

## **Minutes of the Argyll Fisheries Trust AGM**

**At 1pm on Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> November 2018**

### Attendees:

Andrew Barker (AFT Chair)- AB  
Alan Kettle White (AFT Senior Biologist) -AKW  
Alyssa Stewart (AFT/ADSFB Admin)- (AS)  
Roger Brook (AFT Director/ADSFB Chair)- RB  
Bob Younger (Clerk/AFT Director) - BY  
Jonathan Brown (AFT Director)- JB  
Hugh Whittle (AFT Director) - HW  
Fiona McLeod (FM)  
Stephen Austin (SA)  
Richard McKenzie (RM)  
David Stewart (DS)  
Tom Turnbull (TT)  
Jamie Mellor (JM)  
Rosie Campbell Preston (RCP)  
Tim King (TK)  
Jane Wright (JW)

### Apologies:

Tony Huntington  
Tom Turnbull  
Jim Frame  
Ian Tegner  
Maja Pepper

### **Introduction from the Chair**

AB thanked everyone for coming.

### **Apologies**

As noted above. Ian Tegners apologies were not noted for the last AGM.

### **Minutes of 2017 AGM**

The minutes were approved by Johnny Brown and seconded by Tom Turnbull.

AB asked if there had been any feedback from Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organisation which was discussed last year. There had been no updates.

AB questioned if RB had any developments on the Crown Estates transfer of responsibilities to Scotland. RB is not sure if that has happened and what the impact would be.

The Directors Meeting Minutes from July 2018 were discussed. The Trust has received money from ADRIA and not all the work has been completed. AKW explained that there have been discussions between the Trust and ADRIA and he had hoped to complete a large habitat project for the Lower River Orchy to counter the eroding banks and its decline in Juvenile Fish. This was difficult to co-ordinate due to other project partners and therefore AKW is looking into alternative smaller-scale projects that can be completed in winter. This would bring the AFT work up-to-date more quickly. One option is to re-visit an ongoing River Awe project which would review baseline habitat data after recent floods. This will be discussed with ADRIA at their meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> November and SSE in December.

### **DIRECTORS RE-ELECTION/ELECTION**

AB asked for the following to be agreed.

Mark Smith and Johnny Brown were co-opted directors and will join the Board of Directors. Tim King will also be joining the Board of Directors. Jane Wright is due to retire and is prepared to be re-elected. All agreed. David Stewart proposed, and Tuggy Delap seconded.

### **STAFFING**

AB explained that staffing has been difficult for the last 12 months or so. MP, who could not attend the meeting today, is still contracted to work 12 hours per week. Due to unforeseen circumstances MP will be leaving the AFT by the end of November, if not earlier.

At the Executive Meeting it was discussed and agreed that AKW would continue as Senior Biologist. AS will manage the daily office management for the Trust and will join as an employee of the Trust from a date to be agreed and on a remuneration package to reflect the estimated amount of time she will be working on Trust affairs. Extra temporary fieldwork help may be needed, AKW is confident that he can use temporary staff to complete field work in 2018. MP will work for the Trust as an independent contractor and continue projects that she has started and look for potential new work. This is fluid and may change but is the plan for the immediate future.

### **ACCOUNTS FOR 2017/18**

AKW presented the accounts;

Total Income: £107453

Total Expenditure: £99079

Surplus: £8374

Cash in bank: £56500

AKW explained the Trust Income and Expenditure account summary.

Income; Some planned projects didn't come to fruition and the Fisheries income went down slightly, however there was more contract work undertaken than planned which made-up some of the shortfall. Awe catchment money was carried over from last year to this year.

The Trust will not receive as much funding for Sea Trout Netting this year, 2018/19 as funding was reduced and AFT did not prepare the project report last year.

Expenditure; Wages were lower than budgeted due to MP going on maternity and returning part time. AKW has sourced field work at reasonable cost for hourly paid staff. Motor Expenses were less than forecast (but may be higher in 2018/19 due to mechanical issues].

Statement of Financial Activity.

