

Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors – Minutes

1 July 2021

By Videoconference

Present

Richard Sankey (Chairman)
Alison Baker
Roger Brook
Alasdair Laing

Peter Landale
Alexander Scott
Mary Nicholson

Apologies

Chris Conroy
Lorraine Hawkins
David Summers

Bill Whyte
Hugh Younger

In attendance

Alan Wells
Brian Davidson
Charlotte Middleton
Sean Dugan

1. Introduction & apologies for absence

Richard Sankey welcomes Charlotte to Fisheries Management Scotland and apologies were noted.

2. Declaration of directors' interests

No new interests were declared.

3. Actions arising from the March Board meeting

The majority of actions were discharged or discussed later in the agenda, with the exception of the following discussion points:

- Options for delivery of the 2022 Conference are still being considered. This action was carried over. **ACTION: AW/BD**
- At the March Board meeting, staff were asked to consider whether to circulate the 2021 annual review in hard copy. It was felt by the Board that this was not necessary for the 2021 review, but the 2022 review should be produced in hard copy.
- BD would contact the River Tweed Commission to check whether they had made progress with Marine Scotland on the production of warden warrant cards. **ACTION: BD**
- AW provided an update on the election campaign to seek pledges of support for salmon conservation. A number of candidates from all major parties signed the pledge, of which 17 were elected. AW has followed up with all of these MSPs, to thank them for signing the

pledge and to explore means of working to protect and enhance wild salmon in future. A number of meetings are planning in the coming months.

4. Financial & administrative

4.1. Organisational resilience

Partly in response to the pandemic, BD and AW have been reviewing Fisheries Management Scotland procedures to ensure that the organisation is as resilient as possible. A paper was circulated in advance of the meeting, which summarised the process that has been undertaken to date. The board recognised the importance of this work and welcomed the progress that had been made. Staff were asked to further consider operational resilience, with a focus on cyber security, and to ensure that training needs and procedures for health and safety were fully covered. **ACTION: BD**

The need for a Vice Chair of the organisation was discussed and it was agreed that this should be taken forward by correspondence, with a view to finalising by the September Board meeting.

4.2. Director elections & appointments

A paper was circulated in advance of the meeting, setting out the process for Board elections. The 2021 AGM will mark three years since Fisheries Management Scotland was incorporated, and therefore a number of directors will reach the end of their first three-year term. It was recognised that it was important to ensure that there was a turnover of directors, but also that it would not be desirable for a majority of directors to leave the board at once, either this year, or at the end of a second term. It was suggested that one solution would be for two board members to be replaced on an annual basis. It was agreed that an assessment of the skills required for the board, followed by an audit of any current gaps was required. This assessment should recognise the importance of diversity and inclusivity on the board. It was also agreed that building some additional flexibility into the constitution with regard to appointments might be worth consideration at the AGM. Staff were asked to develop thinking on the above issues with a view to reporting back to the board by correspondence. **ACTION: AW/BD.**

5. Communications

5.1. Website

BD provided an update on progress to re-design the Fisheries Management Scotland website. The overall design of the website is now complete, and staff will progress updates on page content over the coming weeks. **ACTION: AW/BD/CM/SD**

5.2. Members' meetings

It was agreed that Members' meeting would be scheduled over the summer using Microsoft Teams. The importance of giving Board members, Trustees and fishery owners the opportunity to attend was emphasised. It was recognised that staff within the DSFBs and Trusts are likely to be extremely busy over the summer, but that we should explore options for scheduling 2-3 dates for members' meetings. **ACTION:AW/BD**

6. Update on key policy areas

6.1. *Meeting with Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands*

Alan provided an update on an early meeting Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands. This was an opportunity to highlight the work undertaken by Fisheries Management Scotland members, and discuss key issues including managing the impact of aquaculture, delivery of the Salmon Interactions Working Group recommendations, the impact of Covid-19 on the fisheries management community, the need to reform funding mechanisms for riparian tree planting and the Wild Salmon Strategy. This was a very positive introductory meeting, and Alan has followed up with officials on the issues discussed.

6.2. *Pink salmon and red skin disease*

Alan updated the board on the recent arrival of non-native Pink salmon in Scottish Rivers. Alan and Brian have been liaising closely with Marine Scotland, NatureScot and SEPA to plan for the likely arrival of these fish, including management options. The Fisheries Management Scotland [website](#) includes guidance and Sean has developed a new reporting tool, which also covers red skin disease and escaped farmed fish. Red Skin disease is again proving to be very challenging on some rivers and Brian has been in close liaison with the Fish Health Inspectorate, who have been attempting to sample live fish. Further guidance and a Q&A is available on our [website](#).

6.3. *Wild Salmon Strategy*

Alan provided an update on the wild salmon strategy. During the introductory meeting with Alan, the Cabinet Secretary made a clear commitment to progress the wild salmon strategy in recognition of the issues that salmon are facing. Officials are progressing the strategy with a view to an informal consultation later in the summer. The second phase of this process will be to deliver a detailed implementation plan.

