

# MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

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|--|----------------|--|---|
| <b>UHI INVERNESS COLLEGE</b>   |                | <b>PRESENT:</b><br>David Barclay (DB) Chair      Melanie Smith (MS)                      |   |
| <b>DATE:</b>   | 14 August 2014 | <b>APOLOGIES:</b>  |   |
| <b>OPENED AT:</b>  | 11.00          | <b>CLOSED AT:</b>  | 14.15   |
| <b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b><br>Peter Cunningham (PC)      Matthew Curran (MC)<br>Peter Jarosz (PJ) |                | Richard Greene (RG)<br>Henry Dalgety (HD)<br>Angus Davidson (AD)<br>Ewen Ballantyne (EB) | Nigel Pearson (NP)<br>Mark Williams (MW)<br>Bob Kindness (BK) |

## 1. **MATTERS ARISING**

There were no matters arising from the 29<sup>th</sup> May 2014 minutes – which were adopted as an accurate record and were proposed by DB seconded by PJ.

## 2. **Meetings (DB) and correspondence**

**2.i** Since the last meeting DB has remained in contact with Don Staniford and PWS. The thought/reason is that PWS can operate as a political pressure entity, which WRFT quite obviously cannot. Even though WRFT does not necessarily agree with tactics used by PWS, the fact that there is a pressure entity operating within our area of Wester Ross does mean that the wild fish side can and does get some PR exposure, thus raising the profile of all activities in support of wild fish.

**2.ii** DB reported that he had been in contact (by letter) with HD and that the reply from HD stated that he had withdrawn his offer to resign as a trustee. This matter had now become a more “principled” topic and is covered by item 5.i on the agenda.

**2.iii** The only correspondence outstanding is a letter to Philip Smith thanking him for his donation to the trust – DB will respond.

**2.iv** A review of the WRFT web site was discussed and it was agreed that we should include names and some details (such as office bearers) of the trustees on a separate page. This will involve the web administrator’s time (though it is a fairly simple task) but, in the meantime, exactly just what details, that we may put against each name, does require consent by trustees. We should also provide a “link” to the WRASFB web site.

## 3. **FINANCE REPORTS**

### **3.i Cash Projections.**

On 11<sup>th</sup> August 2014 the end of July cash projections had been emailed to trustees so that they had an opportunity to read through them and bring any queries to the meeting.

No queries were raised.

### **3.ii Management Reports**

VM presented simplified financial reports for the meeting that had been previously emailed out.

### **3.iii 2014 Budget**

The draft budget, as presented the meeting on 29<sup>th</sup> May, has not been adjusted/updated. However the latest mini-reports are now showing a more positive cash flow situation. But, as agreed at our last meeting, continual monitoring of the financial position is crucial and the need to find and secure new sources of income for the trust is of paramount importance.

## 4. **BIOLOGIST' REPORTS**

### **PC's report (attached below)**

PC's report had been circulated on 8th August 2014 to trustees. PC offered a précis of the contents of his report to the meeting.

- Work on Skye for the SFT has been completed – this work consisted of two surveys that have been commissioned by Scottish Water.
- The sweep netting work has also been completed but not all three sites yielded the full complement of fish.
- WRFT needs to rationalize its approach to fish farm visits – visiting farms on the day that they are counting the lice on their fish.

**5. PLANNING AHEAD**

**5.i Appropriateness of Aquaculture employees serving as Trustees**

Trustees were aware that the WRSFB had raised objections to Trustees who were employed in aquaculture, and in particular to the position of Henry Dalgety.

The chair had been in extensive email correspondence with Trustees, and by email and telephone with the Chair of the Board. In summary, there seemed no consensus about whether the Trust should, as the Board requested, require any ‘aquaculture’ Trustee to resign, but there was universal acceptance that there were no grounds at all for requesting Henry Dalgety in particular to do so. Indeed his contribution was clearly valued.

The motion had therefore been worded to debate the subject in principle of aquaculture Trustees being appointed.

The Chair had hoped that we would get consensus at this Trustee meeting, but because that was clearly not possible, if only because of the numbers attending, he took it on himself to withdraw the motion and to seek an accommodation with the Board along the following lines already discussed with them.

Their main difficulty was based on the possibility that Trustees might obtain information about objections to consents and planning applications, thus putting themselves and the Board in a difficult position. This is, in the opinion of your chair, a valid concern.

Such ‘commercial in confidence’ information is already available of course to Peter Jarosz and Peter Cunningham, who are involved in the preparative process, and with Trustees approval, it is suggested that circulation prior to the inevitable publication on the Highland Council website, be **strictly restricted to them, and to the current chair of the Trust**, who of course is ultimately responsible for content produced by our employees.

The material would subsequently be circulated in the normal way and discussed at Trustee meetings as usual. DB is grateful for Bill White’s help in reaching this accommodation.

Trustees would be formally polled on this solution after circulation of the minutes.

