

MINUTES OF TRUSTEES' MEETING

WESTER ROSS FISHERIES TRUST OFFICES		PRESENT:	
DATE:	04 March 2013	John Mackenzie (JM)	Richard Wilson (RW)
OPENED AT:	10.30	Bob Kindness (BK)	Angus Davidson (AD)
CLOSED AT:	14.30	Nigel Pearson (NP)	Mark Williams (MW)
IN ATTENDANCE:		APOLOGIES:	
Peter Cunningham (PC)	Peter Minting (PM)	David Barclay (DB)	Ben Hadfield (BH)
Mary Gibson (MG)	Veronica Mullaney (VM)	Melanie Smith (MS)	Richard Greene (RG)
Peter Jarosz (PJ)			

1. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters (not covered elsewhere in the agenda) arising from the 7th December 2012 minutes which were accepted as a true record – proposed by BK seconded by RW.

2. WRASFB

2.i There have been two complaints made by individuals to OSCR regarding WRFT – one early last year and the other in July of last year. To date WRFT has not even been contacted by OSCR, which suggests that the complaints cannot be considered very serious by that body.

2.ii It is clear that the new Board wishes to have more involvement than previously in how levy funds are spent on Trust work and this may have serious consequences for the Trust. A meeting between the chairmen of both board and trust took place on Tuesday 19th February to clarify how the work the trust does within the board area is organised and how it is to be funded in 2013-2014. Subsequently a Trust's work programme and associated costs for 2013-14 was submitted to the board chairman for consideration by the Board. Although there has to date been no indication of the Board's view it was agreed that it is essential that WRFT's datasets be maintained as fully as possible despite possible funding difficulties. It was therefore agreed that the way forward was for planned work for the board to be undertaken, with particularly carefully controlled costs fully recorded and reported back to the board. This recording is something the trust already does for all its projects and activities.

2.iii There is a need to look at how the southern river contributions relate both to the work undertaken by the trust on their rivers as well as to their catch returns.

2.iv It was agreed that it must be a priority to ensure that the board and trust continue to work together. Funding from proprietors via the board is important in sustaining the work by the trust in the board's area whilst the Trust's work serves to inform proprietors and their staff of the state and condition of their stocks and any threats to them. A letter will be sent to the Chairman of the Board to underline this point and set out the need to define the methodology for future work undertaken by the trust for the board. It will also stress that with the new financial year only weeks away, the need for the Board to indicate its funding intentions is crucial.

2.v It was agreed that the WRFT biologist should continue to attend board meetings and that it would be extremely useful to co-opt a board member onto the trust.

3. FINANCE

3.i and 3.ii There were no issues arising from both the cash projections and the management reports.

3.iii A draft expenditure budget had been prepared for the trustees to consider but in the absence of any indication of Board funding it could only provide a very basic outline. It was decided to try to finalise the budget in about six week's time but acknowledged that in the present uncertain circumstances it may be necessary in the short term to dip into reserves to allow electrofishing, sweep netting and other such survey work to be continued.

3.iv A number of items from the current f/y were discussed:

- There are still some southern rivers' contributions outstanding – PJ to chase up.
- Money from two small RAFTS' projects is still outstanding.
- Money from RAFTS for 2013 will be further reduced.
- The continuing need to look for alternative sources of income is now more important than in previous years. Diversity into other areas of work/projects/monitoring (particularly in the marine environment) may facilitate alternative funding sources.
- Consultancy work could be sought by WRFT in our area.

- The fish farm at Sgeir Dughall (Diabaig) was granted permission with the condition of constant monitoring of their management performance – but who does the monitoring? Should WRFT be involved in and be paid for this monitoring process?
- In the current financial year the WRFT biologist's visits to all the fish farms he went to, have been made at a cost to WRFT of £2K (at current overhead rates). Should MSS co-ordinate a programme and payment scheme with trusts for fish farm visits by trusts' biologists?
- Will the new legislation, currently at its first reading stage, require external monitoring of fish farms?

