

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
Wednesday 8th November 2022
Loch Fyne Hotel
TIME: 10.30am
Minutes

Attendance: Jane Wright (JW, Chairperson), Tim King (TK, Treasurer), Alasdair Reynolds (AR, Director), Alan Kettle White (Director, AKW), Roger Brook (RB, Director), Robert Younger (RY, Director), David Stewart (DS, Director), Jonathan Brown (JB, Director), Caroline Fleming (via Teams, CF), Alyssa Stewart (AS, Secretary), Graeme Anderson (GA), Tuggy Delap (TD, Director), Hugh Nicol (HN, Director), Lucy Abel Smith (via Teams, LAS), Rebecca Smith (RS, Forestry and Land), Finbarr Rose (FR, Forestry and Land), Callum Strong (CS, Forestry and Land), (DM, Duncan MacGillivray, Dunoon & District Angling Club), Bill Rankin (BR, Dunoon & District Angling Club), Andrew Barker (AB)

Apologies: Jamie Gibbs, Stephen Austin, Gordon Stephens, Ian Tegner

INTRODUCTION FROM THE CHAIR

Jane Wright welcomed the attendees both in person and on Teams.

JW explained that on Andrew Barker's resignation last year, she had agreed to chair the Trust for a year or so on the understanding that AR would take on the position having thoroughly familiarized himself with the Trust's workings. In the intervening period, Alasdair has been at the forefront of updating the Trust's governance documents. He had done an excellent job and has now agreed to accept the position of Chair.

Over the years since 1998, JW has served as Chair, Trustee and Board member and she felt now is the time for someone younger with fresh ideas to take over.

A detailed Chair's report is included in the accounts; however, it is important to acknowledge that due to the increased number of staff, the Trust has done more work than ever before. This includes some outstanding achievements including: learning and applying new acoustic tagging techniques in partnership with AST & FMS for the West Coast Salmon Tracking project; tracking smolts at the barrage to interrogate their ability to navigate the Awe barrage; long term sea trout lice surveys which have been extended to cover Loch Creran and Loch Na Keal on Mull. Habitat restoration started last year on the revetments at the Goil and has been extended to the Rivers Ruel, Eachaig. A programme of re-meandering has commenced on the Dalvuie Burn. A new and exciting relationship with Riverwoods is in the pipeline which has huge potential.

AFT's usual role is in an advisory capacity to ADSFB (the Statutory Body), on consultations. Along with the ADSFB, on this occasion, AFT submitted its own objection to the Loch Long fish farm proposal. The farm application has been refused; however, it is anticipated that this will be appealed.

The Sea Trout lice survey data, collected over many years by several Trusts has at last pushed the Government to act. JW ruefully pointed out that RB, JW and AKW have been trying to persuade Government to appoint an agency responsible for sea lice emissions from salmon farms underpinned by a legal framework for over 20 years!

JW thanked AKW for his dedication and hard work. She also thanked AS for her excellent management of the office and commitment to AFT and GA for his hard work in supporting Alan.

RB was thanked for all his time and effort whilst working on the Salmon Interactions Working Group.

TK was thanked for his hard work and excellent financial presentations as Treasurer and JW also thanked all those that have supported AFT over the years.

All in all, JW is confident that there is an excellent team in place, and an exciting time ahead.

ELECTION/ RE-ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

Current Directors were confirmed:

Roger Brook
David Stewart
Tom Turnbull
Jane Wright
Tuggy Delap
Robert Younger
Hugh Nicol
Johnny Brown
Mark Smith
Tim King
Alasdair Reynolds

The following directors retire by rota and have agreed to stand for re-election.

Robert Younger

Tuggy Delap
Hugh Nicol
David Stewart

Proposed and seconded unanimously.

There are two Director spaces if anyone is interested in this position.

ELECTION OF NEW CHAIRPERSON

JW vacated the Chair and asked for the Directors' agreement for AR to replace her. This was unanimously agreed.