The effect of this decision and the withdrawal of the motion is that we hope that Henry will feel able to continue as Trustee. There is therefore no change to our policy of appointing the best-qualified trustees from whatever background, but in order to prevent similar situations arising in future I have undertaken to consult with the Board on any possible appointees.

However, as noted above, because of the lack of trustees present at this meeting it was decided to extend discussion/decision of this issue by email.

**5.ii Wester Ross MPA**

Some legislation to help control activities with the MPAs is scheduled for 2015. There will be a forum in Inverness on 7/8<sup>th</sup> October to help promote MPAs and their real worth for the future.

**5.iii Project Based Work Programme**

WRFT needs to formulate more short and long term projects.

**5.iv Angling Information**

A second grant application has gone to the Landfill Tax Credit grant system that will allow WRFT to complete the “Gairloch” side of this project.

**5.v Additional Trustee**

See 5.1 above.

**5.vi 5-year: Aims and plan**

Because of the current financial constraints and the possibility of substantial changes resulting from the Wild Fisheries Review, the trust needs to define a five-year “aim” and, at the same time, develop a one-year plan.

**6. AOB**

AOB was effectively dealt with under items 2.iii and 2.iv.

**7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

| NEXT MEETINGS     | DATE       | LOCATION    | TIME  |
|-------------------|------------|-------------|-------|
| Trustees’ meeting | 23/10/2014 | WRFT Office | 11.00 |
| Trustees’ meeting | 16/12/2014 | WRFT Office | 11.00 |
| Trustees’ meeting | 05/03/2015 | WRFT Office | 11.00 |

**WRFT Trustee Meeting 14<sup>th</sup> August 2014**  
**Preliminary WRFT Biologists Report (as of 7<sup>th</sup> August)**

**1. Sea trout sampling**

Sweep netting has been carried out at Kanaird river estuary, at Dundonnell – head of Little Loch Broom, Boor Bay (Loch Ewe), and in Loch Gairloch. In addition I helped the Skye fisheries Trust with an initial session for the year in Loch Slapin on Skye.

Sea trout have been harder to catch this year. However most of those seen have had low numbers of lice relative to other recent years, and many of condition factor around 1.2 - demonstrating good feeding at sea. Sandeels, small pollack, coalfish, cod and whiting have been seen in the net.

At Kanaird sweep sessions were carried out on 16<sup>th</sup> June and 14<sup>th</sup> July. Altogether 29 trout have been caught, mostly small post-smolt sized (<25cm) fish. Lice numbers are lower than last year; only one fish with over 100 lice, 4 with over 50 lice and 18 fish with less than 20 lice. The Dundonnell fyke net was fished as usual by Alasdair MacDonald during three weeks in June catching only two or three sea trout (final figures to follow) and jellyfish and crabs. To learn more about sea trout in Little Loch Broom, two sweep netting sessions on 17<sup>th</sup> June and 15<sup>th</sup> July with much help from local volunteers. Twelve sea trout were caught of a range of sizes up to 530mm, all with less than 20 lice except for one fish with 164 lice taken on 15<sup>th</sup> June. The fattest fish was a sea trout of 365mm and 617g, condition factor 1.27. At Boor Bay we've struggled: only 7 sea trout have been caught in three sessions, and only 2 post-smolts to date. However, sea trout of 485mm and 525mm were caught; the two largest sea trout seen by sweep netting team after several years in Loch Ewe (better prospects for Loch Maree). Lice levels have been low with only one fish with over 10 lice and fish generally in good condition with condition factors of up to 1.31. In the River Ewe 11 sea trout were sampled using rod and line on 11<sup>th</sup> July; two had over 20 lice with one at 62 lice. The fattest sea trout had a condition factor of 1.34. In Loch Gairloch, we're up to 20 post-smolt sea trout & small trout after three sweep sessions (12<sup>th</sup> June, 28<sup>th</sup> June and 10<sup>th</sup> July) most fish had no lice on them. Further sweeps of Boor Bay and Flowerdale are scheduled for next week; and a sweep at Loch Broom.

**2. Rod catches**

So far few salmon have been caught. Water levels were too low through most of June and July for salmon and grilse to enter; water levels rose over the first weekend of August. The Ewe has some early fish up to 21lb; other rivers are just getting going with some grilse coming in – mostly around 4lb mark. Sea trout have been caught in Loch Maree and Dundonnell River with several fish of 2lb to 3lb reported.

**3. Juvenile fish surveys**

Just getting going; in early July salmon fry and were again found by the Heights of Kinlochewe. Today 6 sites were fished in the Tournai system. In contrast to 2013 when fry were found throughout the system, no fry were found at the upper 4 sites; though good numbers of parr. This reflects fewer salmon in the trap in 2013 than in 2012 (when we had a record run of salmon). Surveys of the main river systems in the WRASFB will be carried out later in August and September

**4. Tournai trap**

Modest smolt run: 77 salmon and 39 sea trout smolts in downstream trap (April to June). A few fish may have been missed when the water briefly over-topped the screens. In upstream trap, no salmon so far; however 4 sea trout including three fish of over 360mm (largest 459mm; just short of a 470mm sea trout taken in 2010). The smaller finnock of 243mm on 4<sup>th</sup> August was recognised as a smolt that been taken in the downstream trap on 21<sup>st</sup> April when it was 139mm (so quite good growth over 3.5 months). See above for juvenile fish survey summary. At MSS Shieldaig trap some quite large eels have been taken in the downstream trap – an unusual occurrence . . .

