

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

UHI INVERNESS	PRESENT:	
DATE: 06 March 2014	David Barclay (DB) Chair	Melanie Smith (MS)
OPENED AT: 11.00 CLOSED AT: 13.20	Angus Davidson (AD)	Bob Kindness (BK)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Henry Dalgety (HD)	Ewen Ballantyne (EB)
Matthew Curran (MC)	APOLOGIES:	
Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Richard Greene (RG)	Nigel Pearson (NP)
	Mark Williams (MW)	

1. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the 12th December 2013 minutes – which were adopted as an accurate record and were proposed by BK seconded by DB.

PJ gave a follow up report to the item 6.i of the December minutes informing trustees of the outcome of the complaint made about WRFT to OSCR – OSCR have dismissed the complaint stating that they (OSCR) had “not found any evidence to suggest that this (complaint alleging that the charity trustees are putting their commercial interests ahead of their charity trustee duties) is correct”. A copy of the decision letter from OSCR was passed around the trustees present.

2. **Meetings (DB)**

DB suggested that this should be a regular Agenda item in order to inform Trustees of background activities progressed by himself and PJ which did not rate a separate Agenda discussion.

2.i On Tuesday 20th February there was a workshop in the Aultbea Village Hall with speakers from AST – Mark Coulson and Ken Whelan. The latest science/research on sea lice and the treatments used by aquaculture was explored in some detail. There are complicated factors affecting sea trout and salmon and methods used, in various parts of the world, to mitigate adverse effects on wild salmonids were looked at as well as measures used to support wild fish. The workshop concentrated on science not political views and was well attended.

2.ii Earlier on 14th February MS, DB and PJ met to discuss the second biologist agreement between UHI and WRFT. At the meeting it was agreed that the financial agreement would cease as of the 31st December 2013. However, both UHI and WRFT want to continue with the close association both with co-operation in projects as well as MC, through UHI, doing work (with and directed by PC) in the area of the southern rivers. The southern rivers do not pay a levee but a voluntary contribution to the trust and a comprehensive assessment of catch returns on their rivers, compared to rivers in the board area, did show that their contributions were in fact in line with levees paid to the board. MC could also do work on Skye for the SFT. This clear demarcation of work into two categories of work, one within the board area and the other outwith the board area should benefit our working relationship with the board. Continued ties with UHI open opportunities for student research projects.

2.iii **DB** reported on a meeting he had had in early February with Hugh Whittle. HW believes the southern rivers in general and the Carron in particular are not paying enough to the trust. HW was upset that the WRASFB logo had not appeared on the WRFT annual review for 2013. HW also had an issue over an aquaculture employee being a trustee and is against the trust taking any money from aquaculture. It is apparent the assigning PC's work for the board to specific parts of individual rivers can create the appearance that this is benefiting individual proprietors. Boards are supposed to generate an amount of money (from levees) that is then used (as agreed by the board members) to fulfil the board's remit. That said, DB considered the meeting to have been both meaningful and useful with both parties moving towards agreement on a number of topics. The board appears to be a little more relaxed about the issues surrounding work done by the trust for the board with the need for tighter controlling/reporting on the work in 2014-15. DB will attend the next board meeting on 11th March.

2.iv In early January there was a Bruachaig meeting during which it was suggested that there would be an option paper (on all the things that could be done) available by the end of February. MC reported that he had completed the first draft and it would be circulated shortly.

3. **FINANCE REPORTS**

3.i Cash Projections.

- DB stated that he had found it difficult to work out the trust's financial position even though

to give a clear overview. It is also difficult to cost time for PC as so much of his time can be spent on the telephone/email researching and answering queries etc-what DB calls 'scientific overhead'..

- At first glance there appears to be a loss this f/y of £22K but there was a "carry over" from 2012-13 accounts of some £10K of unpaid invoiced liability reducing the loss to some £12K in reality for this f/y. So, although the overall position is still one of the trust losing money for the second year, the actual f/y end balance is not likely to be as bad as first indicated.
- The above two points clearly illustrate the need for a simpler system of reporting of the accounts so that trustees can quickly and accurately read the overall financial position prior to each of the WRFT meetings. A draft one page report (prepared by the book-keeper) that was presented to the meeting was ideal and read along with the cash projections would give the type of simplified report that is required.
- Money passed over to WRFT by the previous Board subsidised Peter C's activities ("stuff that Peter does") – telephone calls, emails, transfer of data etc.. Once the Board wanted to pay money to WRFT on a project by project basis then Peter's core work was no longer being funded.
- It is now self evident that a lot of what Peter does has, in the past, been funded by the Board on an unaccounted basis and, because of the new funding basis from the Board, we need to evaluate the extent of this hole in our core funding and account more specifically for Peter's time.
- DB will, next week, circulate full accounts and these will form the essence of DB's report to the Board dealing with the trust's scientific research work as well as the trust's core costs.

