Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors - Minutes

Wednesday 24th June 2026

By Videoconference

Present	In attendance
David Johnstone	Alan Wells
Edward Humphrey	Brian Davidson
Richard Miller	Federica Foiadelli
Richard Davies	Graeme Cullen
Jamie Stewart	Helen Feenan
Brian Shaw	Jenny McNeill
Ann-Marie MacMaster	Julia McCarthy
Lorna Lyle	Paul Sizeland
Robert White	
Edward Mountain	
Amelia Heath	

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies were received from Jamie Ribbens and Robert Younger.

The Chairman welcomed two new attendees, Robert White, appointed as a Director following the retirement of Claire Mercer-Nairne and nominated by the Tay Board, and Julia McCarthy, Wild Salmon Conservation Manager, who joined the organisation in February and was attending her first Board meeting.

2. Declaration of interests

The declaration of interests was circulated in advance of the meeting. AH highlighted her involvement in projects with FMS and Forth Rivers Trust in response to this.

ACTION: BD to update declaration of interests if necessary

3. Actions arising from March Board meeting

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

4. Financial

4.1 Reports to end May

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

4.2 Approval for increased HMRC rates for private car use

A short paper was circulated to highlight the new rates for private vehicle use introduced from 1 April this year. The board agreed to adopt the new rate for staff mileage

4.3 Draft 2025/26 accounts

The Chair reported that the first draft accounts for 2025/26 were available for consideration, significantly earlier than in previous years. The Chair thanked JM for her work with the accountants in streamlining processes to enable the earlier preparation of the accounts. Subject to any comments or queries, the accounts would be presented for approval at the AGM in November. The Chair invited JM and BD to address any detailed questions and welcomed comments from members.

BD reported a successful year in terms of securing project grants, much of which had delivered direct benefit to members. The accounts showed total turnover of £1.49m, of which nearly £1.3m related to project and other income.

BD highlighted an operating profit of £38k, explaining that this reflected an unplanned reduction in salary costs due to staff changes, lower staff expenses through reduced travel and proactive cost control, and successful project delivery where grant funding secured management fees to help cover staff costs to run the projects.

The Board posed questions relating to professional subscriptions. This was a new category in the accounts which is mainly a subscription for GIS software for members and largely funded through the Riverwoods initiative. A breakdown of the projects grants, and member support will be circulated as an explanatory note with the Accounts when they go to members at the AGM in November.

The Board also discussed the reserves policy and how reserved funds are held. BD confirmed that FMS holds reserves in a separate bank account and agreed to recirculate the FMS reserves policy to the Board.

ACTION: BD to circulate FMS Reserves policy

ACTION: JM/BD to include a breakdown of project grants and member support in the explanatory note for the Accounts

5. Nature Finance update

PS reported that, since the start of the financial year, he and FF had progressed the development of the Scottish Rivers Fund (SRF) and the FORTH$_2$O project. The third FIRNS project had been completed, with fourth-round funding secured to continue development of the SRF until March 2027 in partnership with NatureScot. Work had focused on corporate engagement, preparations for the Fund's launch and supporting the transition of its administration to NatureScot.

PS advised that the FORTH$_2$O project was underway, led by FMS in partnership with the Forth Rivers Trust and the University of Edinburgh Business School. SAC Consulting had been appointed to deliver the research programme, while FMS continued to coordinate the project Advisory Group. A dissemination event was planned for September.

PS reflected on his three years leading FMS's work on nature finance, highlighting progress in developing the organisation's expertise, establishing the Scottish Rivers Fund, and advancing nature market development through the FIRNS programme.

The Board discussed the future development of the SRF, including demand for nature finance, corporate engagement and investment opportunities. It was noted that the current FIRNS phase would focus on marketing and refining the Fund, while work continued to better understand corporate investment drivers and develop a consistent market framework. The Board welcomed the FORTH$_2$O project as an opportunity to improve understanding of demand for water outcomes and inform future investment, noting the involvement of key partners including Scottish Water and SEPA. Directors recognised the importance of strong stakeholder engagement, effective communications and senior-level corporate relationships, and noted that external consultancy support had been secured to strengthen corporate engagement. The Board also recognised the value of the FORTH$_2$O research in providing evidence to inform future investment decisions and river restoration outcomes.

The Chair, on behalf of the Board, thanked PS for his significant contribution to FMS, particularly his leadership in developing the organisation's nature finance programme and the Scottish Rivers Fund, and wished him every success for the future.

6. Key policy areas – questions arising from staff update

The Chair noted that the staff updates paper, providing an overview of key policy and work areas being progressed by the staff team, had been circulated in advance of the meeting. The Chair invited questions and discussion on the update and welcomed any comments from members.

The following points were raised in discussion:

What is the process and timeline for the Wild Salmon Strategy deliverable to support local fisheries management? AW noted that this is being taken forward through the delivery group. It was emphasised that the recommendations set out in the report are just the first step in the process and FMS were pushing for action on delivery. The board would be informed as soon as the timeline for action is clearer.