JW will remain on the Executive Committee as Vice Chair.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

2021 AGM

The minutes were approved by TD and seconded by JB.

No matters arising.

EXECUTIVE MEETING

The minutes were circulated prior to the AGM for the interest of those not at the Executive meeting.

MATTERS ARISING

DS was pleased to see that Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) were well represented at the AGM and enquired as to what position Stuart Findlay holds. He is the West Region Assistant Delivery Manager for Lochaber, which overlaps with North Argyll including the R. Creran catchment.

Callum Strong is the Regional Environment Manager for FLS Northwest.

AKW had attended an informal meeting with other biologists to discuss the lack of resources relating to monitoring sea trout and sea lice burdens looking ahead toward adoption of the new regulatory SEPA process. The West Coast Trusts have a lack of staff to work on these projects; housing is also an issue for the recruitment of staff.

RB stated that these issues have been raised with FMS; an online chat will be arranged with AKW, Alan Wells and Charlotte Middleton, looking at the problem on a national basis. It may need some cross-boundary (including other Trusts) support.

DS asked about the publicising of Marine Scotland data, RB explained that Marine Scotland are empowered to publish their data. RB receives a weekly update from FMS, which could be circulated to anyone who is interested.

Approval of minutes was proposed by JB and seconded by DS.

DRAFT ACCOUNTS 2021/22

The accounts were circulated prior to the meeting.

The financial year had been better than expected. The results are showing a surplus of £23,530 compared to £56,625 in the previous year. TK noted that the Trust received over £33,000 in COVID funding last year and £12.2k from FMS for a cancelled project; this income had no related costs. Excluding these funds, the results are comparable.

Included in the income is £50k for 3 different projects that had not been budgeted for: The Awe Catchment Plan, FMS NEPs Project and the Dalvuie Burn. The FMS project returned a surplus of over £5k and £27.2k of funds unspent on the other 2 was carried forward to next year.

TK explained that project surplus funds had been released into general funds, which is as it should be.

The accounts were approved by JB and seconded by DS.

FORECAST FINANCIAL POSITION 2022/23

TK presented the financial report for FY23 which will be circulated with the minutes.

TK commented that budgeting was more realistically optimistic than previously, which helps to ensure good executive decisions are made.

AKW will produce reports and invoices through to the back end of the year, when the cash will start to come in.

Based on extra work required to support Environmental Management Plans(EMPs) and having been agreed in principle by the Executive Committee, the recruitment of a

replacement staff member will be progressed. Affordability will be reviewed early in the new year and won't be finalised until next year's budget is produced.

The Wild Salmonid Support Fund has been a significant contract; however, funds have been stopped. This will have an impact on AFT, however as much of the work was carried out for us by sub-contractors, the impact should be less than anticipated.

The Board has agreed that 3 months of operating reserves will be moved into an interest paying account. Ultimately FY23 is looking to be another good year.

AR thanked TK.

STAFFING

Piran Craigo left by agreement in October, and as noted above, it was agreed that a new biologist will be recruited.

It is envisaged that the volume of work will increase, and financial projections support the recruitment of a new biologist, however this will be reviewed at the next Executive meeting.

JB is concerned that with AKW's heavy workload, he may feel that he is unable to take his annual leave and it is important that he should do so.

AOB

No other business.

AR thanked JW for her hard work, and expertly steering the Board.

At this point AR handed over to RB to chair THE ADSFB BOARD MEETING

AKW presented the Biologists report which will be circulated with the minutes.

West Coast Salmon Tracking Project

This is the second year of the project, the WCSTP identifies inshore marine migration routes of salmon smolts. The 2021 project tracked the smolts migrating from the Etive and Awe took two routes around the West and Sound of Mull, then seemed to spread out more widely.

There is a current that flows past Ireland to the North of Scotland, which seems to be where the fish are heading to 'speed' up their migration.

The map shows other fish migrating from areas such as the Clyde.

It will be interesting to know what happens to the fish from Loch Fyne, Arran, and Kintyre, and whether they migrate West.

