

MINUTES OF WRFT TRUSTEES' MEETING

Via Zoom	PRESENT: Alasdair Macdonald (AM) Mark Williams (MW) James Close (JC) Steve Kett (SK)	
DATE: 29 th March 2021	APOLOGIES:	
OPENED AT: 16.30 CLOSED AT: 18.15	IN ATTENDANCE: Peter Jarosz (PJ) Peter Cunningham (PC)	

1. Update on where events are currently at.

PJ gave a précised update of where things are currently:

1) we now have a bank account, emails for Peter C (info@wrft.org.uk), Peter J (admin@wrft.org.uk) and Veronica Mullaney (accounts@wrft.org.uk) and our web site is back up.

2) we are awaiting the apportionment of residual funds and when that arrives PJ will request the minutes of all the meetings between June 2020 and end of December 2020 to see just what was proposed and who voted for each proposal. We need to have our facts correct if there is a need to make a complaint to OSCR - however unlikely that may turn out to be.

3) If we need to take legal advice regarding the apportionment of residual funds we do have the option of approaching Fish Legal of which WRFT is a member.

2. Do we need to have a Secretary, a Chairman and more Trustees?

PJ said that at this point it is not that important for us to have either a secretary or a chairman but we do need more trustees and those approached to become trustees should have knowledge and expertise that we are currently short of. Our Articles of Association allow for WRFT to have a minimum of 4 and a maximum of 10 trustees. We should try to recruit at least one new trustee immediately. There were some suggestions of people who could be approached. Mary Gibson (MG) was mentioned and PJ said that he had been in conversation with MG recently and though she is very willing to help us she does not want to commit to trusteeship whilst she is adjusting to her new life in retirement. MG would be a very good trustee and we can hope that once she has adjusted to her new life of retirement (and Covid-19 is behind us), she may yet accept a trusteeship of WRFT. PC suggested some names of people who had expressed interest or might be interested in becoming a Trustee of the new WRFT. AM said that we should contact the WRASFB proprietor and the angling clubs letting them know where things are up to and looking to them for interest in joining meeting or as trustees. SK said that we should approach all our existing life members and ask them if they would consider paying their life membership again - this had worked well in another charity that SK had been a trustee of some time ago. JC suggested options of "crowd funding" for the input of start up funds. SK said that crowd funding should be considered when we have any projects (such as conservation projects) that might engender a particular public appeal. JC offered to research available crowd funding platforms and report back at the next meeting. PJ to contact Lynn Schweisfurth to see if she would help - even if only for funding. JC suggested that there may be room for a group of "Friends of the Trust". We need to put the listing of potential trustees on an Excel spreadsheet expanding their interests/expertise alongside their names and keep adding to the list as we think of others. AM said that we should sort out the apportionment of residual funds with SLRT first as 3 of the trustees were also trustees of SWRFT and then we can decide on who could be chairman - all agreed.

3. Our Aquaculture policy

We need to determine our policy for our financial dealings with aquaculture. There will be the monitoring of EMPs in the near future - the work for which will be paid for by the aquaculture company whose fish farm the EMP is associated with. There are also the donations that Mowi (and WRF Ltd) have made to the trust for the past 16 years that we need to decide on - do we continue to take these donations? SK thought that the work that WRFT does in terms of conservation management, monitoring and every aspect of it makes it is quite right that aquaculture should contribute towards this work as long as we make it quite clear that the funds are received without any strings attached. AM thought that WRFT should not take money directly from Aquaculture even for contract work on monitoring. MW said that our general principle should be that the polluter pays and if that involves aquaculture paying WRFT to monitor their polution and to comply with their planning consent the we

should take that money. But not enter into any confidentiality agreement with them about the work and its results. PJ said that we should not lose sight of what was reality as regards this issue - in the very near future there will be a new EMP in Loch Torridon (for the two latest planning consents), an essential part of which is wild fish monitoring. The WRASFB and MSS will agree with the aquaculture companies the framework of the EMP together with the wild fish monitoring programme that will be an essential part of it. It will be the WRFT that will be required to do that monitoring. It will be a commercial contract paid for by the aquaculture companies. The results of that monitoring are open for anyone to inspect and will be relayed back to the Highland Council and all the other parties. JC said that he was in agreement with this view of this issue of taking money from aquaculture. JC stated that he does not see any conflict of interest as long as the results of this work being made publicly available. SK said that the transparency of data must be a core principle of the Trust and this must apply to all the data that we get no matter how much we may not like the data or how much the aquaculture companies may not like the data. The data should be published and be publicly available for it to be the basis of good science. If we don't do that then we are not good scientists and we may as well "roll up" the Trust now. PJ pointed out that the monitoring of wild fish as a part of EMPs is being performed by all the west coast trusts so that cumulative data once fully analysed/interpreted could then give a far better "picture" than just the data that WRFT will be producing. SK said that data once it is fully analysed, interpreted and peer reviewed can then be published as a scientific paper. That not only raises awareness of and gives credit to the Trust but once it is out there in the scientific world it puts pressure on government to react to its findings.

4. Work programme

PJ put round a budget that contained a programme of work that was based on probable funding anticipated for this year. PC had also put round a programme of intended work today that trustees could look at and comment. AM said that he thought that there were 2 possible work issues that we might consider. One was the culvert in the burn at Second Coast and the second was at the headwaters of the Broom where there is a hydro scheme that diverts water from the Broom into the Conan. We could put pressure on the hydro company to put more water down the Broom and improve the Broom habitat. PC said that AM was right the burn at Second Coast offers a real opportunity for sea trout to get up to a series of lochans higher up the system if the culvert were improved for access.

5. Finance

MW had looked through the intended work programme and wanted to know how many days PC will be working this year. PJ said that PC and PJ had been in discussion about this issue as we do need a contract of employment in place for PC. PJ had received from Duncan Burd (DB) a template of an employment contract that will be amended to reflect PC's work intention for this year. This contract will be for an average of 3 days a week throughout the year with the flexibility of PC being able to work 5 days a week throughout the field work season (should this be required) and the adjustments made during the winter time to average his time as 3 days a week.

AM thought that we should produce a letter to be sent to all proprietors (who are the ones that are benefitting from our work) stating where we are up to, what we would like to do but that our constraint is lack of money.

MW said that we should have an up-to-date budget to ensure that we can employ PC for the work that needs doing.

PJ said that he had produced a budget and circulated it round the Trustees - all expected expenses were listed and it did balance against income as long as the anticipated income streams materialize. PJ said that he would re-send round the budget.

6. AOCB

There followed some discussion regarding the possibility of posing some relevant questions to SLRT.

7. Date of next meeting

To be arranged via Doodle Poll.