

Fisheries Management Scotland
Meeting minutes
19 September 2019



Directors present

Richard Sankey (Chairman)
Alison Baker
Chris Conroy
Lorraine Hawkins
Alasdair Laing
Peter Landale
Mary Nicholson
David Summers
Bill Whyte

In attendance

Alan Wells, Chief Executive

Apologies for absence

Roger Brook
Douglas Dobie
Brian Doran
Brian Davidson, Director of Communications & Administration

1. Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting and noted the apologies. Brian Davidson was unable to attend as he is now on paternity leave. The directors extended their congratulations to Brian and his family.

The Board were deeply saddened by the recent death of Tony Donnelly, who had recently been appointed as the Director of the Cromarty Firth DSFB and Trust. Condolences were expressed by all directors.

2. Governance

2.1 Members' interests – declaration

Members were invited to declare any updates to members' interests. Nothing was declared.

3. Actions arising from March board meeting

- *PL/MN/RS/AW/BD to develop thinking on actions required to deliver objectives and identify resource gaps*
In progress - update provided under agenda item 5
- *AW to circulate the report of the NASCO symposium to Fisheries Management Scotland members*

Completed

- *AW to progress discussions on action across a range of issues with key officials*
Ongoing – update provided under agenda item 6.3
- *AW to develop proposals for a further Parliamentary event later in 2019*
Ongoing – update provided under agenda item 7.3
- *ALL to provide feedback on the draft approach for guidance*
Ongoing – This was raised at the recent Fish and Fisheries Advisory Group meeting.
- *BD/AW to meet with IFM to discuss the future relationship between both organisations and report back to the Board*
Complete – AW, BD and SD met with Alastair Stephen and Keith Williams on 1st August. This was a positive discussion and IFM are presently reviewing their activities/role in Scotland, taking into account the role of Fisheries Management Scotland & members. The objective is to establish clear areas of responsibility, principally around training delivery and where specific areas of training development, facilitation & delivery best sits with each organisation.
- *AW/BD to coordinate information relating to pink salmon and keep existing guidance under review*
Complete – update provided under agenda item 6.4.
- *AW/BD to coordinate information relating to fish health issues and keep existing guidance under review*
Complete – update provided under agenda item 6.4.
- *BD to clarify a number of issues on the draft accounts, including the clear disaggregation of SFCC funds from Fisheries Management Scotland reserves.*
Complete – updated accounts discussed under agenda item 4.1
- *BD to provide quarterly management accounts to the Board, in addition to monthly cashflow against budget reporting*
See discussion under agenda item 4.1
- *AW/BD and PL to produce a short brief for the 2020 conference*
See discussion under agenda item 7.1

4. Financial & administrative

4.1 Draft accounts and appointment of accountants for 2020-21

Draft accounts, and an explanatory paper were circulated in advance of the meeting. Subject to advice from the accountants relating to any liability for corporation tax the accounts were agreed. It was agreed that final sign-off would be by correspondence in advance of the AGM and the reporting deadline at Companies House.

ACTION: AW/BD to circulate updated accounts for agreement by correspondence.

4.2 Draft 2020/21 budget and subscription options

Proposed subscriptions and a draft budget were circulated in advance of the meeting. It was noted that a range of alternative mechanisms has been explored, following feedback from the membership. All alternative options explored for DSFB subscriptions (which included rateable values and catchment areas) would have resulted in significant swings in subscriptions levels, with resulting impacts on local management. It was therefore agreed

that the proposed subscriptions for DSFBs would be based on the existing mechanism for 2020. With regard to Trusts, it was agreed that for 2020 a two-tier subscription based on income as reported to OSCR would be proposed to the membership.

The directors noted the vital importance of maintaining stability in funding from the membership, whilst recognising the financial pressures that local managers are facing. This is a key driver for the strategic review (see below) and it was agreed that a small committee would be convened to identify alternative mechanisms for structuring member subscriptions, perhaps based on a three-year funding model. AL, AB and DS agreed to contribute to this workstream.

ACTION: AW to coordinate input to the group.

The draft budget for 2020/21 was agreed.

4.3 Potential tax liabilities

A briefing paper was circulated in advance of the meeting. The accountants are currently assessing potential liabilities for corporation tax and VAT. Once this assessment is complete, further information will be circulated. Following early advice from the accountants it was agreed, in advance of the meeting, that the company articles should be amended to ensure that they are compliant with mutual trade status. The motion to inform this change has been circulated to the membership.

There was some discussion about the nature of the company and whether charitable status or Community Interest Company (CIC) status might be advantageous. It was agreed that CIC status would be explored further.

ACTION: AW/BD to explore the advantages/ disadvantages of CIC status.

4.4 Draft reserve policy

A paper was circulated in advance of the meeting. It was agreed that the reserve policy would be adopted with a view to building and maintaining a 6-month operational reserve.