4. **BIOLOGISTS' REPORTS**

4.i **P C Biologist's Report (PC's full report is attached below)**

PC reported:

- Fisheries' reports had been produced for the northern rivers and for the Torridon river while a report on the River Ewe is still in the preparation stage.
- A draft sea lice report has been circulated – highlighting, among other things, the high numbers of sea lice on wild fish in 2012.
- On-going genetic work, using the current DNA analysis technique, has shown that a significant percentage of local (and all other West Coast areas) wild salmon are carrying a signature of Norwegian fish – pointing to evidence of leaks from fresh water fish farms (River Lair for example).
- Are there now implications, from the results of this genetic work, that this may not necessarily be a bad thing? There is obviously much more to learn, and the genetics' work and its results to date are on the agenda for discussion at the RAFTS' AGM in March.
- The recent visit to Isle Ewe fish farm suggested that sea lice were absent on the majority of farmed fish following recent lice treatments. The site is about to start harvesting and this will continue over a period of some weeks.
- The Bruachaig Project requires further details, covering the science and monitoring aspects, being written into the project. There is a need to get clips from returning adults (**co-operation and active participation by Ewe system anglers and ghillies will be required to obtain the fin clips**) – PC.
- A student from the SAMS will now be coming in April to research coastal spawning areas of herring – her costs are covered by SAMS.
- Mink traps are currently being put out for another two weeks of monitoring.
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4.ii **P M Biologist's Report (PC's full report is attached below)**

PM reported:

- There has been a number of hydro and fish farm applications that he has had to deal with.
- Has noted possible issues of super-saturation of returning water with potential impact on fish.
- Salmon in the Classroom could be a project for the schools on Skye with a possible scaled down version linked to the curriculum with potential funding from aquaculture.
- Mayfly in the Classroom could also be considered depending on funding.
- PM hopes to arrange a Loch Alsh fish farm visit and could do the monitoring at Loch Duich.

5 **PLANNING AHEAD**

5.i **Work Programmes**

Both biologists have produced prospective work programmes for the coming year – these will be considered (including any trustees' proposals) by directly linking the individual items of their work programmes to income budget. Desired projects such as:

- Otter predation - that has previously been looked into and may not have changed since.
- Tagging Sea Trout - to attempt to discover their coastal movement.
- Loch Duich Sentinel Cages - to attempt to discover sea lice dispersion within a loch.
- Sea Trout feed stocks in the marine environment.

will all require specific funding if they are to be included into the 2013 work programme.

5.ii Angling Advisory Service

Because of the idiosyncrasies of the ENTRUST (Landfill Tax Credit) system, a new funding application for this project has had to be made recently to the Highland Council. The project has been approved by ENTRUST so its funding should follow once the correct procedure has been pursued.

5.iii Bruachaig Restoration Project

The project now has in the hatchery sufficient potential broodstock for the production (from next winter) of 100,000 eggs over each of the next 3 to 4 years.

A properly science based programme and its monitoring need to be agreed – see 4.i above.

5.iv Trustees

Ben Hadfield has resigned as a trustee following his move to Norway. Trustees agreed to defer any decision on an addition to their numbers pending the outcome of attempts to co-opt a proprietor (see 2.v above).

6. AOB:

6.i Change of Audit Requirement

- All trustees present unanimously agreed the move from full audit requirement to that of Independent Financial Review for the year-end accounts of WRFT.
- It should be noted, that those not attending this meeting had previously agreed this by email.
- It is therefore minuted that all the current WRFT trustees have given their consent to this alteration of accounting requirement.

6.ii Southern River Assessments

PJ reported that a request under FOI has been put into MSS for catch data on rivers in the north of the WRFT area. Once this data is received it will provide for a similar analysis to that already produced for the southern rivers. Comparisons of rateable values/levies of the northern rivers to contributions of the southern rivers can then be made.

6.iii FWPM Seminar

There is a possibility of a FWPM seminar in either April or May.

6.iv Annual Open Meeting

The value of continuing what has been known as the AGM was discussed. In the early years of the Trust attendances were very good but in recent years numbers have declined dramatically and it is difficult to justify the expenditure involved. Thanks to the biologists' contact with interested parties and the breadth of information on the website there seems little reason for people to come to a meeting. It was agreed that it will be necessary for some particular and relevant presentation, film etc to form the core of proceedings in order to attract interest.

7. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

NEXT MEETINGS	DATE	LOCATION	TIME
Trustees' meeting	30/05/2013	WRFT Office	10.30
Trustees' meeting & "AGM"	01/08/2013	WRFT Office	15.00
Trustees' meeting	03/10/2013	WRFT Office	10.30