

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES	PRESENT: Melanie Smith (MS) Ian Lindsay (IL) James Close (JC) Alasdair Macdonald (AM) Nigel Pearson (NP) – via Skype
DATE: 23 June 2016	
OPENED AT: 11.00 CLOSED AT: 14.40	APOLOGIES: Mark Williams (MW) Ewen Ballantyne (EB) Richard Greene (RG) Angus Davidson (AD) Veronica Mullaney (VM) Bob Kindness (BK) David Barclay (DB) Chair Bill Whyte (BW)
IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Cunningham (PC) Isabel Moore (IM) Mary Gibson (MG) Peter Jarosz(PJ) Fran Cree (FC)	

1. Minutes of Meeting on 31st March 2016

1.i MS had raised a query regarding the draft minutes of our March meeting not including any update on the meetings that had occurred with Simon Mackelvey (Cromarty) and WRFT/SFT. This has been addressed with an inclusion at 2.x in the minutes of the March meeting.

1.ii The minutes of the meeting on 31st March 2016 were approved by MS, seconded by IL and confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

1.iii Matters Arising:

- The sub-committee/steering group was set up at our December meeting to take forward the formation of an FMO with our preferred structure of a link with SFT. This is not the option being suggested to us by RAFTS/ASFB who were strongly promoting an east/west union with Cromarty.
- Monies has come in recently for the ghillies' interview project – we should record our thanks to Hugh Whittle, Donald Rice and David Barclay.
- Discussions on the Loch Maree project are on-going with a meeting scheduled for later today.
- The Open Day scheduled for 2nd June did not occur for a number of reasons – “feed back” suggested that it would be better attended later in the autumn and this is now our intention – PC/IL.
- The Loch Broom project to control Japanese Knotweed now has two locals trained to carry out stem injection. It was decided that we should buy a stem injection gun for use by one of the two trained operatives for continuing work on the INNS Loch Broom catchment area. NB Only trained operatives will be using this gun and they will provide the on-going commitment/action that is required. This project could well contribute towards a LIFE project being developed by RAFTS.
- Fran Cree (FMO project officer) is now working on the Skye Memorandum & Articles of Association adapting these documents so that they will correctly represent the combined trusts (WRFT/SFT) and become the new constitution for our joint trust.

2. Meetings (DB) and Correspondence (PJ)

2.i PJ reported that he had attended a meeting of the North West Salmon Management Group in April in Ullapool.

2.ii PJ had also attended a meeting with Dr. James Close and Jim Sutherland (Gairloch High School) to discuss the Angling Information App. It was agreed that the GHS would produce and test a smart phone App for a number of species PC has already noted to JC. WRFT will donate £1500.00 (from the Angling Information Project) to this venture. MS stated that that figure could be part funding for a STEM funding project from HIE – we should “think big” and “flesh out” this project. JC should talk with Andrew Johnson re this. Meanwhile WRFT will consider the use of Twitter as the smart phone data collection tool for the Angling Information Project. We need to check out the ownership of the data – Kevin Ginty to be asked.

2.iii We need to be aware of the issue of long-term projects that WRFT may have as still on-going at the time of our amalgamation with SFT – will the funders be approving of the transfer of their grant

monies into the new joint trust? Will we have to give assurance to those grant funders of our continuing understanding of our liabilities/obligations regarding those projects?

2.iv BW and PJ had a meeting with Douglas Sinclair (Head of Aquaculture SEPA) and Andrew Steel (Environment Protection Officer SEPA) regarding a CAR licence application for a biomass increase at Aird fish farm (TSSC). Whilst the HC Framework Plan for Loch Torridon states that biomass in that loch system is at its maximum from a sea lice perspective with no further increases of biomass advocated, SEPA's position was that they do not have a remit for sea lice and can only judge the application from water and sea bed pollution viewpoint. Our requests to run their computer modeling for the new biomass using the results of a previous benthic impact survey have been rejected on the grounds that *"It is not possible to solely and reliably extrapolate from past surveys to inform the suggested 'what ifs', so any results from autoDEPMOD or any other assessment would not be reliable, so this will not take place"*. If nothing else was achieved at least we now have their own verdict of their computer modelling system.

2.v BW and PJ also had a meeting on 21st June with Chris Read, Gareth Butterfield and Claire Lumley-Holmes (Marine Harvest Scotland), at their request, regarding a planning application for new equipment along with a CAR licence application for a biomass increase for their fish farm in Loch Duich. They pointed out, at some length, all the sea lice management tools that now have at their disposal – some of which are quite new and innovative. With the continuing sea lice problems being experienced by aquaculture, it is necessary to have area based production management agreements where different companies are operating within a single loch system and to have "fire breaks" between production areas sufficiently big enough to mitigate sea lice dispersal having a knock-on effect. The new interpretation guidelines, agreed between MSS and SSPO, of 3 adult lice per fish for triggering treatment and of 8 adult lice per fish for the reduction of biomass was mentioned and MHS considered these numbers too high both to prevent problems for wild fish and for fish in the farms. "MHS will continue to work to the lower levels of 0.5 adult lice per fish (from 1st February to 30th June each year) and 1 lice per fish (from 1st July to 31st January each year)." By their example, they hope to influence the rest of the industry to work to these lower levels. All these new ideas being developed and implemented highlights the need to keep lines of communication open. PC along with NP and IM are to visit Loch Duich to see the freshwater treatment process in action. It should be noted that the Loch Alsh and Loch Duich AM group still meets.

2.vi PJ reported that the MSS telemetry project has now successfully finished. Some 20 salmon were tagged and released back into the river. 18 salmon were recorded as exiting the river and then heading north between Skye and the mainland.

2.vii PJ said that he had talks recently with Lorna Brown (LB) and she will continue with the educational projects. There is a need to produce "Living Lochs" this financial year in both Portree and Gairloch High Schools. In order to synchronize both the presentation as well as the content, IM will "shadow" LB when LB presents it in Gairloch HS. As a general principle we need to push forward with our educational projects, including the primary schools' "Salmon and Trout in the Classroom" project since all the equipment exists.

3. FINANCIAL REPORTS

3.i The cash projections and the management finance reports had been previously circulated by email and there were no queries regarding the finances shown on them.

4. BIOLOGIST' REPORT

4.i IM highlighted the following points from her report that she had previously emailed round:

- That she has been sweep-netting at a number of various sites and had not always been successful as the fish seem to be dispersing. This could be a possible clue to fish being in good health?
- As well as continuing to sweep-net, IM will try the use of fyke nets. To this end she has already got a fyke net (PC dropped it off a few days ago) and, depending on its results, may well consider buying more fyke nets and utilizing these along with her sweep-netting.
- IM also said that she is looking at different tagging techniques to help with the identification of the fish she is catching. One preferred method will mean that she will be visiting Shona Marshall to learn her tagging techniques first hand. She also have the possibility of the use of our pan-jet marker gun as another option.
- IM will also visit MSS Shieldaig Station to learn the trawling method they employ for catching plankton and sea live blooms.

- IM has identified 54 potential electro-fishing sites but firstly has to ensure that she has the relevant license for these sites.
- IM (along with IL and PJ) will be attending a meeting with MHS regarding funding by MHS for the PhD telemetry project.

4.ii PC summarized his report (that he had previously emailed out):

- A CAR license application for a hydro scheme at Achnashellach meant the PC will visit the site asap in order to better understand its complexities. But it is true to say that this is yet a further hydro scheme on another of the important habitat tributaries of the Carron catchment system and will need to be addressed carefully. To date the WRASFB has lodged an objection to the scheme and does not intend to withdraw its objection until the necessary mitigation measures are agreed.
- The Wester Ross MPA meeting at Ullapool, organized by Sea Change, proposed that new surveys of the MPA should take place to improve knowledge of the species and their habitat distribution.
- PC attended a Wester Ross Biosphere meeting on 22nd June 2016 that agreed to focus on governance.
- Part of PC's draft work plan will include the utilization of the students (that Steve Kett will bring up later this summer) who will be looking at trout in Wester Ross. We should extend that work into Loch Maree and, to that end, make links with UHI and IM. It was agreed that MS would organize a meeting of all interested parties.
- We should activate a fishing/angling tuition project for school pupils possibly leading onto a competition. But even if there was to be no competition, we should get on with the tuition project.
- PC is currently looking at the MHS Bottle Island screening and scoping applications to the Highland Council. Bottle Island is close to the Little Gruinard river (a SAC for Atlantic Salmon) as well as being in the new WR MPA. This could well be a test case for the exact role of a MPA. There are a number of submission documents on the HC web site and in one of these the possible relinquish of the Loch Ewe fish farm site is mentioned. Because of its three consecutive benthic impact survey failures, the Loch Ewe fish farm has had its biomass reduced by 25% by SEPA.

5. Planning Ahead

5.i The Open Day needs to be re-scheduled for a day in the w/c 24th October. PC will create a Doodlepoll in order to arrive at a date that is best for all who respond to the poll. The day needs to be symbolic - presenting the amalgamation of the two trusts as an opportunity to be taken with a view to the future implementation of the ScotGov's vision of FMOs. Our proposal must emphasise the need to retain the history and expertise of the existing trusts as a separate working arm of the new FMO which we are informed will have statutory remit for wild fish. The Open Day should not be confused with, or in any way appear to represent, our inaugural AGM that will have to be a specific meeting.

5.ii FC has been able to sift through the Skye Fisheries Trust Memorandum and Articles of Association and identify just where changes will need to be made in order to arrive at versions of both documents that will then be worded correctly for the amalgamated trust. The aims and governance criteria of the new amalgamated trust will stay unaltered. Basically WRFT will be included into the company limited by guarantee that is currently SFT will details such as (the already agreed) board/trustee representation being 2/3^{ds} from WRFT and 1/3rd from SFT and with the chair chosen by the board.

Once the finished Memorandum and Articles of Association are completed, they will be circulated to all existing trustees for their approval. The next step then will be the completion of the OSCR pre-application document that needs to be submitted to OSCR for their approval of our intended amalgamation. This is part complete but will need up to date financial information imputed at the time of submission to OSCR. This financial information includes any financial debts along with financial and tangible assets.

5.iii The next step then is the production of a business plan. The business plan will need to include the conservation plans for our rivers with clearly defined inaugural objectives that will have to be costed. Currently, proprietors are being asked by Scot/Gov for the past five years' catches specific to their river. This information is important to the business plan so we should ensure that the information comes to the trust as well. We need to identify a range of management measures and cost them. Overarching themes need to be agreed, developed and costed – these should be place the required science into a linked up plan. This process should start by the up-dating of our existing plans. Phase

one of this process needs to be the review and update our existing Fishery Management Plan into our FMO conservation plan. There are a total of some 50 rivers within the WRFT/SFT area and each of these should warrant suggested management actions. During this process we must include that additional species (that will be include in the new legislation) into our plans.

5.iv There was some discussion regarding the current office situation and whether or not the current “understanding” will continue. Hopefully it may, as we do not have any alternative options.

6. AOB

There was no AOB from any of the attendees.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	STATUS
25/08/2016	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed
25/10/2016	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed