

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES	PRESENT: David Barclay (DB) Chair Ian Lindsay (IL) Bob Kindness (BK) James Close (JC) Melanie Smith (MS) via Skype Richard Greene (RG)
DATE: 23 March 2017	
OPENED AT: 11.05 CLOSED AT: 15.30	
IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Cunningham (PC) Veronica Mullaney (VM) Peter Jarosz(PJ)	APOLOGIES: Nigel Pearson (NP) Isabel Moore (IM) Derek Dowsett (DD) Neil Cameron (NC) Mark Williams (MW) Alasdair Macdonald (AM) Mary Gibson (MG) Bill Whyte (BW)

1. Minutes of Meeting on 30th November 2016

The minutes of the meeting on 30th November 2016 were approved by MS, seconded by IL and confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

1.i Item 1.i of the November minutes reported that MHS had withdrawn their financial support for the telemetry project. After discussions (see below) the difficulties were resolved and we can now report that MHS have agreed to financially support the project. This support with the help of two individuals' donations totaling £5K puts the telemetry project firmly on a sound financial footing.

1.ii Further to item 6.ii of the November minutes, PJ reported that BW had been elected to the FMS board.

2. Meetings and Correspondence (PJ)

2.i PJ and IL met up with Chris Read (CR) and Claire Lumley-Holmes (CLH) of Marine Harvest Scotland in the Kyle Hotel on Friday 10th May when CR confirmed the funding for the Telemetry Project (see 1.i above). Additionally CR and CLH briefed us on management status/information of the MHS current sites as well as their experience of the new well-boat water treatments for sea lice management. They also updated us on the future plans for their additional Isle of Rum and Isle of Canna sites. There was an update on the Loch Duich new cage configuration which will then see a biomass increase.

2.ii IL and PJ reported on the Skye AMA (and Board and Trust) meetings held on 16th March at the Aros centre in Portree. Most of the fish farmers with sites around Skye were present. It was a very positive meeting with two fish farmers wanting to engage the Trust in scientific monitoring of possible interactions to wild fish from their new fish farms (one that is approved and one that is still to be submitted to planning). As well as the monitoring of the new fish farms, it is likely that monitoring (that the aquaculture companies will also fund) could be conducted around existing sites. This monitoring of possible interactions is a result of the move towards the introduction of Environmental Management Plans (EMPs) into planning conditions. These EMPs are based on the results of the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) that are required to accompany planning applications submitted by aquaculture companies. Highland Council's approval of a number of planning applications that had ten-year terms as part of their conditions was the catalyst for EMPs. Argyll Council have passed a number of planning approvals with EMPs as a condition. Part of the Argyll Council's EMP condition is that the aquaculture company that has been granted the planning approval pays for the monitoring to be performed by the local fisheries trust. There is currently work on-going to create an EMP "template" that will have the essential "must have" conditions along with further secondary conditions that can be tailored to meet each specific new site being applied for in all future planning applications. The final version of this EMP template should be vetted/approved by MSS and the planning councils so that its "adoption" by the fish farm companies is a "given".

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.

3.ii PJ said that he had written a letter to the WH Smith Trust Fund regarding a possible charitable contribution that the fund has made regularly. To date there has been no reply to the letter.

3.iii The invoices sent to MHS recently for the annual contributions to WRFT have “moved” into the payment office – so WRFT may now receive the MHS contribution for 2016-17.

3.iv A number of the Southern River Proprietors have not, as yet, paid their 2016-17 contributions. Yet, despite the SG’s decision to “shelve” the WFR process, the Southern Rivers remain strategically/financially important to involve in the WRFT/SFT amalgamation. The survey performed some two years ago indicated a consensus for opting into the then proposed FMO. The only river that did not reply was the Carron. So a meeting with the River Carron proprietors remains a priority so an attempt to meet up with them to discuss “what happens next” will be sought via BK.

