

## MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

<b>WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES</b>		<b>PRESENT:</b>	
<b>DATE:</b>	<b>07 October 2015</b>	<b>David Barclay (DB) Chair</b>	<b>Nigel Pearson (NP)</b>
<b>OPENED AT:</b>	<b>11.00</b>	<b>Mark Williams (MW)</b>	<b>Ian Lindsay (IL)</b>
<b>CLOSED AT:</b>	<b>14.45</b>	<b>Bob Kindness (BK)</b>	
<b>IN ATTENDANCE:</b>		<b>APOLOGIES:</b>	
<b>Peter Cunningham (PC)</b>	<b>Isabel Moore (IM)</b>	<b>Melanie Smith (MS)</b>	<b>Richard Greene (RG)</b>
<b>Veronica Mullaney (VM)</b>	<b>Mary Gibson (MG)</b>	<b>Alasdair Macdonald (AM)</b>	<b>Ewen Ballantyne (EB)</b>
<b>Peter Jarosz (PJ)</b>		<b>Angus Davidson (AD)</b>	<b>Bill Whyte (BW)</b>

### 1. MATTERS ARISING

It required few corrections to the 25<sup>th</sup> August 2015 minutes – Item 2.ii the date of the Drop In meeting was 30<sup>th</sup> July 2015. Item 7.iii the wording was altered from “All trustees present....” to “Those trustees present...”. Ian Lindsay was recorded under “Present” rather than as “In Attendance” and Peter Jarosz was entered under “Apologies”

### 2. Meetings (PJ) and correspondence

**2.i** PJ reported on a meeting with SG officers (associated with aquaculture) that BW and PJ attended in the SG offices at Victoria Quay, Leith on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2015. The meeting discussed issues regarding both Planning and Audit & Review processes and centred on the availability of sea lice information/data to help inform decision-making. The Board considered the use of time limited planning consents to be extremely relevant where there existed reasonable doubt as to the effects a fish farm might have in a particularly sensitive area. This scenario is precisely why the “precautionary principal” should be considered and time limited planning consents issued. The continued increase in use of hydrogen peroxide seems to indicate that the more traditional medicinal treatments are becoming less effective. The SG officers did state that the SG had instigated an independent review of the planning process with a tender going out for appointing the body to conduct the review. The review itself will be undertaken within the next 11 months.

**2.ii** PJ attended an Interactions meeting in Invergarry on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015. This meeting was one of the on-going series of meetings brokered by Crown Estate. On this occasion a potential project was discussed and agreed by all that, if viable, should be considered for joint implementation.

**2.iii** PJ also attended a meeting at the Gairloch Heritage Museum with Sue Pomeroy, Peter Cunningham and Rosalyn Goulding to discuss a project for interviewing ghillies who worked on and around Loch Maree. The resultant information/data will be available for various usages including the Two Lochs Radio. A specialized hand held recording device will need to be purchased to facilitate the project's success – a grant application to WREN will be made for this purpose.

**2.iv** On 29<sup>th</sup> September there was also a meeting of the Loch Maree Project. The immediate need is to identify the spatial requirements of the building as well as the ownership of the building and the management issues. The site, as well the majority of the timber required for the construction of the building, will be donated by the estate. Since the main focus of the building will be research, the lead will be taken by UHI.

**2.v** DB reported on a meeting with the manager of the Shildaig Lodge Hotel regarding fishing rights that they have but do not seem to want to promote and utilise fully. The main issue is one of accessibility for fishermen using ATVs or Argo-cats as the estate does not seem interested in repairing tracks that offer access, which is having the effect that internationally renowned waters like Loch Gowan and Loch na h-Oidhche are falling into disuse. Could the WRFT/Community do anything to promote the fishing - possibly utilizing a passport scheme? DB/PJ will talk with Gairloch Estate.

**2.vi** DB mentioned the possible opportunity of a “Private Eye” article to draw attention to the Wild Fisheries Review as well as the SG's attitude to land ownership.

**2.vii** Correspondence with SEPA regarding the Loch Ewe fish farm site has shown that recently the site has experienced a number of serious adverse issues including mortalities, sea lice and benthic impact as a result of organic matter. Two previous benthic impact surveys failures were followed this year with a third failure that has resulted in a 25% reduction in biomass being imposed by SEPA on the site. The meeting debated whether this reduction of biomass would affect the viability of the site.

**2.viii** At this point PC reported the usage of wrasse by WRF Ltd and of wrasse and lumpfish by Marine Harvest Scotland and that the visits by WRFT to WRF Ltd sites showed that the use of wrasse was showing good results in keeping sea lice numbers very low to nil. The wrasse are being

sourced locally using creels to catch them in and are then used for two complete production cycles. Ensuring that there is a sustainable supply of wrasse locally may well be a possible project.

**2.ix** DB reported on a meetings that he had had with John Port (Head Teacher Gairloch High School) James Close (the new Biologist to discuss the option of a teacher being appointed as a trustee. JC has agreed in principle and will now be formally approached. Such an appointment would help to build links with the school and the community and, hopefully, develop projects/fishing/work-groups.

**2.x** PJ reported that part of the Wild Fisheries Review was, with effect from February 2016, a three-year ban on all fixed-net estuary fishing.

**2.xi** PC stated that a protection order for trout in Assynt had been very successful – though it was still difficult to get catch returns. The order makes it a criminal offence to fish for brown trout without a permit. Permits are £5 a year for locals and £5 a day for visitors.

