

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES	PRESENT:	
DATE: 23 June 2015	Melanie Smith (MS)	Ewen Ballantyne (EB)
OPENED AT: 11.00 CLOSED AT: 14.15	Bob Kindness (BK)	Angus Davidson (AD)
IN ATTENDANCE:	APOLOGIES:	
Peter Cunningham (PC) Ian Lindsay (IL)	David Barclay (DB) Chair	Nigel Pearson (NP)
Veronica Mullaney (VM) Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Mark Williams (MW)	Richard Greene (RG)
	Alasdair Macdonald (AM)	Henry Dalgety (HD)
	Bill Whyte (BW)	

1. MATTERS ARISING

1.i It required one correction to the 12th March 2015 minutes – Angus Davidson was shown as being present when, in fact, he had sent his apologies. With this correction the minutes of the 12th March 2015 meeting were adopted as an accurate record and were proposed by EB seconded by PC.

1.ii Due to a late commitment, **MW** (who should have been chairing this meeting) sent his apologies. **PJ** chaired the meeting.

2. Meetings (PJ) and correspondence

2.i PJ reported on a meeting with Douglas Sinclair (DS is head of Aquaculture at SEPA) that BW and PJ attended in the SEPA offices in Dingwall. The meeting was generated by a response that WRASFB made to a new CAR licence for a fish farm in Loch Kishorn. The Board's concern was that the commencement of production, in this previously unused site, would take the total biomass in Loch Kishorn over 6000 tonnes – with the resultant significant increases in sea lice numbers. The Board's response took into account the additional existing 4000 tonnes in fish farms in Loch Carron and recommended to SEPA that the new CAR licence should be for a ten-year term and include the monitoring of sea lice management at this new site. Failure to manage sea lice numbers on this new site should then result in a reduction of the biomass granted in the CAR licence. At this meeting, there was agreement that the statutory remit for sea lice on wild sea trout and wild salmon was not part of Marine Scotland Science's role but was, in fact, the remit of the Planning Authority and of the District Fishery Board. DS also assured us that SEPA's view on benthic impact problems on a fish farm was that any fish farm that had problems with its benthic impact would first receive a warning. Following a warning, if the benthic impact did not improve the CAR licence amount would be reduced. If there continued to be a problem with benthic impact a warning would be issued for immediate improvement. Should improvement not follow on from this warning the CAR licence would be revoked.

2.ii Last week WRASFB (BW and PJ) had a meeting with WRF Ltd (Hugh Richards and Gilpin Bradley) with the main purpose of gaining site visits for PC to all the WRF fish farms. Reference was made to a meeting that occurred in 2011 when different interpretations had been placed on an item under discussion then. It was agreed to put this issue behind us and, after some further robust discussion, that WRFT can undertake farm visits to see sea lice situations and to observe the cleaner fish in action. It was further agreed that communication should continue.

2.iii WRASFB (BW and PJ) will be attending, on Thursday next, a stakeholder meeting with Highland Council Planning regarding the new Aquaculture Supplementary Guidance document that has just been issued by HC.

2.iv DB has received an email from Henry Dalgety in which HD tenders his resignation of his WRFT trusteeship with immediate effect. HD quoted his increasing lack of time to devote to being able to attend meetings. He also stresses the view that there is a need for on-going collaboration between fish farms and wild fisheries. Trustees expressed thanks for Henry's contribution during his time as a Trustee and agreed on the need for on-going dialogue with aquaculture.

2.v The move towards closer cooperation between the WRFT and SFT is on-going with the objective of a more formal arrangement. IL clearly explained the benefits that such a move would mean for SFT (stressing their "junior" role in such a partnership). IL also paid great attention to the potential on Skye for WRFT where exciting potential opportunities for communal ownership of fishing rites should offer unique research and habitat restoration opportunities with all that this implies. Because of the differences, not least constitutionally, between the two trusts it is necessary to produce a document of understanding, that is underway, assess it and put the resultant version to all trustees,

3. FINANCE REPORTS

3.i Cash Projections.

The end of May 2015 cash projections had been previously emailed to trustees giving everyone an opportunity to read through them and bring any queries to the meeting. No queries were raised. However PJ explained that the May cash projections were produced using “prints outs” from the BoS branch and included transactions in our account up to 4th June. This meant that two salary amounts for PC and PJ are in these cash projections.

3.ii Management Reports

VM pointed out that within the WRFT bank accounts is monies that are already “ring-fenced” for certain projects – namely Angling Information, Salmon & Trout in the Classroom, Mink and Tournaiig Trap.

PJ said we need to expand our educational and awareness projects both in Wester Ross and on Skye. There is a potential for taking educational projects to the schools on Skye with Isabel Moore taking the lead there. To that end, Isabel will work with Lorna to understand the practical aspects of the projects.

3.iii 2015 Accounts and Finance

- The 2014-15 accounts are almost ready to go to the accountant, Sandy Nairn.
- On the subject of the outstanding contributions to the Trust by three southern river proprietors, PJ said that under the new fishery management organizations (FMO) regime, that will arrive post the Wild Fisheries Review/Consultation, there is little doubt that the main portion of the finance for FMOs will come from levies raised by the government on fisheries. NP knows this and will make those proprietors, who still have outstanding invoices, fully aware of this.
- Because of the WRASFB’s additional funding to the Trust for the monitoring of those fish farms with ten-year conditions, the quarterly payment from the Board will amount to £5.6K.
- To date we have not been informed by RAFTS of the exact amount of funding for the sweep netting that we do in three sites for RAFTS.
- We have just one small contract to fulfil that amounts to £1.8K.
- There has been a noticeable increase of new members, thanks in no small part to AM. PJ admitted that he has still to write to them thanking them for their membership and its subscription.