3.ii Management Reports

The Chair made it clear that trustees' meetings do not need to focus on management reports but read through simplified financial reports (as mentioned above) and raise only queries of items/issues from those reports at the meetings.

3.iii 2014 Budget

- It had been hoped that a draft budget might have been produced in time for this meeting but, because of the issues involved in the analysis of our core finances, this has not been possible.
- Firstly, it is essential to get the hard facts regarding the costs of running the trust. Then, once the actual costs of running the trust have been accurately evaluated and potential funding for 2014-15 projected into the calculations, a draft budget can emerge.

4. CURRENT WRFT FUNDING ISSUES

4.i RAFTS

- Over the past three years the money via RAFTS from Scottish Government has gradually declined – Marine Scotland are cutting back on the budget that they allocate to the projects (previously agreed with MS) that are conducted by RAFTS via the trusts (e.g. sweep netting for the MIAP project).
- It was agreed that there should not be payment to helpers for sweep netting – all helpers will need to be volunteers.
- RAFTS have in the past couple of years been actively looking to EU money for the funding of projects that the trusts can be involved in. A typical example is the Scottish Mink Initiative that is currently funded via EU money. Generally speaking it does take some time to fully access EU funding streams for the substantial amounts required for projects involving all participating trusts.

4.ii WRASFB

Already covered above.

4.iii UHI

Already covered above

4.iv SFT

The vehicle costs, paid for by SFT though the vehicle was used exclusively by the second biologist, amounted to some £4K and are still outstanding but can be offset by the work PC has done for SFT this year which is circa £6K. A difference of some £2K should be included in this f/y's budget.

4.v Southern Proprietors

- WRFT will continue to do work on the southern rivers for the Southern Proprietors but the intent is that the fulfilment of this work requirement will be achieved by co-operation with UHI. Work in the next f/y on Skye for SFT will also be achieved in co-operation with UHI. This will enable PC to work exclusively within the Board area.
- An analysis of catch returns in the southern rivers (excluding the river Carron) over a ten year period showed up a 6% difference in what they paid in the last f/y to what they would have been levied (if they were in a board area). This difference has been partly addressed with this year's invoices and will be fully brought into line next year.
- A memorandum of understanding between WRFT and UHI will reflect the detail of the of the work on the southern rivers and on Skye.

5. BIOLOGIST' REPORTS

5.i PC's report

PC's draft report had been peer reviewed by DB before circulation, and this would be the usual process from now on. The report had then been circulated to trustees and In the absence of substantive issues raised by trustees, it was not discussed further at the meeting.

5.ii MC's report

MC gave the meeting a précis of the work he had been doing to provide a draft analysis of the options for the Bruachaig project. The draft was currently with Eric Verspoor and, after his appraisal of the suggested options, will be circulated to trustees and proprietors of the Ewe/Loch Maree catchment.

MC also provided the meeting with an update on the progress of an initial grant application for funding towards a more in-depth assessment of the Loch Maree centre project that will culminate in a further much larger grant application.

6. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting & AGM	29/05/2014	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	07/08/2014	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	23/10/2014	WRFT Office	10.30

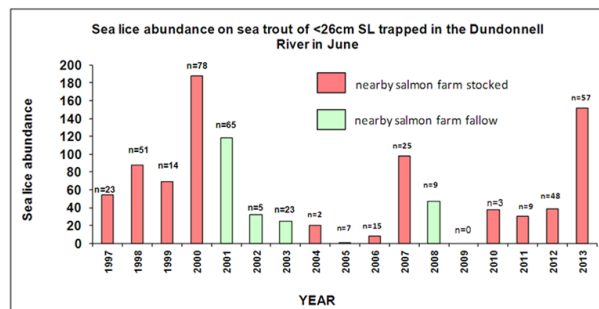
WRFT Trustee Meeting 6th March 2014

DRAFT WRFT Biologists Report (as of 26th February 2014) DRAFT

1. Sea trout and sea lice monitoring (supported by RAFTS & WRASFB, and core funding).

1a In 2013, sea lice levels were particularly high on sea trout taken in the sweep net at the Dundonnell River mouth (graph below). Some fish carrying over 100 lice were also recorded in samples taken at the Kanaird estuary and in the River Ewe. Much concern has been expressed by local wild fisheries interests. I largely agree with members of the WRASFB that the biggest issue confronting sea trout populations in the WRFT area remains the threat of sea lice epizootics and further damage to stocks especially if existing and new farms fail to adequately control sea lice.

