

SFCC Management Committee Meeting

14th September 2022



Minutes

1. Welcome and apologies for absence

In attendance:

Marcus Walters – Deveron, Bogie & Isla Rivers Charitable Trust (Chair)
Alan Wells – Fisheries Management Scotland
James Hunt – The Tweed Foundation
Joanna Girvan – Forth Rivers Trust
Kjersti Birkland – SEPA
Leanne Munro – Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre/Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust
Rowan McCleary – Galloway Fisheries Trust
Sean Robertson – Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre

Apologies

Antje Branding – Marine Scotland
John Armstrong – Marine Scotland Science

2. Minutes of previous meeting, review of action points and matters arising

2.1. Management Committee 20th May 2022

The majority of actions had been discharged or discussed later in the agenda. The following updates were provided in response to specific actions;

- SEPA's invertebrate database would not be compatible with the SFCC Rapid Invertebrate Protocol. As the protocol is based off the ARMI method, we can explore using the River fly Partnership database.
- Sean had contacted Jo & Rowan in regard to the SVQ. The Team leader SVQ is still current, but the introduction to electrofishing one cannot be reinstated. Going forward, Sean will liaise with the SQA about this.

3. Staff Report from Sean & Leanne

Leanne & Sean both outlined activities since the last SFCC Management Committee meeting in May. Among the main activities were delivery of electrofishing and Freshwater Pearl Mussel training, all of which had positive feedback from attendees.

It was proposed to keep Leanne on until Christmas with the same 2 day a week at SFCC, 3 days a week at the Kyle of Sutherland arrangement. This would provide Sean with support as we move into the Fishery Management Plans Project, and as Sean delivers training courses in the winter. The committee agreed to this proposal.

4. Training

Leanne presented some details on the electrofishing courses run over the summer months; 3 introductory, 2 team leader and 1 team leader refresher courses were run. A total of 56 candidates, through all courses, had passed. We had remarks from the trainers about the very high standard of candidates this year. The return to in-person training was well-received. A meeting with trainers will be scheduled shortly to review and begin planning for next year.

With general costs increasing, it has come up as to whether the fees for SFCC trainers should go up from the base rate of £300 per day. If so, this will have knock on implications for the costs of courses needing to increase in line with this. Sean has corresponded with EF trainers via email and some are happy to do a discounted rate for the SFCC, (as their normal day rate for consulting is much higher) but raising to £350 per day would help to cover costs. Leanne prepared and presented a breakdown of the costs involved for running the EF training.

ACTION: Sean & Leanne to share with committee some options for costing the electrofishing courses.

5. 2023 Biologists Meeting – Venues & Themes

At the last committee meeting there was an action to consider themes and venues for the 2023 biologists conference. Sean has prepared a paper with the costs of possible venues, scoping out some others in addition to Faskally House.

A survey has been sent round the membership, and a hybrid option has been identified as the most popular. However, we are unsure how many people from each trust would utilise the hybrid option instead of attending in-person. Additionally, some other pieces of equipment would be needed to offer a high-quality hybrid meeting. Committee had mixed opinions on this format as the ability to attend online may discourage people from attending in-person, however the increased accessibility was a major benefit. Faskally House was the cheapest option identified, but currently they use 4G for internet, although broadband may be installed by the end of the year.

ACTION: SR to trial use of 4G at Faskally to see if it is possible to use to host a Teams meeting.

6. Electrofishing Database

At the last meeting, there was an action to set out the terms of reference for an electrofishing working group, with a view to deciding whether to set up a new database, integrate with FishObs, or update the current database. Conversations with members since then have identified that most are happy with the current database now that the licensing issue has been resolved. Due to Marine Scotland resources, it is unlikely that integration with FishObs will occur in the short term – this could be a longer term strategic ambition but will not be progressed at this time. Therefore, there is no need to move to a new database and it was proposed to continue using the current one.

One of the main drawbacks with the current database is that it doesn't collect smolt information, which is a major strength of FishObs. JH uses a Microsoft access database for smolt tagging on the Tweed, which he was happy to share with SFCC to see if this is something we could develop for all members.

7. Financial matters

The cashflow report and draft budget for 2023-2024 had been circulated previously. No questions arose.

The FMS board have proposed an increase in salary for the next financial year for all staff members, but this has not yet been formally approved. Once this has been reviewed by the FMS Board, Alan would send a note to the committee with more details on the level of increase and how this may impact next year's budget. A one-off Cost of Living Payment has also been proposed for FMS staff, which would take place in October this year.

ACTION: Alan to liaise with management committee on staff salaries

8. AOB

An update was requested on the Public Sector Geospatial Agreement (PSGA). This is still currently sitting with Marine Scotland. An update will be provided once this has been progressed.

Remaining 2022 meetings:

Wednesday 30th November