

SFCC Management Committee Meeting

6th May 2026

10:00 – 12:00



In Attendance:

Marcus Walters, SFCC Chair, Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust

Alan Wells, Fisheries Management Scotland

Craig Robinson, Marine Directorate

Rowan McCleary, Galloway Fisheries Trust

Amy Fergusson, Forth Rivers Trust

Morven McKenzie, West Sutherland Fisheries Trust

Jackie Rennie, Scottish Environment Protection Agency

Graeme Cullen, SFCC Manager

Apologies:

John Armstrong, Marine Directorate

Cathy Bennet, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

Graeme Anderson, Argyll Fisheries Trust

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and introduced Morven MacKenzie of West Sutherland Fisheries Trust as the new Early Careers Representative.

2. Minutes of previous meeting, review of action points and matters arising

2.1. Management Committee 26th November 2025

- It was noted that the sweep netting protocol had not been finalised, and that discussions were ongoing with SEPA in relation to sea lice monitoring associated with the sea lice regulatory framework.
- NEPS workshop: GC confirmed that a follow-up discussion on the NEPS report and interpretation of previous data would be arranged with Iain Malcolm and Faye Jackson.
 - **ACTION: GC** to contact Iain Malcom and Faye Jackson at the Marine Directorate to arrange a meeting for members on NEPS outputs and progress

All other outstanding actions had either been completed or were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

2.2. Annual Members Meeting 18th February 2026

The management committee also reviewed the actions arising from the Annual Members meeting,

- Beaver survey methods: AW provided a short update on work to develop a beaver dam risk assessment. Work is still ongoing to develop this protocol.

All other outstanding actions had either been completed or were covered elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Staff Report

GC gave a short update on progress since the last meeting. The following items were discussed.

Electrofishing database

Discussion focused on the future direction of the electrofishing database and the NEPS protocol. Committee members noted the importance of ensuring any work relating to how individual fish information is recorded was undertaken in consultation with Iain Malcolm and Faye Jackson. The need to improve access to, and extraction of, data was also highlighted.

Habitat Protocol Development

The committee discussed progress on the habitat protocol development work, including the drafting and publication of a formal methods paper, and agreed the proposed direction was positive overall. This had been raised at the annual members meeting. Concerns were raised around the time required to produce a formal methods paper, although publication was recognised as important for credibility and wider adoption. Discussion covered inconsistencies in current habitat and EIA approaches, the potential value of a standardised SFCC protocol, and the need for clear terms of reference, validation data and agreed objectives. The committee also considered the structure of a working group and the level of involvement required from key advisors.

ACTION: GC to produce terms of reference for habitat protocol development working group and approach proposed working group members

Training Courses

The invertebrate survey training course delivered by Buglife will be delivered in June. MW raised the question of access to the Buglife database (Cartographer) for people who complete the course. AW agreed to investigate database access arrangements with Buglife.

ACTION: AW to investigate database access arrangements with Buglife

JH discussed that the Rivers Trust has statistical training material. JH offered to circulate information on the Rivers Trust data portal and statistics access.

ACTION: JH to circulate information on the Rivers Trust data portal

The proposed RAPPER-CS training programme was discussed. This training aims to support the wider rollout of a citizen science method for monitoring filamentous algae in rivers as an indicator of ecological health. JH noted that he had organised RAPPER training, although the course was already fully booked.

ACTION: JH to report back on RAPPER training and its usefulness to the SFCC

4. Financial matters

The committee reviewed the cashflow report to the end of March 2026. Members noted temporary movements relating to Fisheries Management Scotland accounts for Marine Fund Scotland enforcement equipment purchases.

5. Sonar AI project continuing support

MW provided an update on the Sonar AI project, noting that support work remained ongoing and that a further Marine Fund Scotland bid was currently being prepared. If successful, the next phase of the project would bring the tool online under Fisheries Management Scotland hosting arrangements, alongside governance structures and standard operating procedures for onboarding additional rivers.

6. 3D Printed Microscope

GA provided a written update prior to the meeting on the OpenFlexure microscope project. Members discussed possible next steps, including surveying the membership to assess wider demand.

7. Biologists' Conference 2027

The committee began initial planning for the 2027 Biologists' Conference, scheduled for 17th to the 18th February at Faskally House.

AF expressed support for a workshop session on Fisheries Management Plans and suggested there would be value in exploring both current progress and next steps.

RM suggested fish counter session covering available technologies, installation experiences and associated costs. Members discussed developments involving Vaki systems, Teva technology in the Hebrides, machine learning approaches and emerging fish identification algorithms.

AF suggested that Biodiversity Net Gain, natural capital tools and habitat uplift work could also form useful conference topics, particularly in relation to SPEN and SSEN activity. AW agreed to speak with relevant contacts and suggested engagement with the Scottish Government PINK team to better understand framework development in Scotland.

JH proposed a potential workshop on PIT tagging approaches, including discussions on full duplex and half duplex systems and the interpretation of resulting data.

ACTION: GC, MW and AW to take forward conference ideas and report back on conference planning at next meeting

8. AOB

Marcus Walters introduced a proposed survey on electrofishing equipment reliability, noting increasing reports of failures and concerns surrounding specific suppliers and equipment types. Members agreed that collecting evidence across the membership would help identify recurring issues and strengthen engagement with suppliers.

ACTION: MW and GC to finalise member electrofishing equipment survey and send to SFCC members

AF also highlighted the upcoming River Restoration Centre Conference in Edinburgh and encouraged greater Scottish participation through presentations and abstract submissions.

Actions:

- GC to contact Ian Malcom and Faye Jackson at the Marine Directorate to arrange a meeting for members on NEPS

- GC to produce terms of reference for habitat protocol development working group and approach proposed working group members
- AW to investigate database access arrangements with Buglife
- JH to circulate information on the Rivers Trust data portal
- JH to report back on RAPPER training and its usefulness to the SFCC
- GC, MW and AW to take forward conference ideas and report back on conference planning at next meeting
- MW and GC to finalise member electrofishing equipment survey and send to SFCC members