

Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors – Minutes

20 January 2022

By Videoconference

Present

Richard Sankey (Chairman)
Alison Baker
Roger Brook
Lorraine Hawkins
Alasdair Laing
Peter Landale

Alexa MacAuslan
Jamie Ribbens
Alexander Scott
David Summers
Hugh Younger

In attendance

Alan Wells
Brian Davidson
Charlotte Middleton

1. Apologies for absence and welcome to new directors

No apologies were received. On behalf of the Board, the Chairman welcomed the two new directors, Alexa MacAuslan and Jamie Ribbens to the meeting.

2. Actions arising from the September Board meeting

The majority of actions were discharged or discussed later in the agenda. An action to consider appropriate health and safety training for staff was carried over and this will be progressed in the coming weeks. **ACTION: BD/AW**

3. Forward look – priorities for 2022

The Board had a broad and wide-ranging discussion on a range of important areas which should form the priorities for Fisheries Management Scotland for the year ahead. Many of the issues raised are already being addressed and followed up as part of some structured work areas (for example the Wild Salmon Strategy) and others, such as aquaculture, enforcement, protection of the land and water environment are being tackled through established policy groups and targeted advocacy work with the relevant parts of Scottish Government. In summary, it was agreed that the following areas should form the focus of attention for 2022:

- To push for implementation of the Wild Salmon Strategy and ensuring that it is integrated in other national strategies (e.g. the Biodiversity Strategy);
- To continue to push for delivery of the Salmon Interaction Working Group recommendations, and influence SEPA's approach as the new regulator for sea lice;
- To influence SEPA's regulatory approach to better protect the water environment;
- To explore all avenues for funding to support climate change resilience measures in rivers;

- To influence a range of national planning processes (including Regional Marine Plans and Marine Protected Areas) to ensure that these benefit migratory fish as Priority Marine Features;
- To deliver a co-ordinated strategy to help address impacts of hydro on wild salmon, through a Fisheries Management Scotland Hydro Committee;
- To ensure that predation on wild salmon is considered through the delivery of the Wild Salmon Strategy actions;
- To ensure that the Wild Salmon Strategy delivers on promised action to review penalties for fish poaching and continue to work with Police Scotland and Procurator Fiscals to address fish poaching;
- To improve the flow of information about what Fisheries Management Scotland does, both in terms of high-level national work and work locally through the member network. It was agreed to look at where specific 'campaign' approaches might be appropriate.

ACTION: AW to summarise the priorities discussed in a short paper for the Board.

4. Board directorships

4.1. Vacancy – process for new elected director

In light of the current vacancy for a director, it was agreed to organise a process for inviting nominations from the membership and an election as appropriate. In seeking to fill this position, it was agreed that it is important to ensure that the Board membership:

- is as diverse and inclusive as possible;
- has people with the right skills and experience;
- is representative in terms of geographic balance from the membership, and ensuring no overlap between areas where possible and between the different director categories.

The process will be taken forward as agreed. **ACTION:AW/BD**

The Board also felt that it would be useful to consider how a 'big picture' biodiversity/landscape scale type expertise might be brought into future organisational thinking. If this was to be delivered through the board, it would require changes to the existing company articles - this would be considered further. **ACTION: AW/RS**

4.2. Board composition – planning for retirement and election/appointment of new directors

Linked to the previous discussion, the Board recognised that more thought was required on succession planning, to assess the skills and experience required on the board and plan for when existing directors' terms of office end. Such a process should also consider office bearers, such as the position of chair. It was agreed that a planning document should be developed for further discussion with the Board. **ACTION: AW/BD**

5. Communications

5.1. Annual conference – 31 March 2022

Given the strong focus on salmon at the last few annual conferences, it was felt that it would be timely to try and focus some of the event on other important species, such as sea trout and European eel. The conference could also provide an opportunity to premier the *Our Wild Salmon* film which has just been completed as part of the International Year of the Salmon. This change in emphasis would not preclude a session on the Wild Salmon

Strategy, given the work that is already planned for 2022. The Board were comfortable with this approach, and a draft programme will be developed and shared with the Board in due course. **ACTION: AW/BD**

5.2. Website

The Board were advised that the new website was now live. It has not yet been formally launched however this will take place shortly. The new site is much more comprehensive than the previous site and provides greater information about what Fisheries Management Scotland and members do. The site will be a powerful tool to highlight the range of issues we are addressing and our priorities. It will also be used in tandem with social media to provide a greater insight into specific work areas. The website is aimed at a number of target audiences, and the content has been developed accordingly.

5.3. Film project

The film project, grant funded by NASCO and International Year of the Salmon (IYS) will be completed by the end of January. The pandemic has delayed delivery, however extensions were granted to all IYS projects to accommodate this. The project comprises six films. The main feature - Our Wild Salmon - covers many of the pressures wild salmon face and how Fisheries Management Scotland and members are addressing these. Five individual films will cover a range of topics, including artificial salmon stocking, monitoring, enforcement, habitat and barriers to fish migration. There will also be a series of 'shorts' to assist in promotion of the films across social media and other channels.

6. Staffing

6.1. SFCC

Sean Dugan - AW informed the Board that Sean Dugan, SFCC Manager has been offered a job with Kyle Fisheries and he will leave SFCC in mid-March. The Board recognised the significant contribution that Sean has made to SFCC and Fisheries Management Scotland and wished him well in his new role. The recruitment of a replacement is being discussed with the SFCC Management Committee, with a view to starting the recruitment process as soon as possible. Once the criteria/salary range has been agreed by SFCC, the Board will be informed. **ACTION: AW**

Leanne Munro – AW reported that Leanne Munro has now joined SFCC on secondment from Kyle Fisheries. Leanne will undertake the role of Data Coordinator to support the SFCC Manager and members. The role will focus on compiling online training resources, developing tablet-based field data collection forms and developing data collection protocols.