RB suggested that if there was data to confirm that the fish from the Loch Fyne migrate west, there would need to be a focus on Clyde fish farm consultations. AKW stated that this year they changed the arrays, so there is a higher intensity of receivers picking up signals from the smolts, there will be more information from the Sound of Mull and Isle of Mull where there is a lot of aquaculture development.

The Awe, Orchy and Loch Linnhe fish seem to go to The Minch.

The data also provides data on how long the fish stay in an area and their likelihood of picking up a lice burden.

JW asked if there were any heads up on the marine renewables and where the projects will be. This is available online on the Scottish Government website, there is a lot of our coast, and have their negative and positives.

The WCSTP report will be updated and published by Atlantic Salmon Trust at Glasgow University around December/January.

HN asked for AK's opinion on the creating of Islands. This is mixed, we need renewables for climate change and the rising temperature of water, creating more habitat for other fish adding to marine life is fine, overall tackling climate change is positive, there may be some pinch points.

River Awe Downstream Fish Migration

Identifies issues in relation to hydroelectric generation and is of national importance to demonstrate better ways of operating dams effectively.

Smolts are not the only concern, there are eels and ferox trout in the Awe. SSE and SEPA have to be convinced, as SSE fund the projects, if the barrage was operated effectively there would be more smolts in the Awe.

It is very much a pilot study, RY asked if SEPA understand the importance of the passage of fish during migration. AKW added that the situation has been exacerbated the last few years with drier springs where the fish were 'mulling' around for 7 days.

There is a major hydro scheme at Loch Awe, HN asked if, because of the hydro schemes, would it be worth taking this barrage away considering that there are other schemes planned. AKW explained that the government schemes should have a no net loss, there is a reliance on the old school hydro schemes, as it stands there is very little 'wiggle' room.

Government is pushing ahead with windfarms and solar power; the hydro schemes will be a reserve power source. They won't run it according to the seasons but there is a change in the way hydro schemes are seen, using storage of water as a power back up.

Habitat Improvement – River Gail

This is a 5-year project, it will not last forever but will give time for the bank to regenerate and recover.

Techniques have improved with the use of a digger and dumper to avoid volunteer burnout, and this year they achieved regenerating 150m with a handful of people.

Forestry and Land Scotland were thanked for providing the brush which was desperately needed.

Thanks was given to the volunteers from the Loch Goil Community Trust and the funding from The Lomond and Trossachs National Park.

River Ruel- Habitat Improvement

AB has been working on this habitat work with the Trust, which is probably more impacted than the Goil.

Funders were thanked and include the Wild Salmonid Support Fund, River Ruel Improvement Association, SSE and Cruach Wind Farm Trust.

A lot of work has been done higher in the catchment and now concentrating on further down the stream. There is a lot of material ending up in the river.

Brush has been used and willow is there to enable the bank to resprout with new willow.

River Eachaig- Habitat Improvement

The Eachaig has a severely eroded bank due to the failure of a rock revetment.

Funders were thanked.

The costs of reinstating the bank is huge, the Wild Salmonid Fund was thanked.

AFT will be returning this winter to plant willow. The work completed will prevent further erosion and offer adult fish refuge.

Invasive plants are rife in Cowal.

Dalvuie Burn – Habitat Improvement

Although it is not a big burn, it is an important stream for spawning sea trout.

The reconfigured condition will be monitored ongoing.

Riverwoods – Habitat Improvement

Really important piece of work showing water changes in temperature, tackling land that has been grazed for too long and as a result has no shade.

BY asked if beavers become prevalent, will that impact planting. AKW stated that there would have to be a really high number of beavers, if you look at Norway there has not been any big impact from beaver, deer are more of a concern in Argyll.

AFT can't afford to stop this type of work, in 40-50 years there may be no salmon.

RC stated that there is a focus on more work up-stream, however land in Scotland is often leased for 40-50 years, gaining access can be challenging if tenants are reluctant.

It's a case of 'wait and see' to what happens with incentives.