For 2017/18 there was a surplus of £8300 compared to a deficit of £ 30,000 in 2016/17. Cash flow is currently okay but requires monitoring to maintain the guideline 3-month operating expenses. Currently there is £56,500 available in AFT account which is more than 3-month expenses.

The accounts were approved by Jane Wright, seconded by Tom Turnbull.

AKW outlined the forecast for 2018/19. The income was originally forecast at £108,000, and it was thought that the total cost of resources could potentially reach £97000 depending on staffing levels. The projects element of the income is dependent on National projects run by Marine Scotland Science and the potential to develop aquaculture monitoring projects (EMPs) but this has been very slow in terms of negotiating EMP's. Outgoing wages are lower in 2018 than forecast and there are a couple of new contracts that were not in the forecast which are yet to be completed. Taking all things into account, it is currently forecast that 2018/19 should approximately break-even.

AB stated that the Executive Committee will monitor the figures regularly. AB thanked AKW for his hard work, as did all of those at the meeting. AKW thanked them for their support.

**A.O.B**

None.

## **Biologists Report**

AKW gave a presentation of changes in fishery management including Salmon Conservation Limits and the activities of the trust in 2018 which include:

### **Argyll Salmon and Grilse**

The River Awe fish counter recorded lowest count of 480 fish in 2017 but appeared to be higher in 2018 which could reach 1100 fish counted. Some discrepancies are likely due to SSE counter being broken for 2 weeks and no camera in action. The 2017 Catch of salmon is mostly multi-sea winter salmon.

### **Argyll Sea Trout**

Most of the reported catch of sea trout came from the Rivers Eachaig (Cowal) and Laggan (Islay). Generally, sea trout catches would appear to be lower than average in 2018.

### **Conservation Limits 2019**

The river grades have been released for 2019. MSS use counter data, egg deposition, size of catchment and sex ratio. AFT committed resources to provide electrofishing data in 2018 to improve the information used in grading our rivers in future. Argyll has one river at grade 1, 3 at grade 2 [all on the islands] and 23 rivers (all on the mainland) at grade 3, which means that all salmon caught in 2019 in these rivers must be released.

### **Tagging of smolts**

AKW reported on the MSS smolt tagging project. He explained that this will be an important tool which will show the survival rate of smolts at sea. MSS have tagged more than 2000 smolts per year 2016/17 but conditions were more difficulty in 2018 so fewer (no. Yet to be confirmed) were tagged. Adult returns of tagged fish are detected at the Awe barrage fish pass.

### **Sea trout/Sea lice Surveys 2018**

Sea lice surveys were carried out in May and June. Lot of fish caught in Loch Fyne and Carradale, Loch Etive but struggled to catch fish in Loch Ridden. Lice counts were relatively low this year with the exception of Loch Ridden which had an average of 15 lice per fish.

### **MSS Freshwater Assessment**

After consultation with Fisheries Trusts, MSS agreed to look at freshwater production to inform Salmon Conservation Limit regulations. Each Trust area was given 30 random sites to survey in 2018. It is a comprehensive project but time consuming as the biologists do not know the sites and protocols are rigid in ensuring the right location and methodology is used. The work is complete, but the costs may not be fully recovered (to be assessed).

### **Juvenile Surveys**

The Juvenile fish survey programme was affected by the weather in 2018. Surveys were completed on the Eachaig, Awe and Orchy catchments.

### **Farm x wild project**

MSS are looking at potential cross breeding between wild and farmed escapee fish, particularly near freshwater hatcheries producing salmon smolts. AFT has sampled salmon populations in 10 rivers in Argyll in 2018.

### **Freshwater Habitat 2018**

AKW spoke of projects carried out to provide shelter for the fish on the River Ruel which was completed in June 2018. The work was funded by SSE and Ruel RIA. The work used large woody debris secured to banks to improve cover for fish and green revetment to counteract excessive erosion of banks which are the result of land management. This work is aimed at increasing the number of smolts going to sea.

Water temperature is being monitored by two projects; a national project run by MSS on rivers across Scotland including the River Add and Carradale Water. An AFT project supported by ADRIA is looking at the relationship between land management and stream temperatures in the Awe catchment which is now in its third year. The results for 2018 will be interesting after the long spell of warmer weather in the early summer.