The correlation between lice levels on sea lice levels on nearby salmon farms is now accepted. [Middlemas *et al* 2012](#) found that on sea trout were highest at sites closest to farms in the second year of their cycle. In 2013, lice levels on farmed salmon Kennart to Gruinard area were several higher than treatment thresholds. See



trout and widely lice levels salmon production in the times reports at:

[http://www.scottishsalmon.co.uk/science/sea_lice/regional_reports\(1\).aspx](http://www.scottishsalmon.co.uk/science/sea_lice/regional_reports(1).aspx)

However, it has not been possible to quantify the impact of high lice levels on sea trout at the population level; and therefore to be able to state the extent of damage to sea trout fisheries caused by sea lice epizootics. Other factors, including changes in food availability and predator populations (e.g. Common seal) can also affected sea trout growth and survival.

This has presented a challenge to wild fisheries interests, including the WRASFB tasked with safeguarding wild sea trout populations when confronted with planning applications for new salmon farms. To address the need for an improved understanding of this issue, I've been developing a project proposal to learn more about the performance of sea trout in different parts of Scotland and relationships with different factors in different areas.

An initial explanation and project outline was presented at the SFCC biologists meeting on 29th January (see below); and at the **WRFT –'Sea trout and sea louse workshop'** at Aultbea Village Hall, supported by the Atlantic Salmon Trust, on 20th February. One of the main points from the latter workshop, stated by Prof Ken Whelan (based on experiences at Burrishole), is the value of recording sea trout 'kelts' as they drop down from spawning areas, to learn about their growth and survival. This sits well with proposed investigations of larger sea trout around Scotland. This workshop provided very useful information from high quality speakers, and a produced a sensible debate on the issues with a wide range of attendees.

1b A proposed project is to develop a monitoring programme to gather as much data as possible on the status of sea trout in the south **Skye sea lochs area**, where salmon farms have been fallow since 2010. Over the years there have been calls from wild fisheries interests to remove salmon farms from particularly sensitive sites. The south Skye sea lochs area provides an opportunity to find out how sea trout populations respond if salmon farms are removed from an area.

The presentation (and outline project proposal) can be found at:

<http://www.wrft.org.uk/files/Sea%20trout%20presentation%2020%20February%202014%20compressed96dpi1.pdf>

1c. I am preparing a **Dundonnell sea lice report**, with a compilation of other data from the fyke net at Dundonnell in 2012 and 2013. This report will be funded by WRASFB.

1d. On 19th Feb we carried out **our first sweep net session** of the year in Flowerdale River estuary; 18 sea trout of up to 35cm were caught; with an average condition factor of 0.84 (i.e. thin). Most fish had no lice on them, with only one ovigerous female louse and one other louse seen in the entire sample. PJ may be able to provide an update on the likelihood of continued RAFTS funding for post-smolt sea trout monitoring at sites at Kanaird, Boor Bay and Flowerdale by 6/3.

1e. Finally (on sea lice related work): I've identified one possible sampling site for sea trout in the Loch Alsh area (at Balmacara) and plan to inspect it and other sites over next spring tides to assess their suitability for sweep netting later in the year.

1f. On a related topic, arrangements have not yet been made to visit any salmon farms in the area this year. WRASFB has set out the condition that visits within the WRASFB area will only be paid for if sea lice data is obtained, and supplied to the Board. Salmon farms in the south of the WRFT area outwith the WRASFB area are now in the second year of the production cycle.

2. Fish survey reports and juvenile fish surveys

Reports for surveys in the south of Skye Rivers (initial findings were reported following visits) and Arnisdale and Glenelg Rivers have yet to be drafted; I now plan to complete both of these reports in March.

Until 2013, our e-fishing programme aimed to maintain knowledge of the occurrence of juvenile salmon throughout the WRFT area. It is important for us to maintain the continuity of the data, and as part of that I have prepared an outline of proposed priority areas for e-fish surveys within the WRASFB area in 2014. Funding this work will be at the discretion of the Board of course.

I've provisionally booked a place on the SFCC team leader's refresher course in June! This is a new one day course for those who obtained their qualification several years earlier.

3. Consultations and responses [responses within WRASFB area supported by WRASFB]

Since Christmas I have prepared comments for the WRASFB regarding applications to the Highland Council for new hydropower projects near Ullapool and Applecross; comments on another application for a HP scheme near Gairloch have been requested. I have also responded to requests for comments from Scottish Water regarding proposals to upgrade the supply to Kyle and Broadford.

4. Mink monitoring project [SMI programme; funding agreement with SNH via RAFTS]

Our main (funded) task has been to co-ordinate the network of volunteers and provide support in an area extending from Gairloch to the River Kanaird. Mink have been reported seen near Loch Broom and near Aultbea; however there have been no reports of captures within the SMI area. I've had two trips to Ullapool to meet up with volunteers since the new year. Local keepers are best able to put out traps for mink, and traps have been set. Typically about one in 3 volunteers responds to a group email message requesting information about progress, so rather a lot of phone calls are required to keep up to date with progress. Some of the Trustees may be able to help by keeping in touch with neighbours and other people who are involved with the project in the areas you work in.

