torridon. As far as we know, HC planners have not approved any EMP put forward by SSC for Sgeir Dughall.
- (TSSC) Aird - Back in October, TSSC submitted scoping and screening for Aird (6 new cages sited beside the old ones). They have now modified this to 4 cages (Probably to gain planning permission before adding an additional 2 cages through permitted development). Our response is currently being formulated.
- TSSC West Strome. This is awaiting determination from the HC planners.
- TSSC's proposed EMP - The danger in TSSC EMP is that they intend to do their own "Self Monitoring" of wild fisheries. We have advised Highland Council Planning that this is not acceptable to us. The problem is that TSSC have just had a planning application approved by Argyll and Bute council (despite heavy opposition by ADSFB and the Argyll Trust) with that very same self monitoring EMP. This has effectively created a test case that TSSC will almost certainly try to force all planners to agree.
- MOWI, Scalpay (Skye) - PJ, IL, Derek Dowsett (SKYE DSFB Chair) and BW met with MOWI yesterday. MOWI wanted to discuss the WRASFB's response to their Scalpay application (HC planners asked them how they were intending to mitigate our concerns). BW told MOWI that they need to go away and come back with suggestions that will address our concerns (we now await their suggestions).
- MOWI, Isle Ewe (This item is confidential to within the Board) - an Environmental Monitoring survey has been submitted that may well have failed yet again. With enough pressure from WRASFB this could result in another biomass reduction - will keep you informed. Also, It appears that after the 2010 planning application that imposed the ten year consent, MOWI put all their farms including Torridon and Isle Ewe into the Audit and Review Process and had them both included in the mass consent. Three weeks ago, BW contacted Crown Estate Scotland to enquire as to when the lease finished to be told they had applied for a new one using the FULL and PERMANENT CONSENT from Marine Scotland (ScotGov) via the Audit and Review Process. In March, BW contacted Marine Scotland to

argue the case that they couldn't be included but received no answer. However, MS obviously told MOWI because BW heard that MOWI were seeking legal counsel opinion on it. Last Monday and following an opinion from Fish Legal, BW emailed MS, HC, FMS and CES with a forceful request for an answer. HC have replied that as far as they are concerned, they agree with our (and Fish Legal) opinion, that the condition still stands. We will continue to argue that case which BW is sure we will win. All that it means though is that the Isle Ewe site will have to go through planning again in 2020.

- Both BW and PJ have been emailing HC Planning on a regular basis in order to arrange a meeting to discuss the various issues of Ardesie, Loch Ewe and Sgeir Dughall. To date we have only received acknowledgement of our emails and are yet to receive possible dates for a meeting. BW suggested that we may have to use FOI.
- PJ informed the meeting that we had just been informed by email that the Loch Ewe fish farm had failed its latest benthic impact survey.
- There followed an in-depth discussion about the potential closure of the Isle Ewe fish farm with HW suggesting that a public pressure on Mowi may well yield a result. BW stated that after all the hard work that he and PJ had done to get to this stage, he was strongly against any outside interference of this issue. He asked the Board to support the role that both he and PJ have had and were intent on continuing with SEPA, HC planning and Mowi with the objective of the fish farm at Isle Ewe closing before the end of 2020. The Board agreed with this policy.

7. SWRFT Biologist's Report

Peter C had previously emailed round a copy of his biologist's report and talked the meeting through some of the detail from his report:

- The latest newsletter is available [on-line](#).
- Generally the 2018 angling season was poor – at least in the early part of the year.
- PC displayed maps showing that sea temperatures in the North Atlantic were in fact cooling – this could be a recurring cycle pattern or melting ice could be the course of it.
- PC explained that the NEP e-fishing programme of last year that the SWRFT had been asked to do by MSS was designed to get an average fry density for all of our area.
- PC also explained the criteria for conservation levels that is used by MSS for calculating the productivity of each river in Scotland. Basically with the change that MSS have applied to the model for last year the calculated numbers of returning fish have effectively been halved from the year before. PC said that he had been back to MSS expressing his concern regarding this change they had made within the model. He awaits their comments.
- PC said that there will be a trout workshop at Kinlochewe on 30th April run by Dr Steve Kett of Middlesex Uni. Dr Kett has been coming up to this area for ten plus years and been sampling sea trout, taking the samples back to the genetic lab at Middlesex Uni and had students working on these samples. So the workshop will be to inform just what are the varieties of trout within Loch Maree system – are they all the same or do we have distinct populations some of which produce the sea trout of Loch Maree. Prof Eric Verspoor (River and Lochs Institute) and David Morris (MSS) will also be giving talks.

8. Recap on Board's Work in 2018-19

Dealt with under item 6.

9. Board's Work Plan for 2019-20

At this point of time, the Board's work plan for 2019-20 is most likely to be dealing with more fish farm planning and the formulating of the Board's responses to them. This will be circulated by email.

10. Community Relations – Education and Young Fishers' Projects

11. Anglers' Representative's Report

12. AOCB

- **Stocking consents**

The Scottish Salmon Company issued a PR notice stating that they were stocking programmes with wild fisheries on the Outer Hebrides but they did not have stocking consents from either the local Board or from Scottish Ministers. This was reported to MSS who took up the issue and a case is being built up on this issue.

- **EMPs and synchronization issues**

Still awaiting HC to agree a meeting date for this issue and other fish farm issues.

- **Piscivorous Ducks**

Only one report has been submitted to the Board of piscivorous ducks' surveys. The form that was circulated to proprietors should be used if the Board is to build up a case for any control license, against these birds, to be permitted.

- **Catch Returns**

PJ suggested that the MSS catch return could be copied/scanned and the copy then be emailed to the Board.

14. Date of Next Meeting

The suggested date for the next board meeting is in November 2019 - so the actual date will be determined after the results of a doodle poll