

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES		PRESENT:	
DATE:	12 December 2013	David Barclay (DB) Chair	Richard Wilson (RW)
OPENED AT:	10.35	Angus Davidson (AD)	Bob Kindness (BK)
CLOSED AT:	13.25	Henry Dalgety (HD)	Ewen Ballantyne (EB)
IN ATTENDANCE:		APOLOGIES:	
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Matthew Curran (MC)	Richard Greene (RG)	Nigel Pearson (NP)
Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Melanie Smith (MS)	Mark Williams (MW)
Mary Gibson (MG)			

1. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising from the 10th October 2013 minutes – which were adopted as an accurate record and were proposed by RW seconded by MG.

2. New Trustee

2.i DB welcomed Ewen Ballantyne (Arnisdale) and trustees unanimously approved his appointment as a trustee.

2.ii RW reminded everyone that this would be his last meeting with his retirement from WRFT effective from 31st December 2013 – DB thanked him for his nine years of service as a trustee.

2.iii There is a need for another two trustees and these will be actively sought in 2014.

3. FINANCE REPORTS

3.i Cash Projections

The current cash projection (end of November) is showing a loss for this financial year of £23K – the implications of this loss needs to be viewed both on a short and long terms basis.

Work plan will be considered by DB, PC and PJ.

3.ii Management Reports/Accounts

The drop in our turnover has allowed us (following OSCR's approval) to change from "accrual" accounts to a "receipts and payments" version. This is a more "readable" version for trustees (and others) to easily understand and will, in fact, mirror the cash projections as both become compatible due to this change.

In future, a sub-team will analyse the management reports/accounts on a regular basis (prior to trustees' meetings) teasing out key issues. It will be these key issues that are presented at trustees' meetings.

3.iii Southern River Proprietors' Contributions

- An analysis (based on catch and comparison to the levy on rivers in the board area) has been completed. This analysis is demonstrating that if last year's contributions are increased by some 4%, the resultant contributions for 2013/4 will bring the southern river proprietors' contributions onto a par with levies raised within the board area.
- There is one anomaly still to be fully resolved, Carron proprietors are currently asked to contribute to the WRFT but are also contributing to the Carron Project (UHI). This has been recognised by WRFT as situation that may require smoothing – talks have been started with UHI in order to agree a single solution that avoids any apparent duplication of contributions.
- This year's contributions will go out as per previous years but only following PJ contacting Shaun MacDonald to discuss the Carron situation.
- This year contributions from the northern proprietors (via WRASFB) are based on specific projects, focusing on fish farm related issues, and represent some 50% of the amount that has historically been donated by WRASFB to WRFT. New legislation requires boards to submit their accounts annually to SG, who will be analysing the content of these accounts. At the same time the new legislation requires boards to financially support their trusts. In order to facilitate this, WRFT will need to forge better links with the board and that, in turn, will require policies/objectives of WRFT to be revised to better align with WRASFB.

- WRFT's focus is on the health of wild fish populations, including assessing many environmental factors, whilst WRASFB primarily focuses on fish farms and their adverse effects on salmonid health – there are obviously commonalities that we can build on.
- The discussion moved onto the issue of fish farm representatives as trustees of WRFT. It is useful, with respect to fish farming in general, to focus on the local fish farms and their management in determining the position of WRFT when responding to aquaculture planning applications so that we can make an informed assessment of the new farm's position and its projected biomass. At the same time, two years of severe sea lice infestation leans WRFT towards a precautionary approach. Whilst WRFT is keen to have fish farm representation among its trustees therefore, the need to consider a balance of its trustees has not been forgotten.

4 **BIOLOGISTS' REPORT**

4.i **PC's Report** - see report from Peter C (attached below).

Précising his report PC stated that:

- The Sgeir Dughall fish farm had experienced high lice numbers and high mortality rates and had been harvested early as a result. It will remain fallow until February in order to synchronize with Marine Harvest farm in Torridon.
- Marine Harvest is operating on an 18-month cycle and that does seem to reduce the build up of lice at the end of a second cycle and allows for a longer fallow period.
- Wrasse (taking up to 18 months to bring up to useable size) are increasingly being used for sea lice management on fish farms. It requires a new approach to total husbandry as there is the need to manage the wrasse (in addition to managing the salmon). But to date results do look promising.
- The management objectives of MPAs should include management of salmonid fisheries.
- PC's priorities for this winter are:
 1. Completion of reports.
 2. Mink control programme.
 3. Anglers' information web site.
 4. Fish farm visits.
 - MC and Eric Verspoor (EV) will review the Bruachaig project proposal, with a new scope to be produced.
 - The genetic project has not been submitted to SARF due to timescales and the complexity of pulling the information together but it can be worked up for the next round of funding. It is potentially a major project with high costs associated to it and issues of selecting the appropriate sites. Tournai may not be an ideal site to include.

4.ii **MC's Report**

- MC's work for UHI is currently about writing up the work that has been done over the past years on the river Carron – with a focus on catch statistics. The first draft of this work is now with EV.
- MC recently attended the IBIS/AST Conference, held in Glasgow, on stocking. He gave the meeting an insight into some of the aspects covered by the conference:
 1. Issues of in-breeding and out-breeding depression, with their possible impact on marine survival, were discussed.
 2. The effect that climate change appears to be having raised the query "can salmon naturally adapt quickly enough to cope with the effects/trends that climate change may bring?"

3. Generally speaking, more stocked fish means more potential for out-breeding depression.
4. Ranching is OK as long as caught fish are identified and not allowed to breed.
5. Advice was:
 - Be clear what the issue is before stocking.
 - Stocking should be recognised as a tool and may, or may not, be appropriate.
 - There must be continuing monitoring so that adjustments to the stocking can be made accordingly.
 - Arnisdale – EB reported that stocking above the waterfalls has been done for some time but with no monitoring – however rod catches were up, appearing to recognise its success.
 - To assess the success of stocking requires the monitoring of both returning adults and the number of smolts going out.
 - All of the above reinforces the value of the review of the river Bruachaig programme by MC and EV.

5. PLANNING AHEAD

5.i Bruachaig project

The review by MC and EV (see 4.i) will result in a clearer programme acknowledging the risk for potential damage (however slight this might be) but there will be no on-going monitoring.

5.ii Arnisdale

EB reported that stocking above the waterfalls has been done for some time but with no monitoring – however rod catches were up, appearing to demonstrate its success.

5.iii Herring Project - New

This has different project proposals than the previous herring project and may be a possible student project via SAMS (Scottish Association for Marine Science) or a possible HLF/SNH project. PC has been leading a WREN (Wester Ross Environment Network – local biodiversity group) initiative to develop a herring project on behalf of WREN - if grant applications are successful some of the work will be carried out by WRFT. Additionally, proposals have been submitted to SAMS for student projects on herring spawning areas and sea grass bed restoration.

6. AOB:

6.i OSCR

The complaint made to OSCR alleges conflict of interest within WRFT. All requests from OSCR for information have been fulfilled, and we await any request for further information and comment. A similar complaint made against RAFTS has been dismissed, as having no relevance, by OSCR.

6.ii River Basin Management Planning

There is a possibility of a project to identify small water bodies of importance for S&ST as part of the River Basin Management Planning. Information from this project would inform a second plan currently being prepared by SEPA - PC to include this in his work plan.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting	06/03/2014	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting & AGM	29/05/2014	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting	TBA	WRFT Office	10.30