4. BIOLOGISTS’ REPORTS

4.i PC summarized his report (previously circulated):

- The sustainability of catching wild wrasse for use as cleaner fish is a major concern and science is required to inform on the current situation. PC contacted Jeff Gibbons to bring this concern to JG’s attention asking him if monitoring of wrasse could be funded. It seems that Aberdeen are doing some monitoring via SAMS.
- There are a number of hydro schemes currently on-going and PC considered the monitoring of these both during and post construction as being a priority.
- The planning authority wants to impose monitoring for interactions with wild fish when granting new aquaculture consents –MS commented that she would like to have an implied role in post development monitoring.
- PC reported that there is (in an early stage) a SISI project that is being developed by RAFT for EU funding. WRFT are in this project for the eradication of various INNS along the south side of Loch Maree. PJ stated that a second project for Rhododendron Ponticum eradication – also along the south side of Loch Maree - was also being prepared for submission for SLFC funding.
- The newsletter was published in January and published on our web site. At present we have no facility for recording how many people have accessed it and read it.
- Discussion ensued regarding some of the plans and activities listed in the report-
 - JC reported that Mr and Mrs Whittle (the River Ewe owners) had donated two days in for the Gairloch High School pupils to fish on the river as well as use of the manse house. MS said that RLI/STEM could be involved also on these days to introduce science aspects of fishery management. We should note this event and Mr and Mrs Whittle’s generous offer on our web site. PC and JC will get together to discuss other activities to involve the High School pupils with an introduction to fishing and the science for management of our river/habitats.
 - JC stated that some further work on the App development had been achieved by the three pupils though it had been ‘held up’ due to examinations. The data transfer from App to web site has been solved and there will be a meeting with Kevin G next Wednesday week.

4.ii IM’s report was summarized by IL:

- The funding (as reported in item 1.i) for the telemetry project is now in place for year 2017-18 and should other funding applications prove successful, as is anticipated, the project would continue for another year (2018-19) which would provide data over a complete aquaculture farming cycle.
- Other fieldwork will have to be cut back as far as IM’s workload is concerned but some of the fish farm monitoring work scheduled for this year will be done by PC.
- IM completed the “Living Lochs” educational project in the Portree High School in November 2016. This is the first time that this project has been done on Skye - thanks to funding from the MacRobert Trust.

5. Planning Ahead

5.i a) Telemetry project – see 1.i

b) Angling Information project:

DB stated that he had talked with the factor of the Aultbea Estates and had received approval for information about the fishing on the estate to be put onto the web site.

5.ii Amalgamation:

- Further research into the amalgamation process had revealed that it is not as complicated as first thought – PJ reported.

- The OSCR approval letter has been received and the form stating that the amalgamation has been effected (in-line with our submitted application details) needs to be signed (by trustees) before the end of June following a meeting of the new combined board.
- Duncan Burd (A Skye Trust Board Member and a solicitor) has agreed to handle the Companies House registration of the new amalgamated Trust. We need to produce a listing of what needs to be done and the order in which it needs to be done.
- Jim Rennie will give up his role at SFT and all functions will move to the WRFT team.
- IL will become joint chair (with DB) of the amalgamated Trust reflecting the essence of the new Trust.
- Changes to the logo and to the domain name should be achieved as soon as possible.

5.iii & iv FMO Plans.

Wester Ross and Skye Boards and Trusts submitted a FMO proposal to SG on 9th December 2016 and received an acknowledgement from Simon Dryden by return in which he promised to get back to us in January 2017 regarding our application. In early February 2017 he notified us of the SG's decision to abandon the WFR process. However, he has subsequently asked to meet up with us to further discuss our proposal with the possibility of implementing it - as our proposal did meet the requirements of the WFR. SG would still like to see changes to the existing fishery boards' status with voluntary amalgamations towards their original intended target of 16-18 FMAs.

For our proposal to move forward the WRASFB will need

1. an up to date Fisheries Management Plan,
2. additional funding from a source as yet to be found and
3. resolution of a number of Board legal issues.

It remains to be seen just how badly Ministers want the creation of voluntary FMOs possibly funded initially from the European Aquaculture Development Fund (which will terminate by the completion of Brexit) - with that funding being brokered by SG. A date of 18th April 2017 is now set for Simon Dryden to come up to Wester Ross to discuss the WRASFB/SDSFB proposal further, when we anticipate some of these issues will be clarified.

6. AOCB

- BK raised the issue of the collapse of the fishing in Loch Maree and the report in the film by S&TC showing a graph of the collapse. But the graph does not fit with the arrival of aquaculture and it is probably wrong to say that there is absolute correlation. A paper published by Andy Walker on the Loch Maree collapse would be a good starting point to follow through and may be a feasible project. Would MHS have records of sea lice on the Loch Ewe farm(s) going back to the earliest days of production in Loch Ewe? What are the underlying causes of the collapse?
- PC will produce more information for a proposed workshop (led by the Woodland Trust/Croft Woodland Officer – Donnie Chisholm) on croft woodland/trout lochs. The workshop will consider the pros and cons of having woodlands around certain lochs.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	STATUS
06/06/2017	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed
31/08/2017	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed