Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors - Minutes

Wednesday 21st January 2026

By Videoconference

Present
David Johnstone
Edward Humphrey
Richard Miller
Richard Davies
Claire Mercer Nairne
Jamie Stewart
Robert Younger
Brian Shaw
Ann-Marie McMaster
Edward Mountain

In attendance
Alan Wells
Brian Davidson
Federica Foiadelli
Graeme Cullen
Helen Feenen
Jenny McNeill
Paul Sizeland

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies were received from Amelia Heath, Jamie Ribbens and Lorna Lyle.

The Chairman welcomed new Director, Ann-Marie McMaster, Land Use and Nature Based Solutions Project Officer for the Esks Rivers Trust and River South Esk Catchment Partnership, who joined the Board in late 2025 as the new Early Career Representative.

The Chairman also welcomed Graeme Cullen, who joined the staff team in November last year as the new SFCC manager.

2. Declaration of interests

Changes to the register were submitted at the meeting by EH and EM.

ACTION: BD to update the register

3. Actions arising from September Board meeting

All actions from the September Board meeting had been completed or were in progress, with the exception of three actions that would be carried over to the next meeting.

4. Financial

4.1 Reports to end December

The financial reports had been circulated prior to the meeting. EM sought clarification on contingency planning for staff salaries should expected funding not materialise. AW confirmed that, aside from two staff members, all salaries are supported by grant funding that includes contingency allowances, for example in the case of redundancies. A six-month reserve is also maintained to support membership-funded roles and core expenditure.

4.2 Financial management of large projects
The Chairman reported that FMS continued to manage a portfolio of high-value projects, requiring ongoing and careful management of cashflow due to significant up-front expenditure. An update on the current position was provided by BD.

It was noted that, following considerable work by JM and liaison with the directors, the business overdraft had been approved by the bank, providing additional security for cashflow management in the final quarter of the financial year. The Chairman recorded thanks to the directors for completing and submitting the necessary documentation.

It was further noted that work was ongoing to review and refine cashflow forecasts in light of current projects and the approach to year-end, including the Marine Fund Scotland projects. Thanks were recorded to members who had agreed to defer certain grant payments, assisting with the management of the final two payments for the Marine Fund Scotland enforcement and monitoring project.

AW reported on the status of funding from the Missing Salmon Alliance (MSA) and advised that all expected funding would be received this financial year. AW also noted that, in light of this funding now materialising and the receipt of Scottish Government funding for the SFCC, that the overdraft facility would not be required, although it remained available as a contingency to support cash flow.

5. Fisheries Management Scotland strategy

AW thanked the Strategy sub-group for its support in the development of the draft strategy, noting that the group had met prior to Christmas. The Board had been asked to review the draft documents in advance of the meeting, which were taken as read.

There was a wide-ranging discussion on the design and content of the strategy. Discussion points included the timeframe over which the strategy should operate; the inclusion of strategy targets (as opposed to just goals and objectives) in the public-facing version; how particular issues would be addressed (e.g. beaver impacts and forestry creation); and the means by which the Board, and FMS members would maintain oversight of delivery. The following actions were agreed:

ACTION: AW to circulate an updated, public-facing version of the strategy incorporating Goals, Objectives and Targets.

ACTION: ALL Board members to submit any final comments by 16 February.

ACTION: AW to develop a RAG-based reporting system for future board meetings.

ACTION: FMS Staff to consider the development of a website reporting dashboard.

6. Potential changes to FMS constitution

AW reminded the Board that the primary driver for considering a change to the constitution was to enhance FMS's ability to secure external funding. It was noted that, as a membership organisation, any such funding would need to be closely aligned with members' needs and the delivery of the agreed strategy.

Three options were considered: conversion to a Community Interest Company (CIC), establishment of a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), or retention of the current constitutional arrangements. Further considerations associated with each option were set out in a Board paper.

The board were assured that under each option for change, the representative nature of FMS as the trade body for DSFBs, the RTC and rivers and fisheries trusts would remain unchanged. It was further confirmed that any new constitution would require approval by the membership prior to the submission of an application to OSCR or the CIC regulator.

Following discussion, it was agreed that conversion to a SCIO represented the most suitable option, subject to drafting a suitable constitution and following agreement of the membership. It was further agreed that early engagement with the membership through regional meetings and targeted one-to-one engagement would occur over the summer.

ACTION: AW and BY to develop a new SCIO constitution for FMS for consideration at the March Board meeting

ACTION: FMS Staff to develop an engagement strategy for discussion with FMS members

7. Key policy areas – staff updates

FMS staff provided updates on various workstreams and key policy updates in a paper circulated in advance of the meeting. Board members agreed that providing staff updates via a paper in advance of the meeting should be adopted for all future meetings.