Regarding engagement with Scottish Forestry a point was made about the planting of trees on deep peat on the Western Isles. Much of the current engagement has been focussed on activity in Galloway, with discussion on grant schemes and application of best practice. The point made about deep peat would be reflected in discussions with Scottish Forestry.

Further context was sought on the discussions around beaver reintroductions and impact on fish passage. The draft methodology developed for assessing impacts on fish migration wasn't felt to be fit for purpose, and this had led to a further workstream in the Wild Salmon Strategy. The impacts on salmon and trout can be very different, and this needs to be recognised, with this being examined in a GB context.

Further context was sought on the failure of the Scottish Government to submit their conservation commitment report to NASCO at the June 2026 annual meeting. AW explained that the final deadline for submission is November 2026 and Scotland is committed to meeting this deadline. The delay was due to the timing with the Scottish Parliamentary elections.

AW agreed to communicate the detail on the NASCO outcomes to the membership. ACTION: AW

7. Fisheries Management Scotland strategy

7.1 RAG Reporting system

AW referred to the FMS Strategy RAG Reporting System paper, which had been circulated in advance. He noted that, as discussed at the previous meeting, the reporting form had been slightly amended to include a short narrative outlining progress against targets. He advised that most 2026 actions were in progress and on track.

8. Engagement with industry

The Chair noted that a joint approach to directing funding towards conservation work following escape incidents had been announced the previous week.

One board member raised concerns regarding the implementation of the penalty framework for escapes, including whether funds raised through the framework would be directed to the local areas affected by escapes, and whether its introduction could be perceived by the industry as meaning that the issue of escapes had been sufficiently addressed.

HF confirmed that the Articles of Association for the penalty fund specify that monies raised will be allocated to the local areas impacted by escapes. HF also clarified that collaborating with the industry to deliver one of the actions under SIWG does not preclude further advocacy or action to prevent escapes. Other Board members noted that this collaborative approach had fostered a more constructive working relationship with the industry, resulting in commitments to continue discussions and progress additional actions aimed at addressing wild-farmed interactions.

9. Potential changes to FMS constitution and future staff structure

9.1 Briefing paper for members – constitution changes

AW introduced Paper 6, a draft briefing paper for members explaining the basis for the proposed constitutional changes, and Paper 6.1, an amended version of the SCIO constitution as discussed at the previous meeting. He noted that the proposed changes were also outlined in the introduction to Paper 6. AW invited any questions or comments on the approach and asked whether the Board was content to proceed on the basis agreed at the previous meeting.

The Board discussed the potential timelines for this process, which is undetermined at this time. It was also suggested that a deputy Chair of the Board should be assigned to minimise disruption to meetings in the event of the Chairman being unable to attend.

9.2 Suggested future staff structure

AW introduced Paper 7, providing an update on his current thinking regarding Target 51 of the FMS Strategy, which relates to undertaking a strategic analysis by end 2026 to identify and prioritise the skills, competencies, and experience required to deliver organisational objectives and build team capacity.

He noted that, alongside current funding applications and issues highlighted in the staff update, the paper sought to align short-term opportunities with a longer-term ideal position and to address challenges arising from the organisation's current opportunistic approach.

AW invited any questions or comments and asked whether the Board was content for work to continue in line with the approach set out, and whether members would wish to see an updated paper at the next Board meeting. Following Board discussion, it was agreed that the paper should be updated with required and desirable skills/experience for each tier. AW will also develop a diagram setting out the future structure.

ACTION: AW to update staff structure paper to include required and desirable skills and a diagram for circulation at the next meeting

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

JM reported that planning for the annual conference was progressing well, with Norton House Hotel and Spa selected as the venue. The conference will take place on 11 November, following an in-person AGM and members' meeting scheduled for 10 November at the same venue.

JM confirmed the arrangements were within budget and in line with previous years. A conference dinner was being explored for the evening of 10 November, subject to further discussion. The venue offered suitable capacity, negotiated delegate rates, and nearby accommodation, enabling all elements of the event to be hosted in one location.

HF noted that work on the programme was progressing following Board feedback and asked members to support the identification of potential sponsorship opportunities.

11. AOB

The Board discussed the possibility of FMS staff attending Wild Salmon Connections round 2 which is scheduled to take place in October.

2026 meetings 23rd September, AGM 10th November

Summary of Actions – June Meeting

BD to update declaration of interests if necessary
BD to circulate FMS Reserves policy
JM/BD to include a breakdown of project grants and member support in the explanatory note for the Accounts
AW agreed to communicate the detail on the NASCO outcomes to the membership
AW to update staff structure paper to include required and desirable skills and a diagram for circulation at the next meeting

Actions outstanding from previous board meetings:

September 2025	**BY/AW** to discuss further the options for better controls and information on sea trout exploitation
January 2026	**FMS Staff** to consider the development of a website reporting dashboard
January 2026	**ALL** to suggest possible Conference sponsors
March 2026	**AW** to circulate stocking guidance paper to members, following confirmation from JR.