Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors - Minutes

Wednesday 18th March 2026

By Videoconference

Present
David Johnstone
Edward Humphrey
Richard Miller
Richard Davies
Jamie Stewart
Robert Younger
Brian Shaw
Ann-Marie MacMaster
Jamie Ribbens
Lorna Lyle

In attendance
Alan Wells
Brian Davidson
Federica Foiadelli
Jenny McNeill
Paul Sizeland

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies were received from Amelia Heath and Edward Mountain.

The Chairman welcomed Julia McCarthy, who joined the staff team in February as the new Wild Salmon Conservation Manager.

It was reported that, following Claire Mercer Nairne's resignation from the Tay DSFB, she was no longer able to serve on the FMS Board. The Board recorded its appreciation for Claire's proactive contribution and wished her well.

It was noted that, as this directorship was an appointed position, no election process was required, and a suitable candidate could be nominated directly. BD has been engaging with the Tay DSFB, and they have proposed Robert White as their nominee. The Board approved RW's appointment as a director.

ACTION: BD to contact Robert White regarding the new Director position

2. Declaration of interests

The declaration of interests was circulated in advance of the meeting, and no changes were reported.

3. Actions arising from January Board meeting

All actions from the January Board meeting had been completed or were included as items on the agenda.

A paper on stocking guidance was circulated prior to the meeting. JR requested time to review this document, after which AW will circulate to members.

ACTION: AW to circulate stocking guidance paper to members, following confirmation from JR.

4. Financial

4.1 Reports to end February

The financial reports were circulated prior to the meeting, and no questions were raised.

4.2 Financial management of large projects

The Chairman noted that FMS was managing a portfolio of high-value projects, which had required careful planning of existing financial resources to manage cashflow. These projects involved significant up-front expenditure, making cashflow management critical. The Chairman invited BD and JM to provide a brief overview of the current position.

BD reported that the management of the Marine Fund Scotland projects had progressed smoothly. The combined value of the two projects was £688K, with approximately £70K of expenditure remaining in the final stages. Although a business overdraft facility had been secured, effective management of reserves had meant this had not been required. The Board noted its thanks to several FMS members who had agreed to defer grant payments for other projects, which had supported cashflow management in the final stages of delivery.

It was noted that there had been positive feedback on the new equipment sourced as part of the MFS project.

5. Fisheries Management Scotland strategy

5.1 Launch of strategy

Following discussion at the January Board meeting, a consolidated, public-facing version of the strategy was circulated to the Board. It was agreed that the strategy could be published and circulated to members. A 'soft launch' was agreed through a news item on the website, and a direct mailing to FMS members.

ACTION: AW to publish the FMS strategy on the FMS website and send to key stakeholders and the FMS membership.

5.2 Reporting system

AW presented a proposed RAG-based reporting system to keep the Board informed on progress against the strategy. The approach was agreed and would be kept under review in future Board meetings.

ACTION: AW to upload RAG-report to Board SharePoint site

5.3 Update on key actions

AW provided an update on key actions, including a significant success in amending the Natural Environment Bill and ongoing engagement with the fish farming sector and wider stakeholders.

AW highlighted that the national electrofishing programme (NEPS) would not proceed in 2026 and that sea lice monitoring had been reduced due to ongoing legal and funding challenges within SEPA. He noted that the National Adult Salmon Sampling Programme is expected to proceed and that work was ongoing to secure funding for NEPS and a full programme of sea lice monitoring in 2027.

AW highlighted work to secure longer-term funding aimed at building organisational capacity, enhancing member support, and improving communications. Positive initial feedback had been received from funders, and an update will be provided to the Board at the next meeting.

ACTION: AW to provide an update on funding applications at the next Board meeting

6. Potential changes to FMS constitution – timeline & next steps

BY provided an update on the possibility of FMS moving to being constituted as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), including the development of articles of association.

It was noted that there is still uncertainty that the organisation would meet the criteria to become a SCIO, and that this would only become clear upon submission of an application to OSCR, although BY considered there to be a strong case that an application would be successful.

The Board discussed whether minor changes to the objectives of the origination should be considered for consistency with the new strategy. It was agreed that AW and BY would consider this further and report back to the Board.

ACTION: AW and BY to review the organisational objectives.

It was agreed that a briefing paper would be developed and circulated to members to support informal approval of potential changes. The proposed change would also be discussed at Members' Meetings and through direct engagement with members. If feedback was positive, an initial application to OSCR would be submitted prior to formal consultation, with final approval of the changes to be sought at a future AGM or EGM, subject to a successful application to OSCR.

ACTION: AW to draft a briefing paper for members, requesting in-principle approval to make an application to OSCR.

7. Scottish Rivers Fund – progress report

PS provided an update on the Scottish Rivers Fund, noting it had been a flagship project proposal over the past 2.5 years. As the latest FIRNS project phase nears completion, focus had been on business engagement, securing NatureScot hosting beyond March, and finalising application materials, website and communications.

PS reported ongoing engagement with the energy, food and drink sectors, including a recent webinar and follow-up discussions with potential partners, and confirmed applications had been submitted to NatureScot (FIRNS) and the Lottery to support continuation, staffing and marketing. A summer launch is anticipated, subject to securing funding.

PS noted that pilot testing of projects had produced generally positive feedback, with some improvements identified to application clarity and monitoring requirements. PS added that marketing work had been supported through FIRNS and that the Fund website would go live shortly. FF's significant contribution was acknowledged.

The Board commented on the excellent progress to date on this project.

8. Services and benefits to FMS members

AW provided a brief update on a membership benefits paper, which had been circulated in advance of the meeting, and thanked HF for coordinating the work. He invited views on whether it captured the key benefits of membership and noted that the next steps would be to refine the design and share it with members ahead of the new financial year, as well as using it to support engagement with potential new members, which the Board agreed to move forward.

ACTION: AW/HF to refine design of the benefits to members paper, and circulate to members

9. Key policy areas – questions arising from staff update

The Board discussed a staff update which was circulated in advance of the meeting. AW provided a verbal update on the deployment of a new detect and deter system on the River Dee, following successful deployment on the North Esk. This will be watched with interest. AW referred to a paper being developed by the Wild Salmon Strategy Science and Evidence Board on large woody structures. The development of this paper will take some time and there are no conclusions as yet. Once it is published, it will be disseminated to FMS members and other stakeholders.

10. 2026 Annual Conference – progress report, including sponsorship opportunities

JM reported that planning for the annual conference was at an early stage. The proposed dates of 18/19 November remained under consideration; however, Murrayshall was unavailable for accommodation. Alternative arrangements nearby, as well as other venue options, are being explored, with an update to follow.

JM noted that sponsorship would remain a live action and invited Board members to share any relevant contacts or ideas.

11. AOB

None.

2026 meetings 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
Actions carried forward from January 2026:	**FMS Staff** to consider the development of a website reporting dashboard
	ALL to suggest possible Conference sponsors
Actions from March 2026 meeting:	**BD** to contact Robert White regarding the new Director position
	AW to circulate stocking guidance paper to members, following confirmation from JR.
	AW to publish the FMS strategy on the FMS website and send to key stakeholders and the FMS membership
	AW to upload RAG-report to Board SharePoint site
	AW to provide an update on funding applications at the next Board meeting
	AW and BY to review the organisational objectives.
	AW to draft a briefing paper for members, requesting in-principle approval to make an application to OSCR.
	AW/HF to refine design of the benefits to members paper, and circulate to members