

Fisheries Management Scotland Board Meeting

Minutes

25 January 2018



Present

Alister Jack (Chairman)
Alison Baker
Mark Bilsby
Roger Brook
Chris Conroy
Brian Doran
Mary Nicholson
David Summers
Bill Whyte

In attendance

Alan Wells, Chief Executive
Brian Davidson, Director of Communications & Administration

Apologies for absence

Douglas Dobie
Alasdair Laing
Simon McKelvey

1. Register of Interests

No updates to members' entries have been necessary.

2. Matters arising

Wild Fisheries Reform – a 'Priorities' paper is in hand and this will be circulated. **ACTION: AW**

Group purchasing arrangements – a discount scheme has been initiated with a range of suppliers and will continue to be developed. **ACTION: BD**

Sponsorship for the review – AL had opened discussions with Strutt & Parker and AW had now secured confirmation of sponsorship.

3. Governance

Remuneration - It was agreed to establish a small group to discuss staff salaries and chaired by MB. MN was happy to contribute to this group and it was agreed to ask DD. It was emphasised that the work will not be onerous and would be undertaken by correspondence. The outcome of this group would then feed into the annual appraisal process and subsequent budget planning.

Update on incorporation process

The application for incorporation has now been submitted to Companies House and it is expected that the formal certificate of incorporation should be received by early-mid February. New banking arrangements are to be explored and an update will be provided to the Board in due course. **ACTION: BD**

Code of Good Practice

It is proposed to consider how the existing codes of practice for the DSFBs and Trusts are updated or possibly integrated. Work on this has begun and an update will be provided. **ACTION: BD**

Cashflow reports

There were no comments on the cashflow report to end December 2017.

4. FMS priorities for 2018

The staff workplan was discussed. It was made clear that the 'priority' areas are highlighted for the relevant quarter only, and that 'core' work is not prioritised as this is ongoing in nature. Areas which will remain a high priority include:

- **Aquaculture** - This continues to be a high-profile area, and a series of workstreams have started which require FMS to invest time at this stage. It was noted that the Parliamentary enquiry into the environmental effects of aquaculture is now underway and therefore there is a window of opportunity to attempt to make progress across a number of key issues.
- **Legal and enforcement** – a key priority is to identify policy objectives for an improved enforcement framework, which it is hoped can be delivered in the proposed bill scheduled for 2018/19. A range of other actions have been identified, to facilitate a more integrated and co-ordinated way of delivering national enforcement priorities. Some will require legislation, and other areas could be enabled through administrative means.
- **Fishery management planning** – a key priority is to develop, in collaboration with the membership, a template for creating fishery management plans. This will be developed in Q1 and fed back to Scottish Government.
- **Licensing framework review** – Marine Scotland Science have agreed to a request from FMS to review the licensing system (for consenting fishery management and scientific activities). FMS will be investing time in this to help ensure that the review will identify where the system can be simplified and more reactive to the needs of DSFBs and Trusts.
- **Angling participation** - A possible approach to increasing angling participation is to be explored via a meeting with Ian Robertson (Countryside Learning Scotland) and other FMS members.
- **Water Framework Directive** – FMS are currently in discussion on a number of issues on behalf of our members, including ongoing regulatory issues. FMS participated in a recent SEPA River Basin Management Plan workshop, which presented an opportunity for Fisheries Trusts to identify areas where additional local information can contribute directly to waterbody classifications. FMS are encouraging SEPA to roll out similar events across Scotland. SEPA are moving to a centralised permitting team and a meeting will be arranged to explore means by which local fishery managers are fully engaged in the new process for

CAR licensing. Identifying solutions to smolt downstream migration problems will also be prioritised.

- **Predation** – this remains high profile and work will be undertaken to establish an FMS policy position and advocacy strategy.
- **Beaver management plan** – this will be high priority for first quarter due to the work in the Scottish Beaver Forum in developing a new management regime.

