

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES	PRESENT: David Barclay (DB) Chair Alasdair Macdonald (AM) Ian Lindsay (IL) Alasdair Macdonald (AM)	Ewen Ballantyne (EB) Angus Davidson (AD) Bob Kindness (BK) James Close (JC)
DATE: 16 December 2015	APOLOGIES: Nigel Pearson (NP) Melanie Smith (MS) Isabel Moore (IM)	
OPENED AT: 10.00 CLOSED AT: 13.35	Richard Greene (RG) Mark Williams (MW)	
IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Cunningham (PC) Bill Whyte (BW) Veronica Mullaney (VM) Mary Gibson (MG) Peter Jarosz(PJ)		

1. Minutes of Meeting on 7th October 2015

1.i The minutes of the meeting on 7th October were approved by DB, seconded by PJ and confirmed as a true record of the meeting.

1.ii James Close was nominated as a new WRFT Trustee. He was proposed by AM, seconded by DB and unanimously approved. JC is the new biology teacher at the Gairloch High School. As a WRFT trustee he will be able to help forge stronger links with the school as well help to develop educational projects.

2. Planning Ahead - FMO

2.i FMOs will happen. Following the Wild Fisheries Review process that was headed by Mr Andrew Thin, the recommendations of that process have been analyzed and formulated into the current notion of FMOs replacing the existing District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFB).

2.ii Currently there are 41 DSFBs in Scotland and these will be replaced by 15-20 FMOs. Fisheries Trusts may or may not need to be recast or merged – this will depend on whether FMOs will be formed as administration and science based or just administration only and currently it is unclear which of these options is likely to be preferred by the Scottish Government (SG). However, according to ASFB, each FMO will need to have a “critical mass” and, it is also considered by ASFB, that each FMO will need an annual income of £400K in order to support the proposed management/administration structure. These figures indicate that it is envisaged the FMOs will be formed by a combination of boards and Trusts.

2.iii One potential method of achieving “critical mass” is the possible amalgamation/liason of east/west boards/trusts. A Cromarty/Wester Ross Fisheries Trust/Skye Fisheries Trust has already been suggested and, to some extent, has been examined. Such an east/west amalgamation would mean a very large geographical unit that would get closer to the financial “critical mass” but would also have areas of distinctly different issues. Another option of linking with boards/trusts to the north could be considered but, though the area would have very similar issues, it may still fall short of the suggested financial “critical mass”. A lot depends on exactly what is required of FMOs by SG. Trusts will have a chance to influence the formation of an FMO by submitting a fully costed model for their proposed FMO with a business plan supporting their proposal. A third option for WRFT/SFT is to look at the formation of an FMO for their joint area. In such an FMO the issues are very much the same with problems on Skye affecting the rivers of Wester Ross and vice versa. Geographically it is a large area with some 50 rivers and some 500 kilometres of coastline that has been scientifically “serviced” for some years by the existing trusts. A calculation of the current levies and other incomes for this WRFT/SFT area does have cost implications for Wester Ross/Skye when the proposed management structure for FMOs is considered. However, the inclusion of the river Carron (with its stocking project costs) and the MSS Shildaig research station (with its costs) would help develop/raise the financial “critical mass”. The bottom line is that any FMO involving WRFT/SFT needs to be viable. It also has to have the capacity/finance to set up what is needed, employing the necessary staff to affect an FMO’s desired outcomes – but how rigid is the proposed management structure. The timeframes are tight and rigid. One thing remains quite clear – whatever the area is in which we wish to operate as

an FMO we have to consider the required SG outcomes as well as what is needed to achieve those outcomes and more. We need to answer questions of accountability/context/delivery of SG's policies. We need to add in voluntary/community involvement as part of our financial "critical mass" emphasizing its local importance.

It should be remembered that this notion of "critical mass" comes from RAFTS/ASFB and not SG. Trustees agreed that they prefer to prepare and submit a WRFT/SFT FMO to SG a.s.a.p. (draft timetable end March 2016). An important part of our submission must include who we need to have "on board" as endorsers and stakeholders of our proposed FMO. We must consider environmental, educational, community and aquaculture endorsers as well as the Highland Council's planning department.

