

Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting minutes

5 October 2018



Directors present

Alister Jack (Chairman)
Alison Baker
Mark Bilsby
Roger Brook
Douglas Dobie
Brian Doran
Simon McKelvey
Mary Nicholson
David Summers

In attendance

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

Apologies for absence

Chris Conroy
Bill Whyte

1. Governance

1.1 *Members' interests – declaration*

No relevant interests were declared.

2. Financial & administrative

2.1 *Timing of future AGMs, financial year and Companies House requirements*

A paper was circulated prior to the meeting and Board approval was sought with regard to aligning legal and constitutional reporting requirements. The Board approved the following actions:

- Changing the current company year-end (presently 31 January 2019) to 31 March 2019
- Convening the 2019 and successive AGMs in late October

ACTION: BD to make the necessary arrangements with Companies House.

2.2 *Cashflow reports – handling unpaid 2017 subscriptions*

The Board indicated that they are content with the additional information on budget spend and forecasting as part of the regular financial updates provided. It was agreed that two unpaid subscriptions in 2017, would be written off.

ACTION: BD to make the necessary arrangements with the accountants.

2.3 *Draft 2019 budget and subscription options*

A draft budget was circulated prior to the meeting. In setting the budget, Fisheries Management Scotland have been very conscious of catches over the last few years and the knock-on impacts to rental income and DSFB income via the levy.

Currently, DSFB subscriptions are based on 5-year average catches, whereas Trust subscriptions are based on a fixed figure. In response to various comments made by members, various options were considered by the Board for setting 2019 subscription rates. It was agreed that the current system would be proposed at the AGM on 9th November, with a commitment to review this in 2019 (for 2020 subscriptions).

2.4 Election for director vacancies & chairmanship

A notification to invite nominations to fill three director vacancies was issued to the membership in September. Whilst the deadline for nominations is later in October, two nominations had been received prior to the Board meeting. Brian Davidson was asked to prepare voting papers for the election and it was agreed to ensure that votes will be submitted electronically prior to the AGM. This would ensure that the results would be available before the meeting and would allow for more efficient scheduling of the meeting time to ensure that a short Board meeting is able to elect a new Chairman. Each DSFB member will be asked to vote for three directors.

ACTION: BD to organise the arrangements for a vote at the AGM.

2.5 Aquaculture funding

Alister Jack and Alan Wells provided a brief update on a recent meeting with the SSPO in an attempt to make progress on the potential funding support for wild fisheries. The potential for funding remains on the table and possible governance mechanisms were explored.

3. Policy

3.1 Staff update

Alan Wells and Brian Davidson provided a short update on staff activities since the last Board meeting. These included:

Scottish Parliament – Alan Wells will meet with the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, Mairi Gougeon MSP, on 13th November. This will be an opportunity to learn more about this new portfolio and to discuss the work undertaken by Fisheries Management Scotland and our members. Fisheries Management Scotland have secured an exhibition space in the Scottish Parliament on the week commencing 6th May 2019. This will be an opportunity to raise the profile of Fisheries Management Scotland and showcase the work of our members to Parliamentarians.

Marine Scotland – Fisheries Management Scotland have been in regular contact with Marine Scotland officials across a range of issues. In recent months this has included: emphasising the need for regulatory change in salmon farming; predation issues; in-river and marine tracking work planned for 2019 on the Dee and rivers draining into the Moray Firth through the Missing Salmon Project; a review of the licensing system operated by Marine Scotland Science; development of a national wild fisheries strategy; financial pressures on the fisheries management system, the national electrofishing programme; and conservation regulations for 2019.

SEPA – The low water levels during the summer are still a concern in some areas and Fisheries Management Scotland will work with SEPA to review the what happened over the summer, understand the longer-term consequences, and increase resilience in future (including review of current CAR licences). Fisheries Management Scotland are developing joint proposals with SEPA with a view to ensuring an appropriate and consistent level of consultation with the fisheries management sector across Scotland. A number of specific issues relating to diffuse pollution, in-river works, and downstream smolt passage at hydro dams have been identified by our members and Fisheries Management Scotland will continue to pursue these issues with SEPA.

Aquaculture – Alan has been in regular contact with the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust, Marine Scotland, Fish Health Inspectorate and MSPs regarding a serious sea lice infestation in Loch Roag. Sweep netting surveys to assess sea lice levels on wild sea trout have been completed and the results have been submitted to Marine Scotland for analysis. Fisheries Management Scotland will work with our Fish Farming Committee to further analyse and clearly present this data. Fisheries Management Scotland (Alan Wells and Roger Brook) will participate in the Interactions Working Group which will meet for the first time on 31st October. Alan Wells will also participate in a number of working groups relating to Farmed Fish Health, which will run in parallel with the wider Interactions agenda.