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

Mink have been caught at Aultbea; and seen near Mellon Charles and Laide. Volunteers have been alerted and trapping continues. Additional footprint tunnels are available for anyone who has time to look after one. Several have been distributed to volunteers on the western side of Loch Ewe. On 30 June visit to Gruinard Island where 3 mink caught in 2013, with Alison McLennan (RSPB) and Ann-Marie McMaster (SMI). No signs of mink, or of any other mammal other than otters; fewer breeding birds than anticipated . . .

Terns bred successfully on the old concrete quay at Mellon Charles; Barry Blake kept an eye on them. The quay may be mink-proof as mink were seen quite nearby.

**6. Contract work**

Fish surveys have been carried out of lochs near Broadford in June and near Plockton in July for Scottish Water, in connection with providing additional water for local communities. Reports submitted; Isabel Moore of Skye fisheries trust provided assistance and wrote up the Broadford report.

**7. Wester Ross Marine Protected Area**

On 24<sup>th</sup> July, the Scottish Government announced the designation of the Wester Ross 'Marine Protected Area'. The designation follows several years of detailed consideration by SNH with new seabed surveys, new discoveries, careful analyses, and consultations with a variety of stakeholders including the public. For the time being there are no new laws to protect anything within the new MPA. Instead, a voluntary agreement has been put in place where fishermen are asked not to cause damage to the seabed within

have been discovered. Scallop dredgers will be able to continue to operate within ~90% of the new MPA, including most of Loch Ewe and most of Gruinard Bay, places where divers (including commercial scallop divers) have told me of much damage to the seabed by scallop dredgers over the past 30 years.

I've subsequently corresponded with various NGO representatives to gain additional information about the designation, to learn more about what it means for marine wildlife (including fish) within the area, and what could be done to achieve useful management measures.

#### **8. Some other things**

- **Bruachaig.** Meeting held with HP developer and SEPA on r. mitigation measures for fish passage over the Bruachaig falls. On 9<sup>th</sup> July we electro-fished sites in the river above the falls by Heights of Kinlochewe and recorded both salmon parr and fry. The parr included both putative (from appearance) wild fish and stocked fish (slightly different colouration). The fry may have been progeny of salmon lifted over the falls during the summer and autumn of 2013 by Kinlochewe estate, or included progeny of salmon that had ascended the falls of their own accord.
- **Geoffrey Billiet** completed his work at Little Gruinard on aquatic macro-invertebrates and has produced an excellent report (some corrections still required). Thank you to Eilean Darach estate for providing accommodation and to Brian and Carol Fraser and helping to look after Geoffrey.
- **Dr Steve Kett** (from Middlesex University). Steve again spent two weeks 'on holiday' sampling trout lochs to support several post-graduate research projects on brown trout genetics. Post-graduate student, Vu Dang, collected samples of macro-invertebrates for his project; Steve friends and colleagues including Andy Vicks also helped with WRFT sampling including sweep netting in Gairloch, Boor Bay and Kanaird.
- **Other volunteer helpers (mainly with sweep netting) have included** artist Robin Ade and family, Prof Mark Everard, Dr John Ogle and other people on holiday at Kinlochewe; SNH Beinn Eighe volunteers, Jim Buchanan, Jeremy Fenton, Andrew Ramsay, Steve from MH Isle of Ewe salmon farm, Hugh Whittle and family, Ray Dingwall, Ruth and Angus MacLeod, many members of Achiltibuie Angling Club and Ullapool Angling club, High Richards (WRF), Ronald Chisholm, Jamie Fenwick, Lucy & Steve Robison and relatives . . . and others helpers on Skye (full list will be prepared shortly!). Thank you to everyone . . .
- **Salmon farm visits.** No more visits since the last meeting.
- **Laide Wood aquatic beasties:** Robin Ade and family were amongst those who enjoyed a day of discovery in the woods on 17<sup>th</sup> July. Samples of trout, eels, sticklebacks, amphibians and an assortment of insect larvae provided much of interest.
- **Japanese Knotweed.** On 10<sup>th</sup> April, Mark Lorimer hosted a meeting attended by Rob Dewar of NTS and representatives of almost all neighbouring estates. Our aim is to better co-ordinate work to eradicate JK from the catchment area.
- **WRFT Review.** Still in preparation; though nearly there with draft. As we are now near the end of the sweep netting season, I'll combine 2014 results with 2013: a more optimistic picture than had the report been completed on time!

Peter Cunningham, 8 August 2014