

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trust Offices	PRESENT:	
DATE: 06 June 2017	Ian Lindsay (IL) Vice Chair	Melanie Smith (MS)
OPENED AT: 11.00 CLOSED AT: 15.00	Richard Greene (RG)	Derek Dowsett (DD)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Alasdair Macdonald (AM)	Ally Macaskill (AMac)
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Isabel Moore (IM)	APOLOGIES:
Bill Whyte (BW)	Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Nigel Pearson (NP)
Peter Jarosz (PJ)	Mary Gibson (MG)	Neil Cameron (NC)
		James Close (JC)
		Duncan Burd (DBd)
		Bob Kindness (BK)
		Mark Williams (MW)
		David Barclay (DB)
		Ewan Macpherson (EM)

1. Minutes of Meeting on 23rd March 2017

The minutes of the meeting on 23rd March 2017 were approved by RG, seconded by MS and confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from the minutes of the last meeting. It should be recorded that it is the decision of Skye Fisheries Trust trustees that the name of the Skye Fisheries Trust (SFT) is to be changed to the Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trust (SWRFT) and that these are the minutes of the first Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trust (SWRFT) meeting.

2. Meetings and Correspondence (PJ)

2.i. IL and PJ reported that Marine Harvest Scotland (MHS) has now stated that the two invoices from WRFT to them for support of the Tournai Trap and general support of the trust are now in doubt of being paid. Historically MHS have contributed to both the trap and core costs for over ten years. MHS are still going ahead with their funding of the telemetry project but at the apparent expense of the two annual invoices that they have historically funded. Discussions are needed with MHS in order to clarify just what they are prepared to contribute to as well as the general shape and form of the proposed partnership working that MHS is now seeking to firm up. Any existing and on-going financial contribution must be considered as totally separate to the costs of monitoring that is required (and therefore would be paid by MHS) under EMPs. There appears to be an issue within MHS over their strategic policy of funding to fisheries trusts on the West Coast. There may even be a shift in MHS funding from fisheries trusts and towards communities. PJ will report back to MHS following this meeting. Should MHS fail to respond with any clarity, SWRFT will construct a letter to MHS to ask for a meeting with MHS. Prior to being sent to MHS, the letter should go to Robert Younger (Fish Legal) for him to provide any legal overview.

2.ii PJ reported that the Wester Ross Area and the Argyll District Salmon Fishery Boards back in 2015 took the part of ASFB in the Independent Consenting Review process. Both boards were interviewed for their views representing the wild fish sector. A number of "loopholes" within the aquaculture planning process (including the use of the CAR licensing for the increase of biomass with the inevitable threat of increased sea lice within the fish farm and despite SEPA having no remit for sea lice on wild fish) was pointed out to the review and these loopholes were contained in the finished report that went to ScotGov. This issue was highlighted in May 2016 by an SSC application to increase their biomass at their fish farm at Aird, Loch Torridon to which the WRASFB objected to the increase. SEPA disregarded the WRASFB's objection stating that SEPA has no remit for sea lice on wild fish and were prepared to consent the application. A "call in" to ScotGov regarding the SEPA decision was turned down by ScotGov. A further letter to ScotGov from WRASFB pointed out the need for a review of this section of the planning process and this was acknowledged by ScotGov with their promise of reviewing the interactions of differing processes/legislation. To date we are still awaiting ScotGov's response.

2.iii Now that trustees are agreed that the name of the SFT needs to change to the SWRFT, the dissolution form from OSCR for the amalgamation of WRFT with SFT needs signing today as does a formal acceptance/agreement document from SFT for the maintaining of the WRFT bank account but re-named as Skye & Wester Ross Fisheries Trust. This acceptance document also recognizes the transfer/merger of the WRFT assets/itemised equipment into the amalgamated trust. PJ will check that the netting rights (that were on lease to WRFT) can now show S&WRFT as the tenant. The

accounts of both WRFT and SFT need to be synchronized to year-end 30th June 2017 so that the S&WRFT accounts will start at 1st July 2017. Companies House also need to be informed of the name change and the additional trustees/board members.

2.iv Boards will be required to produce a FM plan that will then be approved by MS/MSS. The FM plan needs to be set out in a template (that will be available imminently) depicting what can be achieved because it can currently be afforded and listing what aspirational work/projects could be achieved if monies were made available. The new FM plan will build on the existing FM plans being updated and reformatted for input into the awaited template that will be web based.

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 Trustees wish to record their sincere thanks to the Hon Philip Smith (Coulin Estate) for his recent generous donation to the trust.

3.iii We need to finalize the trust's budget for 2017-18. It appears as though there will be less guaranteed funding for 2017-18 but an initial appraisal of the budget does look OK.

