

MINUTES OF WRASFB BOARD MEETING

HARBOUR CENTRE, GAIRLOCH		PRESENT:	
DATE:	28 April 2017	Bill Whyte (BW) Chair	Stephen Bate (SB) by phone
OPENED AT:	11.00	Hugh Whittle (HW)	Donald Rice (DR) by Skype
CLOSED AT:	15.00	Neil Morrison (NM)	Colin Blyth (CB)
IN ATTENDANCE:		Brian Fraser (BF)	
Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Peter Cunningham (PC)	APOLOGIES:	
Mary Gibson (MG)		Gordon Crawford (GC)	Rosie Nicoll (RN)
Ian Lindsay (IL)		Derek Dowsett (DD)	Johnny Whitteridge (JW)
Dave Barclay (DB)			

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Gordon Crawford, Rosie Nicoll, Johnny Whitteridge and Derek Dowsett.

2. BW welcomed IL from the SFT to the meeting.

3. Approval of the minutes of the 25th October 2016 Meeting

The minutes of the 25th October 2016 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting (proposed by SB and seconded by HW) – with one amendment under AOCB of “exemptions” replaced by “exceptions”.

4. Matters Arising

Any matters arising will be dealt with using the items on the agenda.

5. Initial Draft 2016-17 Accounts

PJ presented a draft analysis of income/expenditure for 2016-17 that showed:

- Core expenses were £12,515.00 with the additional cost of £7,500.00 for legal expenses.
- The additional expenses costs were met by the increase in the rate of the levy.
- There are still two 2016-17 levies outstanding but they will be chased up soon.
- In spite of these additional legal costs the accounts still finished, at the year end, within our anticipated budget.

6. Draft 2017-18 Budget and Levy

- Looking forward to 2017-18, it is considered prudent to budget our anticipated core costs for the same as last year and, as we do not anticipate any legal costs similar to last year, the 2017-18 levy can revert back to 90p in the pound as promised this time last year.

7. Update on Events since the last Board Meeting

- There is still some uncertainty as to who has what rights/beats on Loch Maree and as a result catch returns are not being submitted by all proprietors/owners of beats/rights. This then results in differences in the recorded catches for Loch Maree with MS and the catch figures that Peter C gathers in for his reports. The Board needs to ensure that catch returns are made by all and, to this end, it is proposed to have a meeting of Ewe/Loch Maree proprietors to help clarify just who it is that has/have fishing rights on the loch.
- Sgeir Dughall – following five appeal attempts and two DPEA reporters, the second reporter has now granted S42 planning application but this is dependant

upon a suitable EMP being agreed. The reporter was very clear that there needed to be wild fish monitoring with MSS instrumental in its delivery. In response to the Shieldaig Council's inquiry relating to the required monitoring condition of the planning approval, MSS replied that it would be "inappropriate for them to be involved". A spokesperson from Roseanna Cunningham's office was quoted in the West Highland Free Press as saying that "it is not the position of the Scottish Government to get involved with a decision from an independent reporter". BW and Alan Wells (FMS) have made a submission to SG/MSS that requires SG/MSS to review their position following their statements. Additionally, as Sgeir Dughall was stocked in November (about 800 tonnes) but Camas an Leimis still fallow, the EMP for the S42 planning approval requires synchronization of all aquaculture activities in Loch Torridon. This situation of the Scottish Salmon Company (TSSC) stocking prior to the decision may prevent Marine Harvest Scotland (MHS) from restocking when they would otherwise wish to do so. The Highland Council (HC) planning department do not appear to be moving on the EMP and WRASFB are concerned that the Board may not be involved in the EMP determination process. So the Board will continue to lobby HC in order to be involved in the EMP process.

- Ardesie A & B – HC has still not reached a formal decision on what action to take following the Board's allegations of incorrect/wrong information being used for the CLEUD approval. PJ has restarted the discussions during a meeting with Mark Harvey HC's aquaculture planning officer) and the Board has resubmitted its evidence.
- The Scottish Sea Farms (SSF) freshwater site on the Balgy has applied for a CLEUD approval from HC as they claim that they have "lost" their original planning permission. Though registered in 1995, the planning permission may date back to the 1980s. BW will be following this up but the Board, at the very least, will be requesting an EIA.
- Summer Isles, Bottle Island and Horse Island – Sea Change and Sea Search are undertaking surveys of this area in particular around Horse Island and around the Summer Isles (near to both existing and proposed fish farm sites). The survey has already highlighted the affect of recent dredging south of Horse Island which may imply limited benthic impact.
- Countryfile have been filming in the area for a programme that will go out soon. Frank Buckley has been interviewed/filmed on Loch Maree, BW has been interviewed/filmed on the side of Loch Ewe and someone from the SSF will be interviewed/filmed giving the aquaculture view. The focus of the CountryFile item will be sea trout rather than salmon and the affects that sea lice from fish farms may be having on the wild fish. It was note that there are currently only two cages in Loch Ewe with the other ten being away at Kishorn for "refurbishment".

8. 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:

- A visit to the fish farm at Ardmair in March showed very low sea lice levels (most fish were completely free of sea lice). This is their second production cycle that has seen low lice levels. This is down to their use of small, shallow cages that are stocked at lower than usual densities (around 60% of their consented biomass) and their use of wild wrasse that are stocked at just 3% of the numbers of salmon in the cages.

- Most Fish farms are now using wild caught wrasse with a potential impact on wild wrasse populations from the large fishing operations needed to collect them. There are reports of fishermen in Cornwall and Devon voicing concerns that wrasse are being fished for down there to supply the Scottish aquaculture market. There is a need for wild wrasse management – possibly with (locally at least) protection areas within the MPA. This could be a first step in developing a management strategy for wild wrasse. PC (WRFT) has a meeting with MS and SNH to discuss the wild wrasse situation and PC's concerns for their populations.
- PC reported that, following the extensive juvenile fish surveys that he did within the northern part of the WRASFB area last year, this year he will be electro-fishing with a focus on the southern part of the WRASFB area along with the S&WRFT Southern proprietors area.
- PC informed the meeting that the sweep netting started this year on 26th April 2017 with a sweep at Flowerdale when some 30 sea trout were caught with large numbers of sea lice infestation on them.
- The salmon catches for 2016-17 were encouraging early on in the season but declined as the year went on.
- The River Carron had reported lower salmon catches - the fish caught were mainly grilse.
- PC reported that he now has three survey videos from Sea Change – all are from within the Wester Ross Marine Protected Area.
- At the SNH “Drop In” session in the Gairloch High School in March a number of points were made to the deputy chair by board members of WRASFB though no action is expected.

9. Recap on Board's Work in 2016-17

- At the FMS conference in March the FMS chairman mentioned the possibility of a 2p levy per kilo on farmed fish as an opportunity for additional funding of the wild fisheries boards and trusts. This proposal is now on the back burner and will not be presented to ScotGov.
- The West Coast Salmon Conservation Group (which historically progressed the MIAP project) has now being replaced by a newly formed aquaculture committee as part of Fisheries Management Scotland. Initially the committee will be concentrating on the development of a wild fish monitoring protocol for inclusion into the new Environment Management Plans required for consented fish farms. This will involve examining the data (and the processes used to collect the data) of the MS Shildaig project. In terms of the information needed the most important is the total levels of sea lice on the fish farm.
- The Wild Fisheries Review has now been completely abandoned (notification was received in February 2017) due to the amount of money required to set up, and operate each year, the FMOs.
- However, ScotGov are still interested in reducing the number of DSFB's and a WRASFB and SDSFB merger discussion has taken place. As part of an amalgamation of these boards there was talk of a one-off payment being made available for the facilitation and administration of these amalgamations. The issue of this being that after that money is spent, any new Board then has to survive on its levy income. However with the advent of a general election these discussions are on hold.

10. Board's Work Plan for 2017-18

- The board will continue with its pursuance of positive outcomes for both the Sgeir Dughall and the Ardessie fish farm issues. It is anticipated that the coming year will see more fish farm expansion applications that the board will respond to with accurate data, reasoned presentation of the wild fish perspective and insistence of rigorous EMPs being placed on any applications that are approved.
- The coming year may see more ScotGov initiative for the voluntary formation of an amalgamated Skye and Wester Ross Board.

11. Community Relations – Education and Young Fishers' Projects and 12.

Anglers' Representative's Report

- The Young Fishers' Project could involve a possible fishing competition between the Gairloch and Ullapool High School pupils – this needs more work to be done to bring it to fruition.
- It has been decided to hold a coaching course in May/June on Loch Tollaidh and on the River Ewe.
- The issue of disclosure of CB arose. Getting a disclosure certificate for CB has proven difficult due in part to lack of understanding of the procedure. There is a possible link to the SMART initiative. If needed, DB offered to help CB achieve his PVC as well as offering help with any coaching.
- CB has written to the secretaries of the various Angling Clubs within the WRASFB area. To date he has had no replies from the Gairloch, Ullapool and the Kinlochewe clubs but has had replies from the Achiltibuie, Poolewe and Shieldaig clubs. In their reply Poolewe club stated that their club was in need of re-invigorating as it had only a small number of older members. In their reply Shieldaig club voiced their concerns about the fish farms in their area.

8. AOCB

- We do need to organize a public and a proprietors' meeting – possible towards the end of June.
- Applications for consent for stocking have been received from Coulin and Dundonnell estates.
- Charlie Hill, who previously worked for the Beinn Damph estate, has passed his bailiff's examination but is now working for the Glen Mhor estate. Neil Leith is now working for the Beinn Damph estate but is he a warranted bailiff?

11. Date of Next Meeting

The suggested date for the next board meeting is w/c 16th October - so the actual date in that week will be determined after the results of a doodle poll.