

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES	PRESENT:	
DATE: 25 Aug 2015	David Barclay (DB) Chair	Mark Williams (MW)
OPENED AT: 11.00 CLOSED AT: 14.05	Alasdair Macdonald (AM)	Ian Lindsay (IL)
IN ATTENDANCE:	APOLOGIES:	
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Ewen Ballantyne (EB)	Nigel Pearson (NP)
Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Richard Greene (RG)	Angus Davidson (AD)
Matt Curran (MC)	Melanie Smith (MS)	Bob Kindness (BK)
	Mary Gibson (MG)	Peter Jarosz (PJ)

1. Minutes of Meeting on 23rd June

1.i The minutes of the meeting on 23rd June were approved by Ian Lindsay and would be circulated for approval to other trustees who had been at that meeting.

2. Matters arising, meetings and correspondence

2.i DB reported an informal meeting with the new manager of Shieldaig Lodge Hotel, Chris Mearns, regarding trout fishing. The hotel has fishing rights on the 'fairy lochs' and the lochs at the top of the Horisdale (Badachro) system. These had been the 'premier' wild trout fisheries of the Gairloch area (together with Loch na h' Oidhche) attracting anglers to the area and to the hotel over many years. DB asked Chris whether WRFT could help the Shieldaig fishery by providing information about the lochs and how to get from loch to loch as part of the Anglers Information Service [AIS] project. In the discussion that followed, IL outlined the trout fishing 'passport' system which co-ordinates a permit system and supports management (including work parties) in the Wye area. By participating in the scheme, fishery proprietors also get a modest cheque at the end of season. One issue in Scotland is that access legislation is different from that of England and Wales. Wild brown trout fishing without owner's permission in Scotland remains only a civil offence. AM asked 'how about a Protection Order' like the one operating in Assynt? **Action:** DB, PC or other to contact Cathel McLeod to learn more about this.

2.ii PJ had attended a drop in meeting in Inverness on 30th July 2015 about the ongoing Scottish Fisheries Review. Three members of the Steering Group had been present. There was still uncertainty about the make-up of the proposed Fishery Management Organisations [FMOs]. Fishery proprietors would pay rates to the State (rather than to fisheries boards); employees of FMOs would be Civil Servants as part of Marine Scotland. Money raised from local fisheries would go into a central pot. It was still not clear whether and if so how a rod licence system would be introduced. IL said that administration of the rod licence system in England by the EA costs more than the money it generates.

2.iii **Loch Maree Project.** MC reported that MS had attended a site meeting with design engineer Alan Sutherland. A feasibility study is required and funding is being sought to do this.

2iv **Skye Sea Trout PhD studentship.** IL described how this has now officially started following a press release. The project will be supervised by Prof Colin Adams of Glasgow University and Dr Melanie Smith of UHI, with £30/k year funding from Hjaltland Seafarms Ltd. Isabel Moore, who has carried out much fisheries work on Skye in recent years and has a MSc with distinction from Glasgow University and has been awarded the studentship. IL stressed that the source of the funding would not in any way detract from the rigour and independence of the research; nor would there be any change in the Skye Fisheries Trust's position on responding firmly to salmon farm applications and related policy.

3. FINANCE REPORTS

3.i Profit and Loss Accounts

VM presented figures to show that WRFT is currently trading at a profit, partly thanks to a larger WRASFB contribution than in the previous financial year. Currently, a small year-end surplus is anticipated.

3.ii Management Reports

These were not discussed in detail. There have been no 'over-spends' to date in the current financial year. VM again pointed out that within the WRFT bank accounts are monies that are already "ring-fenced" for certain projects – namely Angling Information, Salmon & Trout in the Classroom, Mink and Tournaig Trap.

3.iii 2015 Accounts and Finance

- The 2014-15 accounts will be authorised at the next Trustees meeting when a bigger turn out of Trustees is needed.
- IL complemented all involved for a well presented set of accounts.
- Generous donations to WRFT had been received from Philip Smith and William Woodrow; all present expressed their thanks.
- Those present expressed view that PJ is doing an excellent job of attending to WRFT finance.

4. BIOLOGIST' REPORT

PC's report had been circulated earlier by email.

He was able to report that:

- Several rivers had already exceeded their 2014 rod catch totals of salmon and grilse.
- Catches of grilse in the River Carron had so far been down on those of 2014, however some good lice-free sea trout had been caught.
- SSPO figures indicated that the on-farm sea louse population in Loch Torridon had remained very high during the first 6 months of the year.
- Sea trout with high infestation or damage associated with sea lice had been recorded in July and / or August in the River Ewe; and in burns around Gairloch, including thin post-smolts and three relatively 'fat' maturing female sea trout with stunted dorsal fins.
- Sea trout sampling in September and October would focus on gathering data to understand impacts to sea trout populations especially around the Loch Torridon area.
- Juvenile salmon surveys had found an absence of juvenile salmon in the Inverianvie river, and restricted fry distribution in the Tournaig, Sguod and one upper Ewe system spawning burn compared to previous years. However salmon fry were recorded at sites in the Allt Beith above the Drumchork fish ladder for the first time in several years.
- Further juvenile fish surveys would be carried out in forthcoming weeks.
- A walkover survey of the Cuaig River had been carried out to assess fish habitat.
- A response had been prepared to the Wester Ross MPA Marine Conservation Order consultation. The Scottish Government had recently introduced a ban on scallop dredging within the MPA.
- Dr Steve Kett and students from Middlesex University had supported WRFT activities in addition to their own studies (genetics of trout and related parasite research) in July.
- Mink had recently been seen within the SMI Wester Ross project area, however there had been no recent reports of captures, despite trapping effort.

5. Skye Fisheries Trust

5.i PJ attends Skye FT meetings on behalf of WRFT. Discussions are continuing regarding joint working between SFT and WRFT. PJ and IL would prepare a document outlining recommendations to be presented at the next Trustees meeting.

5.ii IL explained that as SGRIPID own 8 of the salmon rivers on Skye and is keen to promote local involvement, there may be opportunities for delivering significant improvements in future years.

6. Additional Trustee

Several options were considered.

7. AOB

7.i Trustees extended vote of thanks to **Kathryn Kinloch** for her weeks' work placement with WRFT.

7.ii The **Scottish Sea Anglers Conservation Network** [SSACN] had approached WRFT about possibility of setting up an outreach project hub in Gairloch. PC would meet Samantha King of SSACN to explore options.

7.iii Salmon fishing lease. Those trustees present signed a legal document for WRFT to lease coastal salmon net fishing rights around the Gairloch peninsula and Loch Ewe for ?25 years which stated that they should only be operated for scientific purposes.

8. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting (Proposed)	To be agreed by doodle poll	WRFT Office	11.00
Trustees' meeting (Proposed)	15/12/2015	WRFT Office	11.00