

**Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board
Board Meeting
3rd January 2013**

Minutes

Present: Bill Whyte (Chairman) Hugh Whittle Jenny Scobie Brian Fraser	Gordon Crawford Jamie Crawford Ray Dingwall	In attendance: Mary Gibson Philippa Cliff Peter Cunningham Peter Jarosz (Clerk)
Via Skype: Stephen Bate	Donald Rice	

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Pat Wilson.

1a. Minutes of the email meeting held between 22nd and 26th November 2012

The minutes of the meeting were approved – proposed by GC and seconded by HW.

2. Co-option of Angling Representative

Frank Buckley was formally approved as the angling representative and welcomed to the board.

3. Election of a Chairman and Vice-chairman

- There were two nominations for chairman but at this point of the meeting one of the candidates withdrew.
- Bill Whyte was then duly approved as chairman.
- BW then took over (from the clerk) the chairing of the meeting.
- It was decided that the appointment of a Vice-chairman would be deferred.
- BW proposed (seconded by HW) that there should be two ghillies' representatives (RD and BF) on the board. Following some discussion on the given membership and the need for representation of the whole of the board area, it was decided to ask a third ghillie (Iain MacFadyen – representing the north of the board's area) to also join the board. This was unanimously agreed and RD and BF were co-opted onto the board – IM was also co-opted pending his confirmation of acceptance that will be sought by BW.
- BW stated that, under his chairmanship, no one river would be allowed to take precedence over another.
- BW went on to say that there would be a dissemination to board members of focal responsibilities, allocated tasks and points of contact for items such as: accounts, finance, office, web site, education, community projects and young fishermen.
- A proposed protocol for responses (to aquaculture planning application, appeals and CAR licences) will be considered, amended if necessary, and subsequently issued as a directive.
- The Crown Estate proposal for forum consultation/meeting on fish farm liaison will be considered and a decision whether to participate (or not) taken – see fourth bullet point in section 7.

- The Land Reform Review that focuses on public interest, use and involvement was also discussed and, if the board intends to make a formal response, there is a need to ensure that the board can show just how it is taking these elements into account and identify projects that reflect them.
- It was decided to pursue this further with P Cliff offering to take the lead. A “universal type” response will be circulated for members to read through and data will then be provided by proprietor members for a board response to be considered for submission. Closing date is 16/01/2013.

4. Decision on a Quorum

It was agreed that a quorum for all board meetings would consist of: three representatives from upper proprietor, one representative from lower proprietors and two representatives from co-opted members.

5. Clerk Appointment and Costs

Currently the clerk’s wages, though paid by the board directly to the trust, are then paid under the trust’s PAYE system – thus saving the board direct involvement with the Inland Revenue (for both tax and National Insurance).

It should be noted that the position of clerk, though part time, is permanent. Therefore there is a need to clarify the best method for employing the clerk whilst conforming with tax requirements.

The trust office is also the registered office of the board – is this worth continuing?

There is obviously a requirement for a Letter of Understanding between the board and the trust covering the above and other items – BW will follow upon these points.

6. Finance

- Signatories for cheque signing need to be changed and two signatories will continue to be required on all cheques over £100 (one hundred pounds). BW, HW and PJ are the new signatories.
- For the future it was deemed essential to consider all payments (including those to the trust) and so it was agreed that a board member was to be assigned to approve all financial transactions – HW is to take on the role.
- With a view to financing various projects the board is now considering, there is a need to look at all potential income.
- Once fixed expenses are accounted for, we can then work out what monies will be available for projects.
- Meanwhile, the board members who have been allocated specific tasks can begin to consider what funds they will need to deliver their tasks/projects.
- The board should then be aware of whether (or not) additional levies will need to be raised.
- A budget is required for 2013/4 including: board project obligations, broadband provision, server costs, annual subscriptions, fish legal membership, accountancy costs and directors’ indemnity insurance which the board does not currently have. Quotations for this insurance will be sought from NFU and Lycetts. At the same time, a check will be conducted of those estates, where community projects are likely to occur, to ensure that they have the correct public liability insurance. HW and PJ will produce the budget.