3.iv Budgets 2015-16

The budgets for 2015-16 have been agreed and appear in the May cash projections.

4. BIOLOGIST’ REPORTS

PC’s report had been circulated earlier by email.

From the work that PC has so far completed, he was able to report that:

- Sea water is colder this year from normal
- There is likely to be good feeding off Greenland
- As a result, there has been a good run of 2 and 3 Multi-Sea-Winter (MSW) fish
- Our coastal waters are cooler and providing good feeding – can we expect good Grilse numbers this year?
- BK reported that he had had 19 salmon on the river Carron that were mostly 2 SW fish, over 10lbs in weight and all were in good condition. BK also said that it had been a late smolt run on the River Carron this year.
- PC stated that the river Kanaird had had 12 - 13 Grilse all with few lice on them and that the river Guinard had had 3 - 4 Grilse.

- PC reported that the screw trap on the river Kanaird had caught good numbers of smolts in its first season of operation though there had been some damage to a small number of fish and, as a result, the drum had needed to be lifted.
- MS suggested that between BK, MC and PC there should be agreement on the methodological approach / protocols for the screw trap's placement on the Kanaird and for its day-to-day management,
- So far the sweep netting efforts have resulted in few fish but it is early days yet to make a judgement of the situation. There is more to be done in July and August and that could include a possible site on the river Carron in collaboration with UHI.
- Information regarding the MPA is on the Trust's web site. A new proposal by Scottish Ministers to limit scallop dredging within the MPAs (as part of a Marine Conservation Order) has resulted in petitions being organized both for and against the proposal.
- Mink Project has some 30 active volunteers each with one or more rafts and/or traps in an area from Gairloch to North of Ullapool. Reports are sent in and PC updates the activities onto the database.

5. PLANNING AHEAD

5.i Priorities for the year ahead – trustees' input please

- The ENTRUST grant is now approved for non-native plant eradication/control project for Japanese Knotweed in the Loch Broom catchment area. The Trust will only administrate the monies to contractors to do the actual work.
- There does need to be discussion in order to identify possible new projects and seminar topics for 2016-17.
- IL briefed the meeting on the progress to date of a possible research project, for a PhD student, on Skye Sea Trout. The project proposal is for 3-4 years, is currently in draft form and would be peer reviewed. The project will be in collaboration with UHI and Glasgow Uni.

5.ii Skye Fisheries Trust

All the discussion on this subject was recorded earlier in these minutes.

5.iii Loch Maree Project

This project has an educational focus and is the collaboration of Gairloch estate, UHI, WRFT and Gairloch High School. It now has a steering group with Bill Cameron as its chair. The meeting in April decided to ask Neil Sutherland (Architect) to join its next meeting at the Loch Maree. This meeting occurred on 9th June and now a feasibility study is required along with a business plan. Natural considerations will need to be built in.

5.iv Bruachaig Project

For the past two years, this project has been funded by proprietors. This year, because of a new hydro scheme on the river, 80,000 eggs had to be stocked out below the lower falls effectively putting the project on hold. However, broodstock are still being held and there will be a similar number of eggs available next year. So what are the options? The original intention was to stock above the falls but currently that is not an option and there is little, if any, merit stocking below the falls. Could possibly raise the eggs up to smolts and then release but this would affect costs. The two obvious options are to continue to stock above the falls or to destroy the eggs. Talks with the owners of the Bruachaig need to take place before a decision can be made.

5.v Additional Trustee

With HD's resignation, the need to recruit a new trustee is now more important.

6. AOB

6.i Early Season Fishing

In collaboration with WRASFB the Trust should try to promote fishing opportunities for locals early in the season. But while promoting fishing opportunities for the young, it is important to ensure that something can be caught.

6.ii Involvement With Rural Skill Programme

WRFT could and should seek involvement with the rural skills programme at Gairloch High School. We know that this programme already works well with tourism and it would be useful to discover more about the programme.

Lucy Beattie does something similar on the subjects of agriculture and crofting with Ullapool High School.

6.iii The WRFT AGM will probably take place at the August meeting by which time the 2014-15 accounts should be available.

6.iv MS mentioned the Scottish Salmon Festival in Inverness on the 4th to 6th September when there will be a casting competition, fair and associated activities, and a conference.

6.v WRFT will conduct an Oral History project, starting in August 2015, interviewing old ghillies. The finished interviews will be shared with the Gairloch Heritage Museum.

6.vi Recently some members of the TCV based in Inverness helped PC with his sweep netting in the bay outside the office. Their leader said that this kind of outdoor pursuit was exactly what they would like to do more often. Email addresses were swapped.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting (Proposed)	25/08/2015	WRFT Office	11.00
Trustees' meeting (Proposed)	27/10/2015	WRFT Office	11.00
Trustees' meeting (Proposed)	15/12/2015	WRFT Office	11.00