

MINUTES OF WRASFB BOARD MEETING

HARBOUR CENTRE, GAIRLOCH	PRESENT:	
DATE: 16 October 2018	Bill Whyte (BW) Chair	Donald Rice (DR)
OPENED AT:13.15 CLOSED AT:15.45	Stephen Bate (SB)	Rosie Nicoll (RN)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Neil Morrison (NM)	Stuart Allison (SA)
Peter Jarosz (PJ) Peter Cunningham (PC)	Ray Dingwall (RD)	
Dave Barclay (DB) Mary Gibson (MG)	APOLOGIES:	
Johnny Whitteridge (JW)	Gordon Crawford (GC)	Hugh Whittle (HW)
	Derek MacLeod (DM)	

1. Election of the Convener

Following the election of the new Board, the first item on the WRASFB meeting was the election of the convener – RD nominated BW and RN seconded that nomination and all those present approved the nomination.

2. Co-opting of Anglers' and Ghillies' Representatives

Despite the fact that letters were sent out to the secretaries of all the angling clubs within the WRASFB area, the Board did not receive any responses. So at this time we do not have an angling representative.

We do have two Ghillies' representatives and it was proposed by BW, seconded by SB and approved by those present that both candidates be co-opted to the Board.

RD was proposed by RN and seconded by DR and SA was proposed by HW's mandatory and seconded by NM. With the full approval of all present both were co-opted onto the Board.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Gordon Crawford. Hugh Whittle and Derek MacLeod.

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

The minutes of the 6th April 2018 were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting being proposed by SB and seconded by NM.

5. Matters Arising

- WRASFB could do with an additional ghillie in the north of the Board's area. There is the possibility of SA and/or a new ghillie on the Loch Broom and the Board would pay for any training.
- RE&C committee report has yet to be produced though it is possible that this will happen mid November 2018.
- The problems of dead wild salmon (with huge quantities of sea lice on them) held up in Loch Roag due to low water in the Blackwater river as well as significant mortalities on the nearby fish farms is the subject of Landward that will go out tonight (16th October 2018) on BBC.

6. Finances

SB asked what control the Board was able to exercise over the monies paid to the Trust and whether or not the monies were used exclusively for work in the Board's area. BW assured the meeting that although the monies the WRASFB pay to SWRFT are classed as donations they are tied to specific projects/work that include fish farm visits,

educational projects etc.. The actual amounts are monitored, against the designated project, by the SWRFT book-keeper and are overseen by the Board's chairman.

7. New Rateable Values

After the majority of the queries from Proprietors to the District Valuation Officer seem to have been resolved, PJ received a copy of the final valuations from the Valuation Officer. A glance through the figures revealed that two fishings on one river showed an increase in rateable value that was considerably out of proportion to the rest of the new rateable values. As a result, the Board raised a query with the District Valuation Officer and challenged the new figures on behalf of the two Proprietors.

Once this query has been resolved a final version of the rateable values along with options for a number of levy rates will be circulated round the Board Members for their approval of one of the levy rate options.

8. Update on Aquaculture Events since the last Board Meeting

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

- There have been no applications to the HC Planning Department for either Horse Island or Tanera.
- Wester Ross Fisheries (WRF) has had significant mortalities at their Ardessie fish farms.
- Marine Harvest Scotland (MHS) have also experienced mortalities at their Loch ewe fish farm – PC was out at the farm on 5th October 2018.
- Substantial amounts of hydrogen peroxide were being delivered in early October 2018 to MHS's Camas an Liem fish farm indicating sea lice and/or disease issues.
- The Scottish Salmon Company (SSC) has produced a scoping and screening application for a biomass increase at their Aird fish farm – WRASFB has serious concerns about any increases in Loch Torridon and will respond.
- The SSC fish farm at Sgeir Dughall has been fallow since September 2017, however SSC has now submitted a S42 planning application to change the underwater lighting times and this will effectively give them another cycle of production.

9. 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:

- Generally the 2018 angling season has been poor – in the early part of the year salmon were unable to progress upstream due to low water in the river and the estuaries. As a direct result of low water, many salmon were taken by seals. Only now are some salmon moving up the rivers.
- Sea trout catches are very low with fishing effort low on some rivers. But numbers could be affected by changes in sea temperature as well as sea lice abundance.
- However there has been a 4lb sea trout and a 20lb salmon caught on the Dundonnell river.
- There are particular concerns on the river Ewe regarding the lack of finnock this year.
- On visiting the Loch Ewe fish farm on 5th October PC discovered that the farm had been affected with proliferative gill disease.

- PC has had no responses to his requests to visit SSC fish farms and, as a result, has not been able to visit any of the SSC fish farms. This situation is in contrast to the SSC statement that they wish to co-operate with the wild fish sector. Since any visits are purely voluntary and in no way regulatory the issue now is how best to address this apparent “stalemate” and progress towards getting the biologist onto the SSC fish farms.
- After seeing the latest SSPO table of sea lice figures, there was discussion around the table regarding issues of just how the salmon are selected for sea lice counts as well as exactly what is counted. When PC next visits a fish farm it will be when they are counting sea lice and he will check the pro forma that is being used.
- The MSS national e-fishing survey included the river Kannaird.
- The latest hydro scheme, with its fish pass system, on the Bruachaig is now operational and it looks as if salmon are using the fish pass and getting above the weir.

10. AOCB

- **Synchronized Fish Farm Production**

It is critical that there is synchronized fish farm production especially in the 2nd phase of all fish farm production cycles. SB asked if the WRASFB can do anything to ensure that synchronization happens. SSPO figures from Loch Torridon show that there is no synchronization and that there has been the highest biomass present here during the smolt movement.

Are there conditions that can be used?

Could synchronization be written into all EMPs?

Historically, synchronization was addressed via the AMA process but that method has long gone. Whilst concerning ourselves about synchronization, we should not forget about the necessity for sea lice numbers to be kept down as recent figures are again showing upward trends.

- **Catch Returns**

Catch returns for 2018 to be requested from all proprietors.

- **Stocking consents**

It is also important, as well as a legal requirement, that the Board receives requests for any stocking of salmonids into rivers. Additionally, stocking consents need to be applied for when taking broodstock – as these are retained fish and returns need to be made.

It should also be noted that if water is being abstracted for hatchery purposes, a CAR license must be applied for from SEPA.

Proprietors are requested to double check that these issues have been covered.

- **New Survey**

There will soon be a new survey project within the Wester Ross Marine Protected Area conducted by Sea Change in collaboration with Marine Science Scotland.

The Board will consider further support for this project in kind and/or financially.

14. Date of Next Meeting

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