

Fisheries Management Scotland

Meeting of Directors - Minutes

Wednesday 27 March 2024



Aviemore

Present

Richard Sankey
Jamie Stewart
Alasdair Laing
Peter Landale
Alexa MacAuslan
Richard Miller
Lorraine Hawkins
Claire Mercer Nairne
Jamie Ribbens
Alexander Scott

Robert Younger

In attendance

Alan Wells
Brian Davidson
Jenny McNeill
Paul Sizeland
Sean Robertson
Leah Reinfranck
Helen Feenan

1. Apologies for absence and welcome

Apologies were received from Melanie Smith.

The Chairman welcomed Claire Mercer Nairne, of the Tay District Salmon Fishery Board, who was formally appointed to the Board at the meeting. CMN provided a brief introduction on her background and is very much looking forward to working with the Board.

2. Appointment of Board members

RS gave an update on the vacancy on the Board position for an early career director. A call for nominations was made prior to the Board meeting and two nominations were received. Following discussion on the nominations, it was agreed that Guy Harris, of the Findhorn Nairn and Lossie Rivers Trust, should be appointed to the Board. BD would get in touch with Guy to take forward his appointment with Companies House, and to follow up on the standard governance matters relating to appointment of Board members. **ACTION: BD**

3. Declaration of interests

The register of interest was circulated prior to the meeting – CMN has submitted her declaration, and this had now been added to the register of interests.

4. Actions arising from January Board meeting (see appendix)

All actions from the previous board meeting were reported as complete or in progress.

BD gave an overview of a new FMS SharePoint site which has been set up to create a single 'hub' bringing together a range of resources in one place to support members. This will contain the member network skills resource, as well as a broad range of other resources, including health and safety, good governance, HR and training.

5. Recruitment update

Following interviews held in late March, AW provided an update on recruitment for a Wild Salmon Conservation Manager to join FMS, following a successful funding bid to support the new role. The successful applicant will join FMS in mid-April and will be leading on policy and advocacy work relating to wild salmon conservation.

6. Health and Safety Update

BD provided an update in terms of Health and Safety and reported that there have been no issues raised since the last meeting of Directors. Training needs are under review, with staff due to participate in related courses in the coming months.

7. Staff Updates

Before inviting the team to provide staff updates, RS emphasised the need for the Board to provide feedback to staff where it is required, for example in relation to draft policy position statements, such as responses to consultations etc. This is particularly important where FMS is advocating for change to policy.

7.1. Update on current funding and projects:

- **Marine Fund Scotland**

AW provided an update on the four Marine Fund Scotland projects and the NEPS 2023 project and confirmed that all projects and claims have now been successfully completed and reporting requirements finalised.

AW highlighted the intention of FMS to scope further funding from Marine Fund Scotland in the future, with discussions to explore the potential for future funding to be secured in advance of spend, to assist with managing cash flow.

JR congratulated the FMS team on the management of the projects and cashflow throughout the duration of the projects, particularly given the cashflow management and logistics of delivering these projects.

- **Nature Finance**

PS updated the Board on the FIRNS project, "Developing a Source to Sea Nature Finance Model", which completed at the end of March, following a final workshop with key stakeholders earlier in the month. The Steering Group will consider the recommendations made by the consultants Finance Earth at the next meeting, to evolve the current Scottish Marine Environment Enhancement Fund (SMEEF) funding model to develop the river catchment element, either as part of the SMEEF financing mechanism or as a separate or twinned fund.

A further application to the FIRNS programme has been submitted to support work with our members and linking in to the recently completed fishery management planning project. The result of the second FIRNS bid is expected in early April.

- **National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland**

AW provided an update on the NEPS project, with the majority of payments having now been made to members, following the successful delivery of the project in 2023. It was confirmed that the project will not be funded for 2024, however discussions are

underway with officials regarding the situation for 2025. The outcome of these discussions will be reported when a decision has been made. AM emphasised that early decision making on NEPS funding is essential to allow work programmes to be planned in good time. AW committed to emphasise this point during discussion with officials.

ACTION: AW

7.2. Wild Salmon Strategy

AW provided an update on the Wild Salmon Strategy. The Scottish Government published a progress report on the Implementation Plan in March 2024. The report provides a short update on the delivery of those actions within the plan which have progressed in 2023/24 and highlights the role that DSFBs and Rivers and Fisheries Trusts play in delivery of the plan priorities. It also highlights the role that FMS have played in leading on a number of key projects and workstreams.

AW chaired the first meeting of a working group established to progress thinking on a broad review of the current policy framework, including new ways to better support and resource local management.

AW gave an update on the Science Advisory Board, which is progressing work to assess the potential for the stocking policy to facilitate stocking of salmon into marginal populations in Scotland. This has involved the consideration of a number of technical options and associated risks.

CMN expressed concern about regulatory inaction on a number of areas in relation to the water environment, including issues associated with fish passage and barriers to migration. The Board understood these concerns, and these have been highlighted previously and will continue to be pressed with SEPA, within the context of the Wild Salmon Strategy and SEPA's own objectives for barrier removal. **ACTION: AW**

7.3. Aquaculture Interactions

HF provided an overview on her approach to understanding the objectives of her role and how best to move priority areas forward. HF highlighted three areas for focus:

- **Implementation of the SEPA sea lice framework**

HF provided an update on the framework's current status and fed back new information on SEPA's plans for its monitoring programme. HF highlighted that there were still some areas in progress and that FMS will aim to ensure that the FMS membership is engaged as this develops.

- **Improve common understanding**

HF highlighted that misunderstandings can commonly lead to the breakdown in relations and that it was clear more work was needed to address this. HF plans to create a series of educational topic sheets to improve understanding between both sectors.

- **Develop skills and knowledge in fish health**

HF picked up on a desire to learn more about fish health across the FMS membership and plans to address this by collaborating with fish health professionals from the aquaculture sector to deliver an introductory workshop later this year.

7.4. SFCC

SR updated the Board on recent SFCC activities, including two of the Marine Fund Scotland projects (procurement of electrofishing equipment and fishery management planning). On the latter project, significant in-person support for members has been provided.

The SFCC Biologist's Conference was held in Faskally in early February, using a hybrid format allowing speakers from the USA and Canada to present at the conference. The event was well-attended from SFCC members, Scottish Government, SEPA and Marine Directorate.

SFCC has taken on an intern from the University of Aberdeen for 7 weeks, as part of the "ABDN" Internship scheme, which is funded by the University. There were over 70 applications for this internship from students across a variety of courses from zoology to geography and data science. Abigail Kennedy has been supporting Sean to develop a habitat recording tool and associated dashboard, which will be sent to members for comment. They will also be looking to develop an invertebrate recording tool to accompany the introductory training that SFCC deliver with Buglife Scotland.

JR commented that the fishery management planning project was a huge step forward, with RS passing on thanks from Kyle DSFB for SFCC support given in the process of creating the plans.

8. Financial reports

The latest financial reports were circulated to the Board prior to the meeting. RS commented that FMS cash flow is in a strong position going into the new financial year.

9. AOB

None.

10. Staff salaries review 2024

The staff left the room whilst the Board considered the proposals for staff remuneration in private. The outcome would be reported to staff in due course. **ACTION: CHAIR**

2024 meetings 21 June, 20 September, AGM TBC