7 & 8. Board Strategy for 2013/4

The desired projects/focal points for the board and their assigned project leader(s) include:

- A better understanding of the MSS paper – PC will ask ASFB for their view as well as report his views on this paper.
- MIAP – JS plus one other (as yet unnamed) will lead on this – the RAFTS/ASFB presentation is scheduled for 24th January at the Thistle Hotel in Inverness.
- Statutory consultation responses and scoping reports – BW with PC will lead on this.
- Crown Estate forum – SB will investigate further to determine whether the board should become involved.
- Biologist resource – no assigned leader as yet.
- Web site – JC will lead on this.
- MPAs – DR will lead on this – SNH contacts could be helpful.
- Community Liaison – in developing community led projects there is a need to be aware of the education projects that WRFT is currently doing and, where possible, to compliment these projects – RD/BF/FB/IMcF will lead on this.

9. Biologist's Report

PC outlined the work (that relates back to the Fishery Management Plan and other objectives) WRFT had done from 2009 to 2012. He also highlighted priorities for the future. JS voiced concern that the 2009+ plan concentrated on negative aspects of the rivers whilst skimming over the fish farm problems for the wild salmon and sea trout. The focus is on salmon and sea trout, education and brown trout:

- Electro-fishing (core work) takes place on each river every two years to inform fishery managers.
- At the same time as electro-fishing he is looking at densities relationships and nutrients productivity.
- Genetics.
- Escapees.
- Tournai trap provides information on both freshwater and marine issues
- Sweep netting.
- Rod analysis is an indicator of fishing performance – RD asked about the effects of the “catch & release” policy on this analysis and how this is taken into account. PC will consider and report.
- Bruachaig restoration.

Future Priorities (Salmon):

- Juvenile fish surveys.
- Bruachaig salmon restoration.
- Carrying capacity project.
- Little Gruinard River – juvenile salmon /growth studies.
- Tournai.
- Genetic analysis.
- Fishery management reports.

Future Priorities (Sea trout):

- Monitoring report.
- Sweep netting.
- Dundonnell fyke net
- Sea trout spawning burn investigation
- Sea trout restoration
- Fish farm visits.

Plus:

- Education projects.
- Loch surveys.
- Biosecurity.
- Marine surveys.
- Seminar on refertilizing Wester Ross.
- Responding to consultations
- Informal meetings.

10.AOCB

Planning:

BW raised two issues on planning responses that board members failed to see – one being a scoping application for Loch Kanaird/Ardmair and the other an oyster farm at the estuary of the river Kanaird. BW will look at responses sent in over the past year and produce a protocol for the board's handling of responses – see eighth bullet point under section 3.

A discussion on the previous board's support for MIAP confirmed no minutes had been taken.

WRFT

- There followed a discussion on future relationship with the trust centring around the question of whether the board should use the trust to discharge specific functions or should someone else be employed?
SB stated that he was happy to use the trust for specific functions under the caveat of a Letter of Understanding – SB, BW and PJ to discuss further and put a proposal to the board.
- Some concern about the WRFT membership posed the question: does trust membership compromise the information the board receives from WRFT?
- Concerns were raised that following fish farm visits by the WRFT biologist, some sea lice information is censored by a confidentiality agreement between the fishfarm and the WRFT biologist. Some general information is however made public.

Balgy

SB gave the meeting a précis update on the Balgy:

- The Balgy used to be a sea trout river but now salmon have become more important with a hybrid population.
- Though there has been no formal report of escapes, the cause of the hybrid population could well be down to runts passing through the gauge of net used at the time of grading in the fresh water pens in Loch Damph.
- Samples collected for the MIAP project confirmed that farmed fish as well as possible hybrids were present.
- There is a need to look closer at the genetics using more “markers” to see just how wild these fish really are though it is also clear that they have some wild genes – more work is required.

Other information

- Information from SEPA visits to core aquaculture sites is used for classification and to identify pressures and the measures being utilized to relieve any pressures.
- The spring strategic treatment (introduced in 2000) operates on all fish farms across Scotland but thereafter methods used by aquaculture companies vary dependant on the problem(s) – with wrasse being used in the attempt to keep sea lice numbers down.
- In 2009 there were good numbers of sand eels and sea trout benefitted that year with both bigger numbers and better condition.
- MPAs for skate have yet to be decided.

11 Date of Next Meeting

The MIAP presentation is on 24th January 2013 at the Thistle Hotel in Inverness with a scheduled start time of 1130 hrs.

Following the presentation, question time and discussion, there will be an opportunity to agree the date of our next meeting.