6.2. Administrative role

The Chairman reminded the Board about the financial support provided by the Missing Salmon Alliance and how this will help Fisheries Management Scotland address the priorities highlighted earlier. More specifically, this will allow the recruitment of part-time administrative support which will help free up more time for priority activity. AW and AB have been exploring the possibility of sharing administrative support between Fisheries Management Scotland and the Forth Rivers Trust, which could be a full-time role between the two organisations. The Board agreed that in principle this would make sense and both AW and AB were asked to share the job specification and take this forward. **ACTION: AW/AB.**

7. Staff updates & current issues

7.1. Wild salmon strategy

AW reported that the strategy had been published and circulated to the membership. As anticipated, the strategy is a high-level document and an implementation plan will provide the detail on how it will be delivered. The strategy recognises the situation facing wild salmon and is ambitious. The priority and challenge will be in ensuring that it is implemented in full. The Board highlighted a number of priorities, including core funding for fisheries management, strategic project funding, specific areas within the salmon legislation, and achieving satisfactory outcomes for policy priorities such as aquaculture, enforcement, predation and renewables. It was agreed that the implementation plan will be critical. An advisory group will oversee this process and AW will keep the Board updated. **ACTION: AW**

7.2. Aquaculture

CM provided an update on a range of areas relating to aquaculture policy with an emphasis on the protection of wild salmonids.

SEPA have published a consultation paper seeking views on proposals for managing interaction between sea lice from aquaculture and wild Atlantic salmon in Scotland. Engagement with the relevant Fisheries Management Scotland members is now underway prior to submitting a response to this consultation. CM highlighted a number of areas that need to be progressed including regulation of existing farms, protection of sea trout and suitable monitoring to assess progress. These issues will be developed further with Fisheries Management Scotland members and highlighted in our consultation response and wider engagement with SEPA.

Monitoring data from both seine netting and fyke nets used last year to assess sea lice infestation pressure on sea trout has been compiled and published on the Fisheries Management Scotland website. Sea lice infestation was a concern in several areas of the West Coast, and this has been highlighted to Marine Scotland and SEPA. CM is organising a meeting to discuss the approach to monitoring in 2022 with SEPA and Marine Scotland.

An overview of environmental management plans (EMPs) for fish farm sites is ongoing and CM is supporting members in end of cycle review meetings as necessary. We continue to engage in the EMP process to ensure that the adaptive management mechanisms are as effective as possible, in advance of the new regulatory system.

Funding for the West Coast Tracking Project – a partnership project between the Atlantic Salmon Trust, Marine Scotland and Fisheries Management Scotland – was confirmed for 2022 at the end of last year. The data is now being analysed and partners are working on an animation to summarise the work so far which will be published over the next couple of months.

7.3. Enforcement

BD has been liaising with the Head of Wildlife and Environmental Crime Unit at the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (COPFS). There is a new team of specialist wildlife crime fiscals in place and it has been agreed that Fisheries Management Scotland will co-ordinate training for the new procurator fiscal team. This will be discussed at the next meeting of the Enforcement Committee in early February. There is also the possibility of

enhancing this approach with some online training resources specifically aimed at COPFS and Police Scotland.

Work will begin next year with Castabroad media to develop short films to support enforcement training. As confirmed at the previous Board meeting, the Forth DSFB have made some funding available to deliver this and IFM Scottish Branch have also now also agreed to support this. A project meeting will be held early in 2022 and a specification, with a proposal to include some Fisheries Management Scotland support, will be shared with the Board. **ACTION: BD**

7.4. SEPA

AW provided an update on engagement with SEPA. Discussions are underway with the Land and Water Team to consider where SEPA will review their processes and approach – initial discussions have focussed on licensing (including engagement with DSFBs and Trusts), water resource management (including drought response, and CAR licence reviews), water quality and barriers to fish migration. Fisheries Management Scotland are regularly contacted by members regarding regulation of impacts on the water environment and AW emphasised the need to document and report local issues. It was recognised that Environmental Standards Scotland (ESS) have an important role to play and there are a number of engagement events planned by ESS to allow the public to find out more about their role. Information on these events have been shared with Fisheries Management Scotland members.

7.5. Projects & funding

BD summarised the grants received/distributed to members during 2021 for delivery of a range of national projects. These grants total nearly £620,000 and covered:

- National electrofishing programme (Marine Scotland/Crown Estate Scotland)
- Aquaculture zone – wild fish monitoring (Marine Scotland/Crown Estate Scotland)
- Adult sampling programme (Marine Scotland)
- Pressure tools for salmon (Marine Scotland)

Given the that the receipt of grants will mean that turnover for 2021-22 will exceed £500k, it was agreed to clarify what implications this may have for audit or other requirements.

ACTION: BD

8. AOB

Nominating an alternate to attend a Board meeting

SS is unable to attend the March meeting and asked whether it is possible to send an alternative representative. It was confirmed that this is possible under the terms of the articles and is subject to the approval of the directors. The directors approved this request. It was agreed that for this and future requests, any alternate representative should be from the same organisation as the director.

Biodiversity – LH asked about progress in relation to the Environment Bill. AW advised that work is underway on developing a biodiversity strategy (and 5-year delivery plan), and that the Scottish Government will aim to introduce a Natural Environment Bill in Year 3 of this Parliament.

Scottish Angling National Development Structure – AB asked for an update on the SANDS project. **ACTION: AW** to provide an update on progress

9. 2022 meetings

24 March

23 June

15 September

AGM 3 November