

Fisheries Management Scotland Fish Farming Meeting Minutes



9 May 2018

In attendance:

Alasdair Laing (Findhorn) (Chair)
Diane Baum (Lochaber)
Roger Brook (Argyll)
Chris Conroy (Ness)
Jon Gibb (Lochaber)
Paul Hopper (Western Isles)
Alan Kettle-White (Argyll)
Peter Jarosz (Skye and Wester Ross)
Shona Marshall (West Sutherland)
Bill Whyte (Wester Ross)
Keith Williams (Kyle of Sutherland)
Alan Wells (Fisheries Management Scotland)

Apologies:

Lucy Ballantyne (Lochaber)
Crispian Cook (North and West)
Derek Dowsett (Skye)
Giles Curtis (Western Isles)

1. Welcome and Introductions

AL welcomed everyone to the second meeting of the FMS Fish Farming Committee and noted the apologies. It was noted that LB would be joining the committee as DB will move to a new job in June. The Committee thanked DB for her valuable contribution and wished her well for the future.

2. Update on FMS activities (paper)

A paper detailing recent FMS activities in relation to aquaculture was circulated prior to the meeting. This included meetings with Crown Estate Scotland, Marine Scotland and engagement with the Parliamentary Committees on the inquiries into salmon farming. AW provided an update on the Farmed Fish Health Framework process, which is due to report in the near future and the proposed Interactions Working Group which it is understood will be established soon.

3. Update on local situation

Each area provided a short update on issues arising locally. These included:

- Environmental Management Plans and wild fish monitoring requirements – see below;
- Ongoing appeals to Scottish Ministers;
- Local authority biodiversity duty;
- Tracking studies in Loch Laxford;
- Concern about a rush of applications for new sites and increased biomass, in advance of the conclusions of the parliamentary inquiries.
- Update on the visit of the REC Committee to Lochaber.

- Four traps being operated on upper Loch Shin are continuing to catch obvious and unreported farmed escapees. One company has contributed to this work, but an offer to contribute from a second company has been turned down, as this offer was not consistent with the purpose of the work. One farm is nearing the end of a time-limited planning condition. **ACTION: AW** to work with Kyle of Sutherland DSFB to respond to Highland Council.
- Concern was expressed that genetic monitoring may not be able to distinguish recent and historic introgression – see below.
- An update on the upper Garry project (Ness DSFB)

4. Parliamentary Inquiries

The Parliamentary inquiry was discussed. There was a general view that both the wild fish sector and the industry had been given a suitable opportunity to express their views, and that both Committees had a good understanding of the issues. It was recognised that if any committee recommendations were to come to fruition, there was a clear need to engage with future processes to ensure that the outcome of these inquiries meet the needs of wild fish. It was noted that there was still a long way to go and that the focus must now be on engaging with industry and decision makers, rather than a ‘hard-lobbying’ approach.

Aquaculture Stewardship Council certification was discussed at some length by the REC Committee and Fisheries Management Scotland submitted additional evidence to the Committee in relation to this. It was recognised that we need to finalise our position on the proposal to allow freshwater production of smolts, but that we would need to do so once the second ASC consultation is released. Given the on-going issues of unreported escapes in some areas, there remain concerns about the sustainability of freshwater smolt production, including whether genetic monitoring will be able to distinguish recent and historic introgression.

ACTION: AW to circulate the original Fisheries Management Scotland response to the ASC consultation.
ACTION: AW to contact John Gilbey (MSS) to discuss genetic monitoring.

5. Financial support for fisheries management

AW provided an update on recent discussions with industry about financial assistance for fisheries management in the aquaculture zone. Recent discussion with the industry have focussed on the governance of the process and a number of possible options were discussed. It is the aspiration of Fisheries Management Scotland to conclude the process by September 2018.

ACTION: AW to progress discussions with the industry and report back to the Committee and Fisheries Management Scotland Board.

6. Monitoring of wild fish – developing the approach

i. Crown Estate Project

AW and DB provided an update on the first steering group meeting. A range of options for monitoring impacts on wild fish were discussed including sweep netting for sea trout, bag nets for sea trout and salmon, lice dispersal monitoring, towed and static sentinel cages and structured electrofishing. The possibility of Marine Scotland Science deploying Scotia on the west coast in order to sample migrating salmon smolts was also raised. A bag net has been purchased from Norway with a view to deploying this adjacent to an established sweep netting site in Loch Linnhe. The intention is to source more nets during 2018, with a view to biologists from other areas visiting later in the year.

The national technical group established by SNH and discussed in Committee by Cathy Tilbrooke was discussed. This appears to be a parallel process to the Crown Estate project and concern was expressed that these discussions were taking place in isolation from local fisheries managers.

It was noted that it is important that local discussions on EMPs bear this work in mind when planning monitoring work.

ACTION: AW to follow up with Marine Scotland and SNH with a view to contributing to the national technical group and ensuring read across between this and the Crown Estate project.

ACTION: AW to get an update from MSS about Scotia deployment.

ii. Environmental Management Plans

It was noted that there are a number of EMPs which are yet to be agreed across Scotland. Recently, Marine Harvest and Scottish Salmon Company have approached Lochaber and Argyll DSFBs and Trusts to progress this. It was agreed that wild fish interests need to take a consistent and coordinated approach to EMPs and subsequent monitoring requirements. It was agreed that a finalised EMP from Lochaber would be circulated in order that the Committee could assess and agree the key components that we wish to see in future. A clear distinction was drawn between an EMP (a planning condition and an 'enforcement' mechanism for Local Authorities) and local monitoring agreements between DSFBs/ Trusts and aquaculture companies. It was noted that the SSPO decision to publish farm-level sea lice data, may simplify this process in future. There was some discussion about the timing for agreement of EMPs (before or after planning consent is drafted).

ACTION: DB to circulate the EMP for the Nevis C site in Lochaber.

ACTION: ALL to consider priorities to be included in future EMPs

iii. 2018 Sweep netting programme

Following discussion with the West Coast Trusts a programme of sweep netting has been agreed with Scottish Government. It is anticipated that half of the money will be distributed soon, with the other half on completion.

iv. National electrofishing project

There was a general discussion about the MSS approach, and the potential for this to usefully form part of local monitoring for EMPs and ASC. It was agreed that if sampling designs (and subsequent statistical analysis) could be supplied by MSS, this would be an extremely useful development as part of a wider monitoring plan. However, it was noted that this would not be suitable for sea trout and that resources within MSS are a limiting factor.

ACTION: AW to discuss this further with MSS

7. Liaison with Local Authorities

The group has previously discussed engagement with Local Authorities and agreed that it would be useful to try to organise a workshop with Highland Council councillors (as noted by the Council during a recent planning meeting). It was agreed that Highland Council would be the first priority, but that contact would also be made with Argyll and Bute and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar later this year.

ACTION: AW to contact Highland Council officials with a view to taking this forward in partnership.

It was also agreed that further discussion with councils to ensure that DSFB and Trust submissions are as effective, and useful, as possible was a priority. The increased number of planning applications in recent months was noted and concern was expressed that this was related to the possibility of tighter

regulation in future arising from the Parliamentary Inquiries. It was also noted that broadening this discussion to pre-planning and post consent monitoring was important.

ACTION: AW to explore options with Highland Council.

ACTION: AW to explore options for training from third party providers.