

Fisheries Management Scotland
Meeting minutes
25 June 2020



By videoconference

Directors present

Richard Sankey (Chairman)
Alison Baker
Roger Brook
Chris Conroy
Douglas Dobie
Brian Doran

Lorraine Hawkins
Alasdair Laing
Peter Landale
Mary Nicholson
Bill Whyte

Apologies

David Summers

In attendance

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

1 Welcome

The Chairman welcomed all to the meeting.

Brian Doran indicated he would be resigning as a Director of Fisheries Management Scotland. The Chairman and the Board thanked Brian for his contribution and expertise to the Board since Fisheries Management Scotland was formed. The Chairman invited the Board to consider the nomination of Sandy Scott, current chairman of the Spey DSFB, as an appointment to the Board to succeed Brian Doran and this was approved. The necessary notifications will be sent to Companies House to update the director details and contact would be made with Sandy Scott. **ACTION: BD**

2 Actions arising from the March meeting

Actions arising from the last Board meeting were discussed. All actions were either completed or were addressed later in the agenda.

3 COVID-19 impacts

3.1 Financial support for Fisheries Management Scotland members

Alan Wells has been exploring a number of options for financial support with Marine Scotland. He has written to the Cabinet Secretary on two occasions, and the issue of financial support was included in our press release accompanying the publication of the catch statistics. This resulted in Claudia Beamish MSP, writing to the Cabinet Secretary to make the case for specific support for the fisheries management sector. Alan has also submitted written evidence to the Scottish Parliament Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee (RECC) who have issued a call for evidence on the impact of Covid-19 on the rural economy in Scotland. We have specifically highlighted that the limited resumption

of angling, whilst welcome, does not solve the significant financial impacts being faced by our members.

The Board agreed that the submission to REC Committee would be strengthened with local case studies to demonstrate impact, including the economic impact, future employment prospects and the associated opportunity cost. There is likely to be pressure on Boards to reduce the fishery assessment and this will place additional pressures on resources available to both Boards and Trusts.

Since the announcement that the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland would not be going ahead in 2020, Alan Wells has been exploring options for funding to the network in the absence of this work. This is currently being progressed with Marine Scotland Science.

3.2 Maintaining key fisheries management activities under 'lockdown'

The Cabinet Secretary specifically thanked Fisheries Management Scotland for the guidance issued to date on COVID-19. This guidance covered issues such as enforcement and fieldwork under appropriate physical distancing guidelines. The Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre committee have discussed the resumption of electrofishing and a specific meeting will be convened for trusts to discuss their respective views on how they might resume fieldwork.

4 Financial & administrative

4.1 Update on subscriptions and other income

Brian Davidson provided an update on the membership subscriptions and other income. No issues have been identified with the current membership income. An option was provided to the membership for staged payments of the annual subscription in light of the exceptional circumstances, and several members have taken advantage of this option. Fisheries Management Scotland have also been successful in securing a small business rate relief grant from Edinburgh City Council. Staff have identified savings across a range of budget lines which will help offset any potential issues arising in the remainder of the financial year.

4.2 Update on financial reporting

Brian Davidson and Alasdair Laing have investigated the best means of reporting from the new accounting system, and the Board agreed that a summary of the spend against budget and a balance sheet should provide the key information. This is under discussion with the accountants and reports will be circulated to the Board shortly. **ACTION: BD**

4.3 Annual accounts 2019-20

Douglas Home & Co are compiling the 2019-20 draft accounts – these will be circulated in July for the Board to consider.

4.4 2020 AGM – arrangements for meeting

A number of options are being considered to deliver a virtual meeting to approve accounts and any other business which require members' approval. Advice is to be sought to consider the best means of achieving this, consistent with our governing documents. **ACTION: BD**

5 Strategic review and financial review

A meeting of the working group was held last week to consider a review of Fisheries Management Scotland's objectives and some ideas for expanding our income base. The Board recognise the need to bring more resources into the fisheries management sector, but the means of doing so is challenging. This work will be taken forward by the working group.

