

Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors - Minutes

Wednesday 21 June 2023



By Videoconference

Present

Richard Sankey
Jamie Stewart
Roger Brook
Jamie Ribbens
Peter Landale
Alasdair Laing
Alexa MacAuslan
Lorraine Hawkins
Alison Baker
David Summers
Alexander Scott

In attendance

Alan Wells
Brian Davidson
Sean Robertson
Paul Sizeland
Jenny McNeill
Charlotte Middleton

1. Apologies for absence and introductions

No apologies were received.

The Chairman welcomed Paul Sizeland as the new Director for Nature Finance at Fisheries Management Scotland, and Melanie Smith, Trustee of the Skye and Lochalsh Rivers Trust, as a new Board member.

2. Declaration of interests

BD updated the register of interests prior to the meeting with an updated declaration from AB.

3. Actions arising from March Board meeting

All actions from the previous meeting were reported as completed.

4. Membership of FMS Board

The chairman updated the Board on the work of the Nominations Committee. Proposed changes to the FMS constitution will be discussed during the current round of regional members' meetings with a view to formal adoption at the AGM in November.

AW reported that no concerns were raised at the first members' meeting in Inverness. However, some additional ideas were raised, including the addition of a further space on the board for a person beginning their career - this will be given further consideration. **ACTION: Nominations Committee**

It was noted that three places on the current Board will become available at the AGM. The Chairman led a further discussion with the Board regarding prospective Board members, in the light of the skills register developed by the Nominations Committee. **ACTION: ALL**

5. Health and Safety Update

BD gave an update on the recent Health and Safety review. A new Health and Safety manual and associated procedures have been developed following advice from Greens of Haddington and FishLegal – updates have been made to risk assessments for a range of activities, including training delivery, fish farm visits and travel. Discussions on health and safety are scheduled within the staff discussions on a regular basis.

6. Staff Updates

6.1. Saprolegnia

Alan updated the Board on developments, including a proposal to fund a PhD to better understand *Saprolegnia* in wild Atlantic salmon. Following a request to the member network, members have pledged monetary support for this, and MS will support AW in developing the contractual arrangements for the project, including regular reporting on progress. AW will provide an update to the Board once the scale of support had been established. **ACTION: AW**

AW stressed the importance of a collective effort throughout the membership in using the reporting apps to report incidences of fish disease, pink salmon, seals in rivers and farm escapes. AB suggested using other media to press home the importance of vigilance and reporting of the disease. BD agreed to follow this up, with an emphasis on FishPal and some of the angling press. **ACTION: BD**

6.2. Water Scarcity

AW provided an update on water scarcity, and ongoing communications through the Water Scarcity Communications Group which includes SEPA, Scottish Water, NFUS, Scottish Whisky Association, Farm Advisory Service and Scottish Government. AW highlighted the severity of the current water scarcity situation, and a meeting was held on 21st June with SEPA to discuss how the sector can contribute to gathering evidence of impacts and support SEPA in ensuring compliance is met.

AW will meet with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition in late June, where water scarcity will be discussed as part of the agenda.

6.3. Wild Salmon Strategy

AW updated the Board on the progress of the Wild Salmon Strategy (WSS). A further meeting of the WSS Delivery Group has been held since the last board meeting and a Science Advisory Board has now been established. The delivery group meeting focussed on SEPA's approach to barriers, and Fisheries Management Scotland have provided suggestions for a mechanism for greater engagement with DSFBs and Trusts.

The Science Advisory Board, which includes AW, LH, MS, and DS, discussed early priorities, including finalising the Scottish Government's Stocking policy, engagement on the sea lice risk assessment framework, as well as the provision of advice on critical water temperature for angling. The next meeting of the Delivery Group is in July, and will include the workplan and communication plan for the group.

6.4. Nature Finance

PS gave an overview of the first few weeks in his role as Director for Nature Finance, where he has coordinated a response to Scottish Forestry on the Forestry Scheme Grant as well as working closely with AW and NatureScot to submit a bid to the Facility for Investment Ready Scotland, with a view to creating a fund to support catchment-scale restoration in Scotland.

PS will lead the development of a strategic approach to attract green finance in the sector, to build on current emergent models, with the view of creating opportunities and developing an effective network of experts and contacts to take this forward.

6.5. Hydro Committee

AW updated the Board on the recent meeting of the Fisheries Management Hydro Committee, which has been going through the process of identifying and prioritising issues according to impacts on wild fish. This is with a view to engaging with SEPA, with regard to their hydro review, and SSE and other operators in terms of their wider responsibilities. The prioritisation process will be completed in the next few weeks, with a view to engagement with SEPA later in the summer, once the water scarcity situation has eased.

6.6. Aquaculture

CM updated the Board on developments regarding SEPAs most recent consultation on the sea lice risk assessment framework, which is expected to be implemented by the end of the year. Engagement with SEPA, on behalf of members, will continue through workshops and one to one meetings to highlight concerns, and we will liaise with members to inform our formal consultation response.

CM has been working on developing an overview of current planning applications for finfish aquaculture developments. This will be monitored on an ongoing basis and any relevant updates will be shared with members. Farmed fish sea lice data is collated and circulated on a regular basis to Fish Farming Committee members, which is taken from Scotland's Aquaculture website.

CM continues to support members engaging in the process of Environmental Management Plans. Despite extensive engagement with the Highland Council and Marine Scotland as well as efforts of local Boards and Trust, monitoring in certain areas is still low, and insufficient EMPs are being proposed. CM will continue to push for action on these issues, which include inadequate monitoring of fish escapes, with a view to improving the monitoring and recording processes.

AW recently attended a meeting of the Salmon Aquaculture Council, which was focussed on a report by the Scottish Science Advisory Council on the use of science and evidence in aquaculture consenting, and the sustainable development of Scottish aquaculture. A meeting is scheduled with the Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero and Just Transition in late June where the sea lice risk assessment framework and aquaculture will be discussed as part of the agenda.

6.7. SFCC

SR provided an update on the activities of the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre, including ongoing projects and training. The Fisheries Management Plan project, which supported members to produce 44 plans, was finalised at the end of March. A national dashboard of management actions was produced as part of this process. An application for £150,000 has been submitted to Marine Fund Scotland to support phase 2 of the plan, which will review some outputs from phase 1, as well as adding more contextual information.

SR has also been working with NatureScot and the Working with Rivers scheme to provide training for interns and the SFCC membership. Training over the past few months has included River Invertebrate Surveying and Freshwater Pearl Mussel Surveys. Scheduled courses include a GIS course and seven courses in Electrofishing. The drone user group has proved to be useful for sharing knowledge and experience, and the option of an in-person workshop is currently being explored.

SR has also provided technical support to the Environmental Agency and Natural Resources Wales in utilising the Pink Salmon recording app, as well as exploring funding opportunities for partnering with the Rivers Trust on topics such as recording riparian tree planting.

6.8. Pink salmon

BD gave an update on priorities of the Pink Salmon Task Group ahead of the anticipated return of Pink salmon in Scotland this summer. The Group are focussed on management and surveillance, and BD has been leading on securing national licences to support efforts within the membership in capturing these fish. Proposals for traps in the River Thurso and Oykel are part of this consideration, and the licensing process is almost complete. A funding application has been made to Marine Fund Scotland to support eDNA sampling to improve surveillance and to support the Thurso trap project. The value of this funding bid is £124,000.

7. Financial reports

The latest financial reports were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting and no comments were raised.

8. AOB

AB asked whether FMS insurance policies include professional indemnity cover – BD confirmed that it does.

2023 meetings 13 September, 30 November (AGM)