Action point – arrange a meeting at UHI to involve the river Carron main proprietor (Shaun Macdonald) and hopefully the MSS Shieldaig research station line manager (David Morris) along with other main stakeholders.

2.iv How should the proposal be drawn up? The meeting agreed that we need a project officer, initially to draw up our proposal, with funding required to employ that project officer.

Following the submission of our FMO plan and dependant on its acceptance there would then be a transition period that would also require additional project resource and funding over a relatively long period of time. So there is an immediate need to try and identify the tasks and requirements/procedures that are required.

2.v The timescales of the Wild Fisheries Review/Consultation/Recommendations are:

- A draft bill for further consultation should be available in February/March 2016.
- Following consultation review of the draft, the bill should go to parliament for its reading to become an Act in October 2016.
- Implementation of the new FMO management regime will probably start in October 2017.

2.vi Our aim should be to get a draft proposal for a SFT/WRFT FMO by the end of March 2016.

PJ will identify 2 or 3 possible contractors/consultants for interviewing for the project officer's post - there is no legislative need to advertise for this post. The project officer would need to be paid by WRFT/WRASFB in this financial year – BW to get agreement from WRSF board members. PJ will probably require more time to support this and it was agreed that, if so, he will be funded. Other costs of Trustees and staff attending meetings etc. will need to be recognized and noted/recorded. We should use the template provided by ASFB but also adapt it where appropriate.

2.vii There needs to be a small sub-committee to oversee both the initial proposal period and the transitional period – DB and IL will be part of the sub-committee. It was pointed out that we should keep the local MSPs on board and up to date.

2.viii There are still uncertainties about how members of FMO management teams will be chosen and what interests they may have to represent. Can FMOs simply absorb current members of board and/or trust? Who will appoint them and who will they employ?

2.ix Any proposal, and in particular our proposal, will need to stress:

- The importance of an FMO having a small, manageable, geographical area (WRFT and SFT).
- The necessity for local stakeholders on any FMO.
- The continuation of charitable financial support and volunteer input to support the field, and possibly the management, work of FMOs.
- The transitional arrangements will need to include continued involvement of the existing board and trust members.
- Positive outcomes/visions/opportunities.

- The use of ASFB template but not necessarily being dictated to by the template.

2.x We should consider a further meeting with Andrew Wallace to keep him (and us) abreast of other activities and any new thinking.

3. MEETING AND CORRESPONDENCE

3.i Currently there is an Independent Review of Aquaculture planning procedures (commissioned by Marine Scotland Science and Crown Estate) with just ASFB being the only consultee from the wild fish sector.

However, WRASFB and WRFT have made independent representation to this review regarding:

- The roles and responsibilities of consultees in the planning application procedure.
- The existing loop holes within the planning application procedure.
- The importance of ten-year term conditions attached to planning consent and why ten-year terms should be considered as the norm.
- The quality, or more realistically the lack of quality, of responses from consultees such as MSS and SEPA within the current procedure.

4. FINANCIAL REPORTS

Both the November Cash Projection file and the Financial Management Reports had been circulated earlier by email.

5. BIOLOGIST' REPORT

PC's report had been circulated earlier by email.

6. AOB

6.i IL proposed the possibility of an open day in the period of the run up to the new changes. Not only would it be an opportunity to explain the new changes as well as the reasons for them, but it would offer a showcase of the work that both WR and S Fisheries Trusts do. IL will develop this and present to the next meeting.

6.ii PJ reported that WRFT had received additional funding from the MacRobert Trust, as well as the already in place funding from the Nineveh Charitable Trust, for the Living Lochs educational projects. This means that WRFT/SFT has the opportunity to run Living Lochs in more than 1 school a year. This year the project was run in Plockton High School by Isabel Moore but next year we can run the project in both the Ullapool and Portree High Schools.

6.iii JC reported that Gairloch High School is actively looking to do more projects with WRFT creating links with Ecology and D of E. There is an existing planned focus on tree planting projects that would give the opportunity for access to wild areas and other projects in collaboration with WRFT.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

DATE	LOCATION	TIME	STATUS
31/03/2016	WRFT Office	10.00	Confirmed
17/05/2016	WRFT Office	11.00	Proposed