I've emphasised the need to set traps where mink are known to be present as a matter of highest priority prior to the bird nesting season. The WRFT's role is essentially an administration task; progress reports (one pending) are required periodically by the SMI project team to forward to SNH.

5. Work in Skye [funded by the Skye Fisheries Trust]

As stated above, I am about to prepare a report with the results of surveys in southern Skye in 2013. I've also been responding to requests from Scottish Water for information regarding modifications to the Broadford Water Supply. The data from a proposed study of sea trout in the south Skye sea lochs area, as outlined in section 1b above, will be useful more widely across the West of Scotland. Working on Skye from a base in Gairloch and attending meetings in Portree, is not always practicable and is certainly not cost effective, albeit the Kinlochs and the Johnsons were very generous in providing accommodation during field visits in 2013. The issue of field work in Skye is under review as part of our co-operation with UHI, and may further depend on how much e-fishing is required by the WRASFB during the summer of 2014. However, scientifically, there is some catching up to do within the Board area.

6. Tournai trap project [supported by Marine Harvest]

Ben Rushbrooke compiled a data set for SFCC on salmon and sea trout smolts trapped at Tournai as part of a contract with SFCC to compile smolt data sets from traps around Scotland to inform the Scottish Government's marine renewable programme.

Normally we aim to operate the downstream trap at Tournai from the end of March. I will visit Tournai to inspect the traps, screen and sluice in the first week or so of March. Some repair work may be needed on the structure of the sluice at the top of the fish ladder to be able to operate the traps safely over the coming year.

The Trustees will be asked to authorise necessary repairs to the Tournai trap, in order to make the trap ready for operation from the end of March / early April.

7. Little Gruinard invertebrate study [supported by Eilean Darach Estate, Geoffrey Billiet and to fulfil Grant agreement with SNH]

As part of his 'internship' for his Masters degree, student Geoffrey Billiet from Toulouse, is carrying out a study of aquatic invertebrates in the Little Gruinard River system. This study aims to fulfil an outstanding obligation to SNH following acquisition of a grant for purchase of e-fishing kit and a new sweep net. We plan to learn about the biodiversity of aquatic invertebrates within the river, their hatching times, and how they relate to stream habitat and juvenile fish populations. Eilean Darach Estate has very kindly provided Geoffrey with rent-free accommodation at Little Gruinard until May. Thanks especially to Carol Fraser for preparing Geoffrey's accommodation. I have provided several days of direct support to Geoffrey so far; energetic volunteers are needed to help Geoffrey with sample collecting expeditions (and free up more of my time for report writing!).

8. Other things

- **Aultbea Sea trout & sea louse workshop** (20th February 2014): thanks to all who participated. A report can be found at <http://www.wrft.org.uk/news/newsitem.cfm?id=174>.
- **WREN Herring project proposal**: An application to the Fishmongers Company for a grant has been unsuccessful; outcome of SNH application pending. WREN meeting tomorrow . . .
- **Habitat restoration projects**. PJ and I need to develop a series of projects to improve and restore fish habitat, and obtain funding. Two areas which I regard as being of high priority are: Laide Wood, and Loch Maree spawning burns (especially Loch na Fideil burn: fencing and desilting).
- **Slattadale Burn**: Bruce Taylor (FC officer) has requested that I meet him at Slattadale to discuss management requirements here. Bruce is also keen to input to any proposals to develop interpretation facilities by Loch Maree.
- **Ullapool High School**: I have set up a 'Salmon in the Classroom' chilled aquarium with help from Ms Jemma Middleton for Duke of Edinburgh award student Erin Meek.
- **Plockton High School** visit: I helped with the Crofting Studies course on 14th Feb. This was funded by ???
- **Scottish MPA programme**: a final period of consultation is underway which ends on 12th March. Further submissions are invited only if there is new data, new information, new evidence, or new reflections on existing proposals which are not included in earlier submissions. Submissions should be emailed to: Marine_Environment_Mailbox@scotland.gsi.gov.uk
- **The back stairs** (fire escape) to the office needs repaired; this is both a legal and safety issue.
- **Personal Matters**
 - **Trip to Iceland**: a holiday / study trip, flying out on 1st June; back in Gairloch on 15th June. If anyone has any fishy contacts in Iceland where I might be welcomed and learn something useful, please let me know.
 - **I'll be 50 on 8th May!** Usually I maintain a very low profile on my birthday; however for some reason I have booked the Gairloch Community Hall (7pm) for a ceilidh; everyone invited . . . !

Peter Cunningham, 26th February 2014

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