6.4. *Scottish Government Projects*

Three projects have now been given the go ahead, funded by Scottish Government and Crown Estate Scotland. These are the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS), the National Introgression Programme for Scotland (NIPS) and an adult salmon sampling project which will provide information to inform the national conservation regulations. The grant funding for these projects will be administered and delivered through Fisheries Management Scotland. Genetic samples collected through NEPS in previous years has been analysed and will be published soon.

6.5. *Salmon pressures tool and SFCC*

Sean provided an update on work delivered by the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre. Work on the 'harmonisation' process for the pressures tool has now been completed. Marine Scotland are now working on an overall report, which will complement the main outputs – the storymap developed by Sean which will sit on the Fisheries Management Scotland website with accompanying pages, and a shiny app developed by Marine Scotland Science which will help end users to visualise the results at different geographic scales.

During the past month SFCC successfully and safely delivered updated introductory and team leader-level electrofishing training to a total of 48 candidates. These courses were delivered through a combination of online and field-based training across four different venues from the River Naver to Newton Stewart.

Sean has developed data collection tools to support members in collating and understanding issues such as pink salmon captures, red skin disease and escaped farmed fish. A map-based viewer has also been developed and it was agreed that this important data should be presented on the Fisheries Management Scotland [website](#). An e-mail alert, to inform members when records have been received has also been developed.

6.6. Aquaculture

Charlotte provided an update on a range of workstreams relating to aquaculture. She has been supporting members, including in Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and Wester Ross, to highlight high sea lice levels on wild fish populations. These issues were raised directly with the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs and Islands, Scottish Government officials and salmon farming companies.

Charlotte had an introductory meeting with Scottish Sea Farms and visited some of their sites in Argyll. This was a useful opportunity to understand more about how the industry operates in Scotland, and to discuss important issues with a major salmon producer in Scotland.

Fisheries Management Scotland responded to a consultation on a proposed revision to the sea lice indicator for the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) certification scheme. We have been approached to continue stakeholder engagement around this indicator, and Charlotte noted that no changes are expected before mid-2022 at the earliest.

Charlotte has continued engagement with Lloyd's Register to ensure that Fisheries Management Scotland, and our members, are fully involved in the process of certification for relevant farms.

Charlotte and Alan have continued to support discussions between members, planning authorities and relevant industry operators to progress Environmental Management Plans (EMPs), with a focus on ensuring mechanisms for adaptive management in relation to wild fish monitoring. Charlotte emphasised that EMPs are considered to be an interim measure to help our efforts to protect wild fish, through adaptive management, until the new regulatory system is in place.

6.7. Enforcement

Brian provided an update on Operation Wingspan – a year-long Police Scotland wildlife crime campaign which began in October 2020. The poaching phase of this initiative started **on 1st July** and **will** run until the end of September.

Brian has been working closely with Police Scotland to ensure fish poaching is a key feature of Operation Wingspan. Police Scotland will be undertaking targeted work based on intelligence received, and all DSFBs have been briefed about the operation so that there is the ability to provide intelligence via Police Scotland or Fisheries Management Scotland. This is a good opportunity to establish local joint patrols between Police Scotland, press activity and other engagement work as appropriate. Police Scotland will also be liaising with Food Standards Scotland in relation to proceeds from illegal activity.

6.8. SEPA

Fisheries Management Scotland submitted a consultation response on the third River Basin Management Plan following consultation with members. Our response calls for SEPA to go further and place a stronger emphasis on their core regulatory function.

Alan is participating in SEPA's water efficiency communications group. We have started to receive reports of low water levels and high temperatures in some areas and have raised these with SEPA. SEPA is publishing regular situation reports on their website.

Alan provided an update on SEPA's river engineering campaign which is designed to address unlicensed activities or activities which do not comply with General Binding Rules. We are working with SEPA to identify areas where Fisheries Management Scotland members can contribute to these efforts.

Fisheries Management Scotland has supported members on a range of issues, including a major abstraction from the River Kelvin to re-water the Clyde Canal after a blockage of an intake pipe. We have also been in regular discussion with members and SEPA staff in relation to downstream passage of smolts at hydro schemes, including Loch Shin.

7. Missing Salmon Alliance update

Richard Sankey provided an update on the Missing Salmon Alliance steering group which was held on 21 June. At the meeting, Alan indicated our intention to put forward a proposal for funding for the post that was discussed at our 2020 AGM, to support Fisheries Management Scotland members in their efforts to project wild salmon and to facilitate funding for improving habitat etc. The proposal will be submitted in advance of the next meeting.

Peter Landale provided an update on proposals to highlight the plight of salmon at COP-26. Work is progressing on our proposal to install an inspirational artwork project in a prominent position at COP26. By placing wild salmon at the forefront of the climate change agenda, our aim is to make the case for a range of measures that will reduce or eliminate the impact climate change is having on wild salmon.

Updates were provided on progress in developing the Likely Suspects Framework and a workshop was held last week to discuss, in particular, the developing decision support tool. A number of Fisheries Management Scotland members were in attendance.

8. AOB

It was agreed to reschedule the September Board meeting to allow Alan to speak at a conference in September organised by Wildlife Estates Europe. The meeting was re-scheduled to 13 September.

2021 meetings

Monday 13 September

Thursday 11 November (AGM)