TK added that Loch Goil Trust are working with Riverwoods and landowners to investigate projects ahead of incentives.

The Rain Forest grant should help, managing the deer and pigs is a problem.

There is a lower density of young fish in those areas, the productivity of the habitats, mature broadleaf and leaf litter would result in a larger number of insects, resulting in more invertebrates, which is all food for fish.

These projects need to be embraced.

There was a worthwhile television programme on this week, Riverwoods: Scotland, The Big Picture.

<https://www.scotlandbigpicture.com/riverwoods>

Commercial Contract

A big part of the Trusts contracts is tied up with aquaculture through EMP's.

Thanks was given to AKW. RB added that the work AKW used to do was to help us fish the rivers, now the work is to help the fish in the rivers.

DISCUSSION AND UPDATE ON AQUACULTURE

AKW presented the Biologists report which will be circulated with the minutes.

Loch Long Salmon Farm

The Loch Long Salmon Farm semi-contained fish farm application was rejected last week, those in attendance were impressed by work the Loch Lomond National Park had done.

Arguments discussed were:

The risk of smaller escapes.

Sea Lice was not part of the arguments.

Scenery was the big killer, that really hit home.

Decision making body was the Board of the National Park and was not a political decision.

The Community Councils were split in their notion of for or against.

This may go to appeal with the Scottish Government, as this has been a big expenditure for the fish farmer.

AB asked the views on the semi closed containment, RB explained that the technology is interesting and worthwhile but is not going to be used widely across Scotland. It is not possible to convert existing farms.

The footprint is larger than a 'normal' fish farm.

Dawnfresh went bankrupt and are putting the farms and farm sites up for sale as rainbow trout farms. Loch Etive is unsuitable for salmon farming.

The Upper Clyde is not in the aquaculture zone, and once one farm is there it will be harder to stop others.

RY is going to find out if the options are time limited.

EMPS's came into force 2-3 years ago, whereby AFT monitor the impact of the farm on the surrounding area and its environment. Following the work done by the Salmon Interactions Group, SEPA will take over the role for the planning consent, approving and monitoring and would be

responsible for the work they are doing on the EMP's. RB stated that we need to not only be in position to do the monitoring but also show competence in doing the EMP's.

WSSF funding is under question, which wouldn't necessarily affect the profitability of the Trust but may affect the habitat projects. Smaller rivers do not generate enough income to fund habitat improvement.

TK asked if contracted EMP's run into next year. AKW explained that it is not a multiyear contract however AKW does not anticipate that MOWI will go to the third party.

Aquaculture death reports has increased due to climate change, and poor health of the fish.

DS asked why Loch Creran is being closed down for two years, AKW stated that this may be due to a bacterial load, but he has not heard anything officially.

AK presented a report on aquaculture which will be circulated with the minutes.

Loch Etive

Some data is missing for the sea lice counts as the fish lice numbers are so bad, the farms don't touch these fish. Sampling is not all year round, the red line on the chart indicated what the fish farmers should be aiming for.

Dunstaffnage

2022 is reasonable, but this is the first year of production.

Loch Creran

There is a new EMP, haven't been there since 2010.

Lice related mortality is when they are coming back to the river to rid of the lice, which has an impact on reproduction. There are variables that we can't say why all the fish have died.

Firth of Lorn

Crossover of lice from other farms, which could be affecting Dunstaffnage and the sea lice burdens.

Not a great result for smolts.

Sound of Shuna

Trialing fyke net as a siene net is not suitable for this area. The fish go in and can't get out, 2nd year of use, better results this year with it whereby 133 trout were sampled.

Loch Fyne

Really low numbers of fish, which may be because they are behaving normally, not coming back to relieve themselves of lice. AKW expected that numbers will increase next year when it's the second year of farming.

Loch Riddon

Significant challenge this year. The red bars indicate a large number of fish returning to get rid of the lice.

Carradale

No challenge for the fish this year, although it was the first year of production.

Firth of Clyde

Difficult to say what the relationship was however the numbers may relate to the Ardyne.