AW noted that Stage 3 of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Bill had been scheduled for 27 January and that FMS amendments on fish poaching offences had been tabled again, following extensive engagement with the Scottish Government.

EH raised a question regarding the latest minutes of the Science and Evidence Board meeting. AW confirmed that all meeting minutes and papers from the Wild Salmon Strategy Delivery Board and Science and Evidence Board would be shared with members when published.

ACTION: AW to circulate minutes and papers from all Wild Salmon Strategy meetings – papers published to date are linked below.

- Minutes from the Wild Salmon Strategy Delivery Group
- Wild salmon strategy implementation plan progress report: 2023-2024
- Wild salmon strategy implementation plan: annual progress report 2024
- FMS Paper: A Modernised Framework for Scotland's Wild Fisheries: Finance, Capacity and Governance for the Future
- Minutes from the Wild Salmon Strategy Science and Evidence Board
- Wild Salmon Strategy Science and Evidence Board advice to the Delivery Group: recovery stocking of Atlantic salmon into weak populations
- Wild Salmon Strategy Science and Evidence Board advice to the Delivery Group: bird and seal predation summary
- Wild Salmon Strategy: Fisheries Management Scotland enforcement committee paper

8. Support for FMS members – commercial work

HF circulated a paper outlining a proposed new work package to support members who were undertaking, or considering, commercial work. It was noted that many members were experiencing financial pressures and that increased core public funding was unlikely. HF highlighted the significant opportunity within the commercial space, alongside the wide variation in members' current engagement, from those already operating commercially to those with little or no experience.

The work package was intended to help position all members competitively, maximise commercial opportunities, and strengthen organisational security. There was broad consensus from the Board that this work package should be progressed.

9. FMS draft guidance on stocking

A paper on FMS guidance on stocking was circulated in advance of the meeting. AW advised that the paper had been developed in response to specific requests from a number of DSFBs seeking clarification of their role in the stocking process. It was noted that the current position had evolved over time and had led to considerable confusion. It was also noted that the situation could change again, once the Scottish Government stocking policy is updated.

AW noted that the paper had been drafted to provide factual information and is neutral on the merits or otherwise of stocking. Subject to further consideration once some minor edits were completed, the Board indicated that it would be content for the paper to be circulated to members.

ACTION: AW to circulate an updated version of the stocking guidance

ACTION: ALL to review the updated guidance and sign off for circulation to members

10. 2026 Annual Review and Conference

HF introduced a paper on the Annual Review, which had been circulated to directors in advance and set out the proposed purpose, audience and approach to publication. The Board was invited to provide feedback on the proposals and to indicate whether it was content for the Annual Review to be developed on the basis outlined in the paper.

HF also provided an update on plans for the Annual Conference in autumn 2026.

The Board was asked for initial views on the intended aims of the conference, proposed dates and the suitability of venues, including whether the previous year's venue should be reused subject to cost competitiveness. It was noted that alternative venues would also be explored and reported back as appropriate.

It was further noted that sponsorship opportunities would be explored, and Board members were invited to share any initial ideas or contacts, with the need for coordinated engagement highlighted in light of related work on the Scottish Rivers Fund.

ACTION: ALL to suggest possible Conference sponsors

Finally, it was agreed that future Board meetings would be utilised to provide updates on conference developments and seek feedback.

11. AOB

AW noted that the meeting time had been extended to accommodate a full agenda and invited the Board's views on whether the duration of remaining meetings during the year should be increased.

2026 meetings 18th March, 24th June, 23rd September, AGM TBC

Summary of outstanding actions:

Actions carried forward from previous meeting - September 2025:	**BY/AW** to discuss further the options for better controls and information on sea trout exploitation
	AW to identify an MSP following the May 2026 election with which to discuss this idea and develop a proposal
	AW to draft and circulate the summary paper on FMS member services/benefits to the Board for comment
Actions from current meeting -January 2026:	**BD** to update the declaration of interests register
	AW to circulate an updated, public-facing version of the strategy incorporating Goals, Objectives and Targets

	ALL Board members to submit any final comments on strategy by 16 February
	AW to develop a RAG-based reporting system for future board meetings
	FMS Staff to consider the development of a website reporting dashboard
	AW to circulate minutes and papers from all Wild Salmon Strategy meetings
	AW to circulate an updated version of the stocking guidance
	ALL to review the updated guidance and sign off for circulation to members
	ALL to suggest possible Conference sponsors