### **3. FINANCE REPORTS**

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

The end of September 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.

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

The management financial statement report is, at this time, showing a trading surplus for the current financial year (2015-16). Those present expressed satisfaction at the current financial position.

#### **3.iii 2015 Accounts and Finance**

The 2014-15 accounts were presented to the trustees for their final approval (draft accounts had previously been emailed out to all trustees for their comments) and for signing off by the Chair and Vice-Chair. DB and MW duly signed off the accounts.

### **4. BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS**

**4.i** Peter Cunningham's report had been circulated earlier by email.

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

- September had seen low water levels in all rivers within the trust's area resulting in low catches being reported.
- Earlier in the year the sea lice numbers were high but were now considerably lower.
- Sea Trout around Loch Torridon will be sampled, by sweep netting, during October.
- There is a lack of food higher up the River Ling and this is evidenced by fish in poor condition and that has implications for smolting. It would help by improving the riparian corridor thus raising the productivity of the catchment.
- IL stated that a similar situation existed on Skye with generally poor quality fish.
- The current mink project has ended though there is a likelihood of further funding so we need to update any sightings.

**4.ii** Isabel Moore (the Skye FT biologist) reported that:

- She was looking to do the "Living Lochs" educational project in Plockton High School this year and that thereafter, along with Lorna Brown, in Ullapool, Gairloch and Portree over three years.
- Next year she would also like to do the Salmon & Trout in the Classroom project in a number of primary schools on Skye – but will need to enlist help.
- This year the RAFTS sweep netting was performed in two sites that were chosen to reflect different locations (i.e. areas with and without fish farm presence). Results at both sites showed few sea lice in evidence.
- IM then talked the meeting through a Powerpoint presentation of her PhD studentship that includes a telemetry receiver project for the tracking of sea trout.
- IM stated that she was aware of the need to balance carefully the different and diverse demands on her time.

## 5. PLANNING AHEAD

### 5.i SFT + WRFT = Company Limited By Guarantee?

The meeting agreed that the proposal for a formal amalgamation of both trusts is the most sensible way forward with the start of the next financial year (01/04/2016) being the target date. This formal amalgamation would:

- Maximize delivery of objectives.
- Provide a strong regional unit.
- Be able to incorporate the charitable objectives of both trusts.
- Be in line with national themes currently favoured by charitable bodies e.g. the creation of larger units having the same aims and objectives
- Mean joint accounting as well as a joint Board of Trustees probably on an 8 (WRFT) / 4 (SFT) split.
- Need to address the relative contributions by the two DSFBs.

IL said that there are 35 rivers on Skye that pay levies to the DSFB that in turn passes over the monies from the levies to the SFT. These rivers (through being publicly owned in general) provide an opportunity for large-scale publicly funded projects. 11 main rivers have stocks of both salmon and sea trout populations. A further 8 rivers have been previously surveyed and 4 could be the focus for research and data collection activity.

The meeting agreed that a company limited by guarantee was the most sensible status for the amalgamation. This would provide a legal entity that is allowed to make agreements in its own right and to own property. Trustees would become Directors of this entity. It was agreed that we should draw out the "pros and cons" along with the savings and costs. There will need to be a single bank account.

### 5.ii Loch Maree Project

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

### 5.iii Additional Trustee

Currently the trust has just ten trustees instead of the twelve as in the constitution. With James Close this will rise to eleven, which, for present, will suffice though not all are active/available to attend meetings.

## 6. AOB

### 6.i Signing of the Netting Rights' Lease

See 3.iii for report there.

### 6.ii Southern Proprietors' Invoices

It was decided to hold back on the invoices for this year until a letter, outlining the intentions of the two trusts to amalgamate and giving the underlying reasons, can be sent to these proprietors.

### 6.iii Wild Fisheries Review

There are currently some 41 DSFBs in Scotland with SG looking, through the review, to reduce this number significantly to around 20 FMOs. A meeting with Andrew Wallace and Alasdair Laing (both ASFB) has been arranged on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2015. Issues for discussion include:-

- To consider whether or not there is any benefit of an east/west joining as currently proposed by ASFB and SG.
- If such a joining offers no benefit from a fisheries perspective then what can we propose in its stead?
- What of the Southern Proprietors – what will be their views? – see 6.ii above.
- Should the Southern Proprietors be fully integrated into the new structure?
- In particular, what of the River Carron Proprietors – are they likely to want to be involved?
- Should we contact North Highland, Lochaber and Argyll to find out their views?
- Would a meeting of these parties be worth arranging to discuss options and agree our positions?

#### **6.iv Bruachaig**

BK reported that the salmon fry will be ready to stock out again next Easter and the question now is – where precisely should they go in the river? Whilst the hydro schemes are in build progress it is, temporarily, not possible/ permissible to put the fish above the falls. It was agreed that the relevant proprietors should be consulted about the options for stocking out these existing fry.

As far as the scheme itself goes, HES should be planning a passable weir, waterfall features and flow settings that will allow wild fish to access all parts of the Bruachaig system. WRASFB has been consulted on a variation to the original CAR license and needs to respond. But, at this time, it is unclear as to exactly what is now being proposed and just how it may relate to what was previously envisaged

#### **7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

<b>NEXT MEETINGS</b>	<b>DATE</b>	<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>TIME</b>
Trustees' meeting (Proposed))	16/12/2015	WRFT Office	11.00
Trustees' meeting (Proposed)	23/02/2016	WRFT Office	11.00