4.5 Annual General Meeting

The agenda for the AGM was circulated to the membership along with the motion discussed under agenda item 4.3

4.6 Afternoon Workshop at AGM

It was agreed that Scottish Enterprise would be invited to the afternoon session at the AGM to provide an update on some recent work they have undertaken regarding the impact of declines in salmon on local economies and opportunities for Scotland's rivers in the face of these declines. It was also agreed to use this session to update members on proposals to roll out the 'pressures tool' that has been developed by SD on behalf of the Scottish Government – see below.

5. Strategic Review

Alan provided an update on progress relating to the strategic review. Specific actions required to deliver the agreed objectives were set out and the capacity for Fisheries Management

Scotland to fulfil these actions were assessed. Whilst the current staff have the capacity to partially or fully deliver on most of these objectives. It was concluded that additional capacity is required if Fisheries Management Scotland are to deliver its strategic objectives in full.

AW and RS provided an update on a recent discussion with Marine Scotland. It was noted that the profile and priority of wild salmon has increased in recent months and the Programme for Government commitment to produce a wild salmon strategy reflects this. AW is working on proposals to fund two additional posts – an aquaculture liaison officer, and a planning liaison officer. These posts would support Fisheries Management Scotland members in engaging with industries, agencies and planning/ authorisation processes which have the potential to impact on wild fish.

6. Policy

6.1 Staff update

AW noted that the salmon farming committee and enforcement committee had met in recent weeks and that the minutes of those meetings would be published on the website and circulated to Board members for information.

ACTION: AW to circulate minutes of all Committees to the Board

6.2 Interactions Working Group and smolt tracking

AW and RB attended the recent meeting of the Interactions Working Group. This has been a challenging process, but Fisheries Management Scotland are working hard with SSPO to try to identify areas of consensus to inform the recommendations of the group. This process for developing recommendations was endorsed by the IWG membership. Two further meetings are planned in November with a view to finalising the report by the end of 2019.

A Technical Working Group, comprising current regulations of the aquaculture industry, has been operating in parallel with the Interactions Working Group. This group has been developing thinking for a new risk assessment approach for wild fish interactions which will inform the planning process in future. Early indications are that this is a positive development and Fisheries Management Scotland will engage further in the process, prior to formal consultation later this year.

Fisheries Management Scotland are working with the Atlantic Salmon Trust and Marine Scotland to develop proposals for a major west-coast tracking study in 2020. The logistics of this project are very complicated, and timing is very tight. This proposal, which would be funded primarily by Marine Scotland funding, will be discussed further with relevant members in the coming weeks.

6.3 SEPA

AW provided an update on recent work with SEPA, including a workshop to discuss downstream smolt migration at large impoundments and work with specific members with a view to addressing local issues. Fisheries Management Scotland continue to work with SEPA to identify and seek to address issues of relevance to wild fish and fisheries and develop a greater mutual understanding of the priorities and pressures faced. The wild salmon strategy was identified as a useful driver to help this process.

6.4 Update on pink salmon and fish health issues

AW provided an update on the current situation. Reports of pink salmon catches are substantially down on 2017. 21 fish have been captured in 2019 compared to 139 in 2017. A similar situation has occurred in England, Wales, Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Whilst there have been substantial catches in northern Norwegian rivers, catches in mid-southern Norway are much lower than in 2017. Our published [advice](#) remains unchanged.

There have been no recent reports of fish health issues. The results of tests undertaken by the Fish Health Inspectorate have been inconclusive with no underlying cause identified. The Marine Scotland [advice](#) remains unchanged.

7. Communications

7.1 Annual Conference

A provisional reservation with the National Museum of Scotland have been made for 31 March 2020. There is a possibility of running the event alongside a parallel event with the Atlantic Salmon Trust (potentially on 1 April at same venue).

ACTION: AW/BD to work with PL to identify a theme and options for delivery

ACTION: ALL to provide thoughts on the theme for the event

7.2 Membership engagement – regional meetings

Regional meetings have now been held in Callander, Dumfries and Caithness. These have provided a very useful opportunity to engage with the membership and it was agreed that we should continue this process in subsequent years. The Banchory meeting will take place on 27 September and the Inverness meeting will be rescheduled as soon as possible.

7.3 Scottish Parliament

AW is continuing to work to develop a cross-sector discussion to consider current priority issues for salmon stocks, sponsored by Michelle Ballantyne MSP. This would be part of the International Year of the Salmon and therefore we hope to arrange something within 2019.

In addition, we are exploring the possibility of a 'wild salmon watch' page on the website. This would highlight locations where the public would have an opportunity to see wild salmon leaping. It was agreed that this would be taken forward.

ACTION: AW/SD to publish wild salmon watch webpages

8. AOB

None