

# Fisheries Management Scotland

## Meeting of Directors – Minutes

### 25 March 2021

#### By Videoconference

#### Present

Richard Sankey (Chairman)  
Alison Baker  
Roger Brook  
Douglas Dobie  
Lorraine Hawkins

Alasdair Laing  
Peter Landale  
Alexander Scott  
David Summers  
Hugh Younger

#### Apologies

Chris Conroy  
Mary Nicholson  
Bill Whyte

#### In attendance

Alan Wells  
Brian Davidson  
Polly Burns

#### 1. Declaration of directors' interests

Board members were asked to review their entry on the register of interests and complete a new declaration if appropriate. The register will be updated to reflect any changes. **ACTION:ALL**

#### 2. COVID-19 impacts & the 2021 season

Alan Wells has been continuing to engage with Marine Scotland to make the case for financial support for our members. A letter was sent to Roseanna Cunningham, Fergus Ewing and Kate Forbes to make the case for financial support for the fisheries management sector. A response has been received from Roseanna Cunningham which recognises and appreciates the difficulties the sector has faced over the last year. Scottish Government officials are further investigating the issues raised in the letter and will be in contact following the election. The Board felt that the tone of the response was cautiously encouraging and await the update with interest.

The Board recognised that travel restrictions continue to curtail angling activity across Scotland, and this is one of the key issues affecting participation in angling and revenue generation. It was accepted that there is little that could be done to address this, as the restrictions are not angling specific but are much broader societal restrictions.

#### 3. Financial & administrative

##### 3.1. *Recruitment – Aquaculture Interactions Manager*

Alan Wells provided a brief update on the recruitment process. The shortlisting process has been completed and Interviews will be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April. An update will be provided to the Board following the recruitment process. **ACTION:AW**

### **3.2. Year-end project funding**

Alan Wells confirmed the receipt of grant funding from Marine Scotland to deliver two projects. The first grant relates to the Scottish River Temperature Monitoring Network. This grant supports work already undertaken by our members across Scotland. The Board were asked to approve the distribution of these funds to members in response to documented work which has been completed and this was approved by the Board.

The second grant is to support some concluding work relating to the salmon pressures project. Contributors to the work are asked to review available and new data relating to salmon pressures, check the spatial distribution and severity levels for specific pressures and re-assign some pressures due to a change to the severity levels used. Several 'drop-in' sessions have been convened to assist members with the process, and despite a very tight delivery deadline of 29 March, the work is on track.

### **3.3. Subscriptions process for 2021**

In anticipation of similar financial pressures as those faced by members in 2020, the board agreed, subject to checks on cashflow, to provide an option for members' subscription payments for 2021 to be paid in two tranches of 80% and 20% during the year.

## **4. Communications**

### **4.1. Annual conference**

The Board congratulated the staff team for a successful and engaging event. The event was well subscribed with a range of interesting and thought-provoking contributions. For 2022, it was agreed to look at options for delivery, including a return to a physical event with the additional option of virtual participation. **ACTION:AW/BD**

### **4.2. Annual Review**

The 2021 Annual Review was published on the day of the conference. Whilst the review was launched in digital format only, the scope for a hard-copy release later in the year will be considered and discussed later in 2021. The Board congratulated the staff team on producing a professional publication in-house. **ACTION:AW/BD**

### **4.3. Website**

Work is still underway on the design – the site is not yet ready to be launched but we are working closely with the designer on the final restructuring. A preview of the page design will be shared with the Board before launch. **ACTION:BD**

### **4.4. Members' meetings**

The Board was content with the proposal to run a series of virtual members' meetings over the summer. Whilst the virtual approach worked very well for 2020, it was agreed not to lose sight of the value of physical meetings for the future, with the potential for both approaches where appropriate and practical.

## **5. Update on key policy areas**

### **5.1. Wild Salmon Strategy**

Alan Wells and Alison Baker reported that the steering group met on 24 March and the process is back on track, but there will be a hiatus in progress due to the pre-election period. A number of areas were discussed, including predation and the pressures tool project. It was positive to see that many of the themes under discussion have linkages to the conference topics. Alison emphasised the need for the process to focus on broader,

more sustainable solutions to address the salmon crisis, and stressed the importance of landowner engagement. Scottish Land & Estates are a member of the group, and it is anticipated that this will help encourage broader landowner engagement in the process.

### **5.2. *Salmon pressures tool***

Alan Wells reported that he is the Chair of a technical working group for reviewing the outputs of the tool. The group includes Marine Scotland, NatureScot, SEPA, and Professor Chris Todd in addition to a number of fisheries managers. The function of the Group is to oversee the harmonisation process and ensure that the outputs make sense in a national context. Lorraine asked if the process is likely to stimulate the development of future fishery management plans? This is under consideration by the group.

### **5.3. *Aquaculture***

Polly Burns provided an update on a range of workstreams relating to aquaculture. Considerable work had been undertaken by Fisheries Management Scotland and members in response to the Carradale escape in 2020. This included the collection of scale samples from escaped farmed salmon captured by anglers. Fisheries Management Scotland have now published a report on the results of scale reading, which confirms at least 95% accuracy by anglers in identifying farmed salmon.

Support has been provided to several members on planning casework, including responding to planning applications in Lochaber and Argyll. A semi closed-containment site has been proposed for Loch Long and this is currently at the screening and scoping stage.

A monitoring workshop was held in mid-March for trusts and representatives from aquaculture to discuss the techniques used for wild fish monitoring and deliver training for fyke net deployment. This was well attended on both days.

Alan Wells reported that the Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee has now produced its legacy report. The legacy report concludes, amongst other things, that the Committee was very disappointed by the apparent limited extent of progress in implementing the Committee's recommendations on aquaculture, two years after the report's original publication. On this basis, the Committee suggested that its successor/s may wish to consider following up on these matters during the next session of Parliament and undertake continued scrutiny of the regulation, performance and sustainability of Scotland's aquaculture sector. The Board welcomed the tone and strength of the statement in the legacy report.

Alasdair Laing noted that the current Aquaculture Stewardship Council consultation on sea lice levels will require scrutiny. It was felt that there is a need to maintain a robust position on what is proposed. It was agreed that the current proposal on sea lice thresholds levels is not a welcome development and Fisheries Management Scotland will ensure this is articulated when responding to the consultation. **ACTION:PB**

### **5.4. *Enforcement***

Brian Davidson provided an update on a number of actions relating to fisheries enforcement. There have been positive meetings with the Partnership Against Wildlife

Crime Poaching sub-group and Police Scotland in relation to the Scottish Partnership Against Rural Crime (SPARC).

A key focus of the poaching subgroup for 2021 is Operation Wingspan. This is a year-long awareness-raising campaign to tackle wildlife crime across the country. Phase five later in the summer will deal with poaching. This will be discussed in more detail with Police Scotland, not only to raise awareness of fish poaching but to ensure that there is meaningful operational activity involving Police Scotland and DSFBs across Scotland to detect/prevent unlawful fishing activity. **ACTION:BD**

Discussions with SPARC have revealed further opportunities through which resources between Police Scotland and DSFBs might be pooled effectively to tackle fish poaching. Following the experience of COVID-19 and changes to public behaviour there will be a strong focus on 'visitor management' issues through SPARC in 2021. Many of these issues impact on fishing and involve poaching. Further discussions with SPARC will take place to explore how the initiative can tackle visitor management issues with associated impacts on fish and fisheries. **ACTION:BD**

In terms of training, the latest online bailiff examination took place on 27 February and eleven candidates passed this examination. A further examination is scheduled for late spring. Work continues on the development of the online bailiff training course modules. Funding support has been provided by the Forth DSFB and IFM Scottish branch to help deliver components of this work, including films for training.

Hugh Younger reported long-standing delays in securing wardens warrant cards from Marine Scotland to allow Tweed enforcement teams to enforce the Tweed & Eye Protection Order when on patrols. Brian Davidson advised that he had offered assistance to Marine Scotland with the production of the cards. Brian agreed to remind Marine Scotland of this offer to help resolve this. **ACTION:BD**

#### **5.5. SEPA**

Sandy Scott reported on some local issues relating to Spey dam and, despite the compilation of evidence, there continues to be a lack of response and enforcement from SEPA in relation to fish passage issues. Alison Baker reported many similar issues in the Forth catchment, with these impacting on water quality and fish passage, and with little or no regulatory input.

Alan Wells was happy to raise such issues at national level and emphasised that Fisheries Management Scotland are currently compiling live issues and case studies to emphasise these concerns. It was recognised that the lack of meaningful regulation appears to be at the root of many of these issues.

It was agreed that there should be an initiative from Fisheries Management Scotland to raise the regulatory issues at ministerial level following the Scottish elections. Alan suggested that the pre-election period will also be a good opportunity to build on ongoing engagement and awareness raising about salmon and water.

## **6. Missing Salmon Alliance update**

Both Richard Sankey and Alan Wells provided an update on the engagement with the Missing Salmon Alliance. Following discussions with the Missing Salmon Alliance Management Committee, the Missing Salmon Alliance will provide financial support to Fisheries Management Scotland to assist with essential advocacy work to promote salmon conservation. A further bid will also be developed to support the planning role within Fisheries Management Scotland as discussed at the AGM. Alan emphasised that the collaboration with the Missing Salmon Alliance is proving very positive and this will help to develop strong, co-ordinated policies. Peter Landale felt there are substantial benefits with Fisheries Management Scotland and the Rivers Trust being part of the Alliance, with significant potential to influence political thinking about salmon and salmon fishing.

## **7. AOB**

Alan Wells felt that it would be a timely opportunity to launch a simple campaign to seek Scottish election candidates support for key salmon conservation measures. It was agreed to develop a simple campaign to seek the support of MSP candidates - a draft plan for this will be circulated.

**ACTION:AW**

## **2021 meetings**

Thursday 1 July

Thursday 9 September

Thursday 11 November (AGM)