ACTION: AW

Related to the overall structure and costs, consideration is being given to advantages associated with 'not for profit' status for the organisation. This may bring financial and other advantages, for example discounted rates on IT products and other services. The Board agreed that the concept of 'not for profit' status should be investigated further to assess the potential financial and organisational benefits. **ACTION: AW/BD**

6 Policy updates

6.1 Aquaculture

The final report of the Salmon Interactions Working Group (SIWG) was published on 1st May. The SIWG is one of a range of workstreams which, once implemented, will address the current failings in the aquaculture regulatory regime. Further discussions with members in the aquaculture zone are planned shortly to discuss these wider processes.

The Board were informed that Polly Burns starts with Fisheries Management Scotland on the 1st July and a meeting of the Fish Farming Committee has been scheduled in early July.

Discussions are underway to develop alternative projects to support the west coast trusts, whilst refining agreed protocols and standard operating procedures for wild fish monitoring. This is with a view to informing the reformed regulatory system.

Advanced discussions are underway between Fisheries Management Scotland, Atlantic Salmon Trust and Marine Scotland Science to plan the delivery of the West Coast tracking project in 2021.

6.2 Atlantic salmon pressures tool

Some aspects of the delivery of this work have been slightly delayed by COVID-19 and time has been spent in refining the IT elements and undertaking quality control. A near final version will be circulated to contributors shortly.

6.3 SEPA

Alan Wells has been progressing discussion on a number of policy areas with SEPA since the last Board meeting. This included input to the prioritisation process for downstream smolt passage at large impoundments and a response to the Significant Water Management Issues Consultation. Discussions are ongoing to discuss closer working between SEPA and our sector, with a specific focus on enforcement. Fisheries Management Scotland are also contributing to a water scarcity communications group established by SEPA following drought concerns. This has led to proactive communication with all holder of abstraction licences in areas designated as moderate scarcity or significant scarcity. Situation reports are being circulated to members on a weekly basis. We continue to work with members to raise issues of local concern. Most recently, we worked with the River Bladnoch DSFB and Galloway Fisheries Trust to raise issues relating to abstraction at a distillery.

6.4 Seal predation

The Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill was approved last week and the Scottish Government amendments in relation to seal licensing were passed. The provisions of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 which allow licences to be issued for a number of other purposes, including to conserve natural habitats, or to conserve other wild animals, remain.

6.5 Fish health issues

Since the resumption of angling several reports of the red rash/skin condition in salmon have been reported from a number of rivers. This was raised at an early stage with Marine Scotland and SNH. Fisheries Management Scotland are co-ordinating the collection of data from boards and trusts to build a picture of prevalence and severity. It was recognised that there is little prospect of routine sampling by the Fish Health Inspectorate at present due to COVID-19, but sampling kits and guidance are available and members have been informed of this. There is currently no information on the cause of this condition despite the sampling and analysis undertaken last year. Fisheries Management Scotland will remain in close touch on this issue and should new information be forthcoming this will be shared. **ACTION: BD**

6.6 Environmental Information Regulations

Guidance on the Environmental Impact regulations and access to environmental information has been prepared by FishLegal and has now been circulated to members.

7 Staffing

7.1 Staff working arrangements

All staff are working fully from home and have undertaken homeworking self-assessments. The IT systems are functioning well and are facilitating regular communication between staff and effective remote working with minimal disruption. The Board recognised the uncertainty arising from COVID-19 and the impact it may

continue to have, for example in terms of balancing childcare and schooling provision. The Board discussed the current experience of homeworking for the organisation and it was agreed to consider this further in the medium-long term. A paper to consider the financial and staffing pros and cons would be prepared for the Board to consider.

ACTION: AW/BD

7.2 Appraisals

The first stage of the staff appraisal process will be completed by end June, with a view to convening the appraisal and remuneration committee in July to complete the process. **ACTION: MN/DD**

8 AOB

8.1 Vision, core purpose and objectives

Changes to these have been proposed following the meeting to discuss the strategic review process – further adjustments were made following discussion at the meeting and it was agreed to circulate the revised document for further views on the detailed objectives. **ACTION: AW**

8.2 Catches

There was a short discussion about catches since the resumption of local angling. It was noted that catches have been encouraging on several rivers, including the Tweed and Spey. It was recognised that there is limited effort in some areas due to the current travel restrictions in Scotland. Direct counts on the River Awe did not show a positive trend for 2020.

9 Dates of remaining meetings

Board 9 September

AGM 4 November