3.iv There is an urgent requirement to resolve the issue of the southern proprietors being an area outwith a board and therefore not subject to statutory levy payments. Contributions from them to the Trust seem to be reducing each year.

3.v One other financial point is that the money for sweep netting (which will now come via FMS) should not be subject to the 7% commission that RAFTS used to take.

3.vi An INNS project for the eradication of rhododendron ponticum along the side of Loch Maree has received an offer of funding of £20K from the SLCF – we need to find a Contributing Third Party for the payment of the tax on this grant.

3.vii The Skye telemetry project has also received a grant of £6K towards the total funding that is required still for this project – this grant is specific for the actual telemetry receivers' moorings/buoys.

4. BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS

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

- There will be a repeat sweep netting undertaken in Flowerdale where an earlier sweep revealed evidence of high infestation of sea lice on the fish caught.
- PC reported that the recent meeting with ScotGov (Jeff Gibbons) regarding the fishing of wild wrasse for use on fish farms was in the hope that a monitoring scheme of wild wrasse might be developed. However it seems that ScotGov are unlikely to do anything. But there is still a possibility of establishing "protected areas" or "study areas" set up by NGOs – such as the NTS and then using masters students for a monitoring project of wild wrasse. PC will liaise with MS to develop and acquire funding through the State Aid Innovation Scheme.
- There are opportunities for 4th year student environmental science projects along with the possibility of postgraduate projects through UHI – MS will liaise with PC.
- Following a recent fish farm visit to WRF Ltd site at Ardmair, PC again reported the WRF Ltd was managing to achieve zero lice on their fish.
- The role of checking sea lice origins (that are found on wild fish) has been done historically by Dr Steve Kett who brings students, from Middlesex University, up to this area of Wester Ross. Perhaps this could be expanded.
- Rod catches on the River Carron show a poor grilse run in what is a first year of the production cycle in the nearby Loch Carron fish farms. Are smolts being affected as they pass by the nearby fish farms as well as the fish farms in Loch Duich and Loch Alsh from where sea lice can drift up to 35 kilometres and possibly affect the Loch Carron area? As pointed out by **MS**, we need to carry out a statistical analysis in order to confirm this observation and write the findings up as a paper. **MS** (R&LI) will consider how this might be done. Action point - **MS** to progress.
- Because this information/observation is, as yet, provisional it was decided not to use it when the trust is responding to a recent West Strome fish farm planning application but we do need to request data/interpretation from the fish farm developer. Interestingly, a recent Irish paper on a study on the River Erriff shows an impact of fish farms on the catch returns of salmon for that river.

4.ii IM summarized her report (previously circulated):

- The telemetry project is well underway with 40 receivers now installed and 60 smolts captured, tagged and returned safely to their environment. So active tracking is now being undertaken and more tracking will be done with the use of boat access. The implanted tags should remain actively transmitting data until the end of July. In late August the receivers will be lifted and the collected data will be analysed thereafter.
- IM reported that sweep netting had been successfully done at Slappin and at Snizort.
- IM said that she will do the “Living Lochs” educational project in the Plockton High School in November 2017. There is an opportunity to push on for more educational projects on Skye and it could prove helpful to achieve this with the liaison work from JC. IM could contact the Skye and Loch Alsh Environment Forum (SLEF) to ask them to produce a habitat map of their area for possible use with the Salmon & Trout in the Classroom project on Skye. There is a quite definite need to develop a more strategic educational programme.
- IM pointed out that the MS re-Grading of Rivers 2017 is still a draft document with MS still reviewing their model and incorporating accurate data supplied by river owners. This situation of the re-grading of rivers offers a possible focus for electrofishing surveys to be conducted on those rivers that the trust currently disagrees with MS’s findings.

5. Planning Ahead

5.i SFT + WRFT Amalgamation

- **see 2.ii**
- There is the potential to broaden the skills set within the SWRFT by seeking new trustees from within the Boards membership. There is also a possible new trustee who lives on Skye. Her background is within the third sector where she specialized in fund raising and lobbying. It would be worth inviting her to attend one of the SWRFT meetings so that she could find out more about the trust and its work. RG suggested that ex councillor Audrey Sinclair might be a potential trustee. RG will make contact with her to test her interest.

5.ii a) Projects see 3.vi

b) Telemetry project – see 1.i

c) Education see 4.ii third bullet point

d) Angling Information project:

With DB and JC being absent there was no further update on this project.

6. AOCB

- BW noted that the Organic Sea Harvest Fish Farm Company is using James Bromham (former HC aquaculture planning officer) as its consultant for planning applications.
- Four large new fish farm sites on the east coast of Skye will, almost certainly, have adverse effects of the wild fish of the rivers of Wester Ross.
- MS stated that the “Salmon Festival” would take place again this year in Inverness in August/September.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	STATUS
28/08/2017	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed
05/10/2017	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed