

Meetings of the Wester Ross Area Salmon Fishery Board

October 28th 2025 at 15:00, 15:15 and 15:30 hrs

Hybrid (by Zoom/in person) at The Harbour Centre Gairloch

Minutes of the Annual Public, Proprietors' and Board

Meetings

Present: -

Online: Rosie Nicoll, Gordon Crawford, Pippa Cliff, Donald Rice.

In person: Stephen Bate (Convener), Richard Munday.

Also in attendance: Kevin Ginty (Clerk), Michael Aitcheson, Steve Kett Peter Cunningham and Sue Ward of the Wester Ross Fisheries Trust, Professor Eric McVicar, Nick Underwood and Andrew Graham-Stewart of Wildfish and Jonathan Farmer of Wester Ross Fisheries.

Minutes of the Annual Public Meeting

Welcome and introductions.

The Clerk informed those present that the meeting had been duly advertised in local papers and on the Board's website.

KG reported no additional agenda items had been raised.

Only matters for consideration are the draft report and accounts, which had been placed on the Board's website in advance of the meeting. SB proposed to defer consideration of those documents to the Proprietors'/ Board meeting. All agreed.

Meeting closed at 15:15.

Minutes of the Proprietors' Meeting (15:15)

Welcome. KG reported that no new agenda items had been received, and that the meeting had been duly advertised in the local papers and on the Board's website. No proprietors were present. As no proprietors had attended, SB proposed that consideration of the annual report and accounts be deferred to the Board meeting. All agreed.

Meeting closed at 15:30

Minutes of the Board Meeting

1. Apologies

None.

2. Matters Arising from the last minutes including finalisation of the Annual Report

The minutes of the meeting on 24 April 2025 had been signed off shortly after that meeting and there were no matters arising.

Annual report: The report in its draft form had been previously circulated to Board Members and there were two minor additions to be included in the final version.

3. The WRASFB Accounts 2024-25 and financial report for the year to date.

Draft accounts were previously circulated to the Board.

The accounts were approved by the Board subject to corrections of dates and other errors in titles and personnel.

Debtors from the previous year were discussed, the most significant being the Loch Maree Hotel. SB reported that this appeared to be operated by a company, Loch Maree Hotel Ltd. Incorporated in 2023 and contact details were available from Companies House. KG to follow up by letter to the registered office and copied to the hotel.

On behalf of the Trust, MA thanked the Board for additional funding to the Trust and confirmed the situation re the office rent: that none had been demanded from the Trust.

KG reported the current account balance and outstanding items. The Board is operating close to the planned budget for the year. With effect from this year, the Board's accountants will be charging for their services. The Oakbridge Group have prepared annual accounts for the Board free of charge for twelve years. Oakbridge were warmly thanked for their generosity and support over such an extended period of time.

AGS suggested obtaining other quotes for accounting services for next year. It was agreed to review this. GC explained that he is retiring and has passed control to the company staff, hence it was no longer practical to offer the service for free. He said that the rates quoted were very competitive. KG agreed that he would investigate the position for the future.

4. Aquaculture events since the last Board Meeting.

The draft annual report contained a number of events relevant to

aquaculture (particularly meetings under EMP planning arrangements) and the draft had previously been circulated to the Board Members and made available online via the website.

SB said the most significant events were the sweep nettings as reported by PC. There was a meeting with Mowi and Bakkafrøst relating to Torridon set out in annual report. There was some discussion around reporting sea lice numbers in advance of publication, especially around smolt run time. There had been productive discussions around realignment of production scheduled re smolt window timings.

There had been email communications concerning the Russel Burn (Kishorn) between the Trust and Bakkafrøst. Bakkafrøst approached the Trust re wild fish catch work potentially. The Russel Burn is outwith the Board area and this had been raised as an agenda item to identify whether or not there were any Board issues arising as the works proposed affected Bakkafrøst's land-based smolt production site at Kishorn.

Discussion with Helen Feenan of FMS re CAR licence highlighted the question whether or not there are wild fish populations in the burn. PC said there would be sea trout populations in the area.

HF said that if rescue services are required and the Trust is not to carry out the work (it being outwith the Trust's area), alternative contractors would have to be sought.

In the circumstances, no Board-relevant matters arose.

PC reported that there had been some restocking of the Applecross River, of which the Board was previously unaware.

A request had been received from Dave Barclay for information re Horse Island and any fish farm planning applications, in light of the renewal of a discharge consent by Mowi. KG reported that he had investigated the matter and confirmed that no notice of any application or pre-application had been received from the Highland Council or FMS.

5. WRFT Biologist's Report

PC's biologist report was circulated in advance of the meeting. PC gave a detailed presentation covering the work of the Trust over the past year. The work is summarised in the Board's Annual Report.

6. Anglers Representative's Report

Anglers' representative RM of the Shildaig Angling Club, on the Balgy River reported that local interest was important in complementing official management. They would like to generate more interest. RM said that it was often the case that youngsters were not introduced to fishing by

the previous generation. Some local initiatives are seeking to improve this.

7. Catch returns

KG to remind proprietors again that catch returns should be copied to Board. Returns should be in by the end of the year. PiC said that the end of November would be a better time to send out reminders by email and this was agreed.

8. AOCB

Eric McVicar – re Bruachaig river. He reported a meeting with SSE and PC and concluded that water abstraction had been responsible for the deterioration in spawning grounds from 1950s-1990s. Looking to maintain flow down Strath Chrombhail, providing channels, and building riparian plantings to increase invertebrates. Hydro dam schemes are responsible for low levels.

AGS said it is time for a review of hydro schemes in the North. Their electricity production is very limited compared to more modern wind turbines and photovoltaic arrays, and that the damage to fish environments is severe.

Meeting closed at 16:30 hrs

Signed

Stephen Bate
Convener

22 November 2025