

SFCC Management Committee Meeting

25th August 2026

10:00 – 12:00



In Attendance:

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

John Armstrong, Marine Directorate

Steven Dora, Marine Directorate

Alan Wells, Fisheries Management Scotland

Morven McKenzie, West Sutherland Fisheries Trust

Jackie Rennie, Scottish Environment Protection Agency

James Hunt, Tweed Foundation

Graeme Cullen, SFCC Manager

Apologies:

Cathy Bennet, Scottish Environmental Protection Agency

Graeme Anderson, Argyll Fisheries Trust

Amy Fergusson, Forth Rivers Trust

Rowan McCleary, Galloway Rivers Trust

Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

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

2.1. Management Committee 26th November 2025

- NEPS workshop: GC confirmed that a NEPS workshop had been proposed by Marine Directorate on the 15th of October. Due to Scheduling conflicting with school holidays, we will request that this be postponed to a more suitable date.
 - **ACTION:** GC to contact Iain Malcolm to investigate rescheduling the NEPS workshop to maximise member attendance
- AW to investigate database access arrangements with Buglife
 - This item is carried forward to the next meeting
- JH to report back on RAPPER training and its usefulness to the SFCC

- JH provided feedback on the course. AW informed the committee that this course is part of a Marine Fund Scotland application that would make it available to FMS members.
- MW and GC to finalise member electrofishing equipment survey and send to SFCC members
 - **ACTION:** GC and MW to collate survey responses regarding issues with electrofishing equipment and decide on next steps.

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

GC and GA have been exploring options for developing the new electrofishing database in ArcGIS or as a standalone system built with R. It is still unclear which is the best option. Members discussed the two development approaches currently being explored: building the database entirely within ArcGIS Online or developing a standalone coded platform. It was noted that an ArcGIS-based solution would be fully integrated with existing SFCC mapping systems and would not incur additional licensing costs, while a standalone platform would provide greater flexibility, faster development and reduced dependence on ArcGIS. GC will produce an options appraisal for the next committee meeting outlining the positives and negatives of each system and a decision can then be made.

ACTION: GC to develop an options appraisal for the new electrofishing database

Habitat Protocol Development

The Habitat Protocol Oversight Committee has been established to provide strategic oversight and guidance for the redevelopment of the SFCC Habitat Protocol. The committee brings together representatives from key organisations with expertise in fisheries management, river restoration, habitat assessment and regulation to ensure the protocol is scientifically robust, practical to deliver and meets the needs of the membership. Its role is to review and challenge the overall approach, provide specialist advice and ensure the protocol is developed in line with its aims, while supporting the production of a standardised, evidence-

based method for use across Scotland. The Terms of Reference for the habitat protocol oversight committee were circulated previously and no committee members objected.

Julia McCarthy (FMS Wild Salmon Conservation Manager) is working with GC to produce the overall approach, questions that the survey can answer and intended audiences of the outputs of the habitat protocol. Specifically at this stage the work concerns defining the questions to be answered and the audiences for the outputs. These will then be presented to the oversight committee.

Training Courses

GC reported that the summer programme of SFCC training courses had been successfully delivered, with overall feedback from attendees remaining very positive. There will be an in-person electrofishing trainers' day in Pitlochry on 26 October, which will provide an opportunity to ensure consistency in course delivery, review training content and discuss potential improvements for future courses. JH suggested that it would be useful if training courses were delivered in June so as not to interfere with the electrofishing season. It was also noted that additional courses, including ArcGIS, Scale Reading and Introduction to R, would be advertised shortly.

Working with Rivers Internship Programme

GC reported that the current Working with Rivers Internship Programme was progressing well, with interns continuing to support member organisations across the north of Scotland. Discussions have taken place with SSEN regarding reporting requirements and a funding application for the 2027 programme in areas covered by SSEN. GC also provided an update on plans to establish a Working with Rivers programme in the areas not covered by SSEN. Discussions were initiating with SPEN regarding potential funding opportunities, while alternative funding routes were also being explored.

Sonar AI Round 3

GC provided an update on the proposed third phase of the Sonar AI project, noting that the project was expected to commence shortly, subject to funding approval from Marine Fund Scotland. There have also been initial discussion with Tritech, who produce a different device at a lower price point, to investigate using their sonar technology for the AI tool, with a feasibility project currently exploring funding options.

Member Engagement and Support

GC has continued support for members using the electrofishing database, including the development of additional export functionality. Additionally, GIS support is ongoing as usual. GC also reported on visits to a number of members, including Galloway, Spey, Loch Lomond, Ayr and Clyde, as well as attendance at several SFCC training courses. GC highlighted that further visits to West Sutherland Fisheries Trust and the River Dee Trust were planned over the coming weeks.

4. Financial matters

The committee reviewed the cashflow report to the end of July 2026.

5. Electrofishing qualification for licencing

AW highlighted that there is a growing call from SFCC members that SFCC electrofishing training should be the required standard within the licensing process. It was noted that some concerns about the qualifications of individuals undertaking electrofishing in Scotland had been raised at the 2026 Biologists meeting. It was agreed that further discussion with the licensing team would be required before any changes could be considered. An update would be provided at a future meeting.

ACTION: SD to discuss SFCC training for electrofishing and licencing with the Marine Directorate and report back at a future SFCC management committee meeting.

6. Biologists' Conference 2027

GC presented the proposed programme for the 2027 SFCC Biologists' Conference and sought the committee's approval. Members supported the proposed format, including the management plan workshop. The committee also supported the proposal to develop a programme of webinars based on conference session ideas that could not be accommodated within the main conference, with Management Committee members contributing as speakers where appropriate. GC will confirm speakers and progress conference arrangements.

ACTION: GC to take forward conference programme, reach out to speakers and report back on progress at the next meeting

ACTION: GC to contact committee members to set up webinars.

7. AOB

No other matters were raised

Actions

- GC to contact Iain Malcolm to investigate rescheduling the NEPS workshop to maximise member attendance
- AW to investigate database access arrangements with Buglife
- GC and MW to collate survey responses and decide on next steps.
- GC to report back regarding positives and negatives of choices for the new electrofishing database
- SD to discuss electrofishing licencing requiring SFCC qualification in Scotland with the Marine Directorate licencing team and report back at the next SFCC management committee meeting.
- GC to take forward conference programme, reach out to speakers and report back on progress at the next meeting
- GC to contact committee members to set up webinars.