AFT followed-up on the recovery of the fish population in a tributary of the River Orchy where the removal of a weir in 2016 has allowed fish to spawn upstream. The survey found high densities of juvenile trout upstream of the weir site suggesting the project has been successful.

### **Nutrient Project**

AKW is working with other Biologists in the development of a project to replace the loss of nutrients imported into streams by spawning salmon in the form of eggs and carcasses (after spawning). The project is aimed at increasing the availability of food in the form of invertebrates for juvenile fish in nutrient-poor catchments. The carcass replacement project will use fish feed pellets to raise nutrient and food levels in selected sites which will be compared with other non-treated sites in 2019.

### **Aquaculture discussion**

RB explained that there has been a change of emphasis where council planners are putting new conditions of monitoring wild fish around fish farms rather than just inside the fish farm itself. Negotiations have not yet been completed, however Marine Harvest seem to be working and complying with Environment Monitoring Plans (EMP's), but other farms seem to be avoiding this new condition. RB stressed that importance that all the farms in the area need to be employing this condition, not just one farm. It is expected that much of this monitoring work would be carried out by the AFT.

Nationally, the first meeting of the Salmon Interaction Working group has taken place recently. The group was set up following the government's review of aquaculture and aims to get the industry and wild fish interests talking to government to improve these sectors.

JB asked RB about funding to Trusts from Aquaculture companies which has been discussed previously. Funding will come for the EMP's from the fish farms and the Trust will be paid to do the work. The second funding was a proposed £1million per year coming from Aquaculture industry but no details have been reported to date.

## **A.O.B**

BY raised the concerns of a proprietor on the Kintyre area who had noticed illegal netting of Sea Trout, BY questioned if there is a market from illegal netting. RB explained that while it is legal to sell sea trout from legal netting operation (there is one on the River Esk), there may be an illegal fish market.

RB reported that the Awe fish counter broke down during the peak of the season, estimates were used to count 1,070 fish in 2018 which is improved on 2017 (480 fish) but remains low when compared to long-term average. RB explained that we are going to beat the 5-year average. Last year had a poor spring, steady decline after July however this year there are peaks when there is usually a low number of fish. This raises that question of whether something has changed with the salmon run?

RB advised that fisheries should reassess their peak fishing times as often people stop fishing at the end of the season, but things are changing, although two years is not a scientific basis. AKW explained that during the very hot weather the fish stopped migrating until the weather was cooler which may affect the count. It is also possible that counts were affected by rainbow trout escapes, but as the camera was broken this is difficult to assess this.

AKW's presentation is available on the Argyll Fisheries Trust website.

## **SANDS Presentation**

Ian Robertson the Executive Director for SANDS spoke of their aims; A national approach to sustaining angling and all the social, economic and environmental benefits. Angling has the highest mortality rate [the average age of anglers is old!], they are 20 years behind other sports and there is a lack of industry co-ordination in developing the sport. The vision is to create a national angling growth and development template to be delivered through Fishery Management Scotland and the District Salmon Fishery Board and Trusts infrastructure. The presentation is available on the AFT website or contact [ian@countrysidelearningscotland.org.uk](mailto:ian@countrysidelearningscotland.org.uk)

AB pointed out that without appropriate remuneration, its currently stretched manning and financial resources meant that the AFT would be unlikely to be able to offer much assistance. IR suggested that the first steps to be taken in Argyll would be to form a small 'steering committee' with the aim of:

- 1] Identifying local volunteers who might be prepared to help and potentially attend a training course to prepare them for future instruction of young anglers;
- 2] Contacting local angling clubs/ fishing proprietors who might make their waters available for young anglers to fish;
- 3] Liaising with local schools / youth clubs to encourage their participation.

Jane Wright indicated that she would in principle be prepared to head this steering committee, and AB agreed to join it, and this would operate under the guidance of IR.

Next Meeting: 6<sup>th</sup> February 11.00 am, Cherry Park, AFT Directors Meeting