5. Discussions with SSPO

Alister Jack and Alan Wells initiated discussions on funding with the SSPO, following the Fisheries Management Scotland Conference in 2017. The Board were provided with an update on the progress of these talks. The intention is the secure funding for fisheries management activities in the aquaculture zone – the shared space occupied by wild fisheries and the salmon farming industry. Final proposals will be discussed at both the Board and the Fish Farming Committee.

6. Meeting with Cabinet Secretary

Alan Wells and Mark Bilsby provided an update on a recent meeting with Roseanna Cunningham, Cabinet Secretary for the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform. This meeting focussed on three main areas: the future of wild fisheries reform, the Scottish Government approach to Conservation Limits (including the range of pressures out with exploitation) and managing interactions with aquaculture. The Cabinet Secretary stated that it remains her intention to bring forward a Bill in year 3 (2018/19 introduction). Whilst there was no commitment to ongoing additional funding, and a rod licence is ruled out, the Cabinet Secretary recognised and acknowledged the funding issues faced by our sector and the possibility of one-off funding was raised.

7. Alternative approach to conservation measures

An alternative approach to the Scottish Government conservation measures was discussed in response to the paper circulated on this topic, with a view to moving the decision-making process closer to local management.

There was general agreement, but it was noted that such an approach may risk placing a greater burden, and reputational risk on DSFBs, given the controversy associated with the current system.

It was agreed to take some exploratory discussions forward with Scottish Government – **ACTION: AW**

8. Annual conference and review

Arrangements have been put in place to convene the annual conference on 3 & 4 April at Battleby. A list of potential topics/speakers is being compiled, with the emphasis on reflecting the work of FMS and member organisations. This will be shared with the Board shortly.

Strutt & Parker have confirmed that they will continue their sponsorship of the review at previous levels. They have also confirmed that they will be happy to share sponsorship with another party, providing there are no obvious conflicts and that the level of sponsorship is the same. This will be explored. **ACTION: AW**

9. RAFTS stocking policy

The stocking policy prepared by RAFTS in 2012 was discussed and it was considered whether this might have relevance to a policy position for FMS. Several options were considered, including full adoption of the policy by FMS, asking a small FMS group to review it and recommend a position or seek an independent review from a third party. It was felt that the RAFTS policy was comprehensive but had previously only been signed off by the membership of RAFTS. On that basis, it was agreed that FMS should aim to adopt this policy, check whether updates are necessary and circulate to the Fisheries Management Scotland membership for approval.

ACTION: BD

10. AOB

None.

Following the formal business of the meeting, Alastair Mitchell (AM), Marine Scotland, joined the meeting to provide an overview of Scottish Government thinking in terms of forthcoming activity relating to freshwater fisheries.

Scottish Government priorities and ambitions for wild fisheries

AM confirmed the current intention for a Bill to be presented in 2018/2019, subject to Parliamentary time. The bill is likely to contain enabling powers potentially including provisions to alter constitutional and administrative arrangements to facilitate effective fisheries management within the overall legislative framework. AM emphasised that the sector will have a key opportunity to influence thinking on the bill. Allied to this will be moves to reinvigorate work on a national freshwater fisheries strategy and a sector-led approach to fisheries management planning.

Further issues of priority for the sector were raised by FMS. These included an integrated system for the conservation, protection and management of all species of freshwater fish, and more efficient ways of rationalising salmon fishery districts to encourage strategic management.

AM encouraged FMS to engage early with ideas for change in the context of the bill, and it was agreed that this will be prioritised.

It was emphasised that whatever came out of the process, it needed to be supported by Government and Agencies with effective local empowerment and delivery.

Support/ funding for wild fisheries

The issue of sustainable funding for the fisheries management sector was raised by FMS.

AM explained that ongoing core funding to underpin management is likely to remain a key challenge. However, he hoped that there will be opportunities to secure one-off funding, including to facilitate voluntary changes to current structures.

Salmon farming interactions

FMS emphasised the need for a regulatory system for aquaculture which protects wild migratory fish and proactively seeks to address any local negative impacts.