Enforcement – Brian Davidson has been in close contact with Police Scotland, National Wildlife Crime Unit and Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service across a range of issues including: priorities for legislative change, including the current level of penalties; the use of impact statements during prosecutions; developing local partnerships between the police and DSFBs; effective offence reporting; working together on training, publicity and developing protocols for best practice. More recently Brian has been developing plans for a training day to raise awareness of fish crime issues, in order to increase understanding of fisheries offences and assist Procurator Fiscals and Police Scotland wildlife crime officers in dealing with fish cases.

Predation – Fisheries Management Scotland are supported members in initiating discussion with SNH about the licensing system for piscivorous birds. This included the possibility of reviewing and streamlining the licensing system, noting the current conservation status of salmon and sea trout. A further meeting with Marine Scotland, SNH and SASA is scheduled for November to make progress on predation issues.

3.2 Fisheries Management Scotland response to 2018 catches

It was noted that the 2018 season had been another poor season for catches and was likely to have the lowest catches on record. The combination of a particularly cold spring and a warm, dry summer was a factor and it was noted that some rivers, particularly in the north of Scotland have fared better than others. It was also noted that excellent juvenile numbers were being recorded across Scotland through electrofishing surveys, and that some fish counter data showed an increase on the previous year (Argyll)

The Board discussed how best to manage proactive messaging on this issue, particularly when the official statistics are published. It is important to recognise that reduced marine survival is affecting Atlantic salmon across its natural range. It was also noted that whilst Atlantic salmon face a range of issues, and that urgent action is required to address these issues, Scotland remains a world class angling destination, and it is important not to ‘talk down’ our iconic salmon fisheries. This issue will be discussed further at the AGM on 9th November.

In recent months Alan Wells and Brian Davidson met with Visit Scotland to discuss ways in which our fisheries could be better marketed. Alan also joined a meeting between Scottish Enterprise and several rivers to emphasise the fundamental importance of fishing to rural communities and to explore options for greater support in marketing and improved infrastructure.

3.3 Fisheries Management Planning

Marine Scotland have asked a range of DSFBs and Trusts to pilot a ‘pressures tool’ which has been developed in conjunction with Sean Dugan at the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre. This will allow Marine Scotland to collect feedback from Fisheries Management Scotland members, prior to further development of the fisheries management planning process.

3.4 Salmon stocking policy

An updated salmon stocking policy paper was circulated prior to the meeting. Brian Davidson adjusted the paper, in light of comments received following our consultation with Fisheries Management Scotland members. The Board were content with the paper, subject to some small textual amendments, and it was agreed to recirculate it to the membership. **ACTION: BD**

3.5 Angling development meetings

Fisheries Management Scotland and Countryside Learning Scotland have been working together to develop a Scottish Angling National Development Structure. Four regional meetings have now taken place to explain the project. The feedback from all 4 meetings has been very positive, and the next phase will be to develop an audit of the participating areas as a precursor to planning the more detailed approach at a local level and training volunteers.

4. Communications

4.1 Annual Conference

The options for the 2019 Annual Conference were discussed. Brian and Alan have had some exploratory discussions with National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh and they would be able to provide a suitable venue for up to 200 delegates, including break-out options for workshop discussions. The costings were very favourable for the location. Further options included the hosting of a dinner in the museum hall, however this would be beyond the budgeted costs, and some form of sponsorship support would be required if this option is to be pursued. The conference could also be strongly aligned with International Year of the Salmon (see below), and this may mean that we could generate wider national and international engagement at the event. It was agreed that arrangements should be made to secure the facilities for 29 March 2019. It was also agreed to explore options for sponsorship to consider whether the evening dinner would be viable. **ACTION BD/AW** – to explore sponsorship options and produce ideas for programme, speakers and associated activities.

4.2 Annual Review

The Board agreed that the current format of the Annual Review should be taken forward for 2019. To ensure that the costs remain within budget, additional sponsorship will be required, and this would be explored. **ACTION AW/BD**

4.3 Membership engagement

It was proposed that a more effective way to engage with members would be to schedule a number of regional members' meetings throughout 2019, rather than a single event held in the spring. One possibility would be to link these around other local events, for example game and sporting fairs. The Board were content with this approach, and options to take this forward would be discussed with members in terms of timing and venues and publicised accordingly. **ACTION AW/BD**

4.4 International Year of the Salmon

The Board considered proposals for Fisheries Management Scotland to lead on a number of activities associated with International Year of the Salmon. The Board agreed that Fisheries Management Scotland should be proactive on this front and, working within existing budgets and collaborating with others where appropriate, undertake a range of actions which will highlight the work of Fisheries Management Scotland and members. This is to include: building the annual conference around this initiative, developing and delivering a number of specific activities, such as highlighting members' work through video, interpretative material ('*What salmon mean to me*'),

parliamentary engagement (exhibition and other activity) and other routine activity which can be branded appropriately.

It was agreed that collaboration with other organisations will be desirable in taking any input forward, and there may be scope to work with a number of other NGOs under the *Missing Salmon* project banner. This would be explored further with the organisations who are looking to use this as a vehicle for collaborating on the International Year of the Salmon. **ACTION:AW/BD**

5. AOB

6. None