

Minutes of Argyll Fisheries Trust AGM 2014

Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray, 11.15am Wednesday 22nd October 2014

Present: Andrew Barker (AB), Roger Brook (RB), David Milburn (DM), Keith Miller (KM), Tuggy Delap (TD), Tom Turnbull (TT), David Stewart (DS), Richard McKenzie (RMcK), Jimmy Middleton, Russell Buchanan (RBU), Bill Duff, Bill Rankin, Steven Austin (SA), Robert White (RW) Jeremy Hall Smith, Danny Brazier, Alan Kettle-White (AKW), Craig MacIntyre (CM), Helen MacIntyre

Apologies: Ian Tegner, Lucy Abel Smith, Charles Struthers, Gordon Gray Stephens, David Fellowes, Virginia Sumsion, Elaine Jamieson, Jane Wright, Roger Hatcher, Kenny Black, Jimmy Samuel, Andrew Montgomery, Stephen Gibbs, Caroline Fleming, Steven Beale

- 1. Introduction from the Chair** – AB welcomed everyone to the meeting
- 2. Apologies** – see above
- 3. Minutes of 2013 AGM** – Proposed by KM, seconded by RMcK, and accepted as an accurate record.
- 4. Matters arising**

Kintyre tidal scheme – CM explained there is a demonstration project with three units off the bottom of Kintyre, and that he raised concerns about impacts of electronic impulses on salmonids. KM asked about the tidal scheme in the Sound of Isla but CM thinks it was scrapped.

The Fishmongers Company visited AFT and were impressed with the work on the River Kinglas. They invited AFT to apply to them with a proposal for funding for project work, which will probably be on work to improve Forestry practices to reduce impacts on river habitats. SA said SNH have been developing a standardised approach and would like more information on the AFT work with forestry. RBU pointed out that contractors may not use the same guidelines as the Forestry Commission, but CM hopes that intervention early in the planning stages of forestry will help with this.

5. Accounts from 2013/14

There was a small deficit of £3,700, but over the past four years there has been an overall surplus of around £20,000. However, it is increasingly difficult to find work and funding for projects. Tangible assets have fallen, mainly due to depreciation. Total funds of £126,000 are at a healthy level according to our accountant. AB asked that members give the Executive Committee authority to approve the accounts since a figure needs checking, conditional on the accounts being no worse. Agreed.

Budget and forecasts – this year's budget showed potential deficit of £25,000, but we have secured a significant amount of money from SSE for work this year so we should break even by the end of the year. RB pointed out that this is a windfall which only solves the problem for this year, but times are looking tough for the future.

AB gave thanks to Craig, Alan and Danny for their work over the year, which has put AFT in a good position for the future and maintained AFT's good reputation. Danny has decided to move to another job and we thank him for his work with the Trust and wish him good luck. A job description is being drawn up and an advert for his replacement will be put out shortly.

6. Re-election of Directors

RB, TT and AB put themselves forward for re-election and there were no objections. Jon Strickland has retired as a director so there is scope to elect another person, and they will consider any applications. The Wild Fisheries Review

recommends that Trusts are amalgamated into Fishery Management Organisations, so in the next three years the structure of AFT is likely to change.

7. Wild Fisheries Review

RB talked through the summary of recommendations, highlighting those that are of most interest to AFT and ADSFB. Any changes resulting from recommendations adopted by the Scottish Government will almost certainly not be adopted until after the next Scottish General Election in 2016..

- Local Fisheries Management Organisations (FMOs) will be empowered, but a central wild fisheries unit will be in control. FMOs will be an amalgamation of Boards and Trusts and will be charities. They will manage all fish species. In Argyll, brown trout will be a big population to manage, bigger than salmon.
- Evidence-based management is needed
- The central unit will be based within Government, lead by a senior figure able to command respect with stakeholders.
- FMOs will advise local authorities, rather than being consultees as they are now.
- The government will write a model constitution for FMOs. As charities, the government cannot tell them what to do, but if they don't do what they want then they will not get funding.
- FMOs could be used internally on a federated basis, a bit like what ADSFB have done with RIAs. Likely there will be around 25 FMOs, which is similar to the number of Trusts.
- ASFB and RAFTS are to develop a formal transition program. They currently have a working group which includes CM.
- Review acknowledges the financial disincentive of reporting catches, but does not give a solution. It suggests the levy should be extended to include all fisheries of significant potential commercial value. For example this would include Loch Awe. Net and rod fisheries are to be treated equally, which means net fisheries will be hit hard. The levy is to be collected centrally, with one levy rate used nationally. However, a locally enhanced levy can be used for funding local priorities. We presume levies will be collected from all and then redistributed to those who need it most.
- An angling for all program is suggested, which would be funded by a rod licence.
- Should introduce a ban on killing salmon as soon as possible, which would include netting. This should spell the end of netting in Scotland. To get a licence to kill salmon you would have to prove the sustainability of the population. This would likely be determined by Marine Scotland Science, but it is unclear who would pay for this.
- Impacts on salmon and sea trout in the marine environment should be researched.
- Closed days should be abolished. This would mean fishing on Sundays would be allowed.
- Protection orders
- Bailiffs should be warranted centrally but employed locally.
- Stocking should be subject to licensed consent from central unit and only in exceptional circumstances.

RB believes that if it is enacted as a whole then it will be good for us. RW thinks the report seems to be simply to raise money from anglers, and that everything needs policing which means more administrators and more money. RB suggested that the small rivers committee reconvene and decide what constitutes a fishery so we can input this into the WFR working group. TD asked whether hill lochs would be levied, and RB said yes if they are commercially viable. AKW pointed out that if you get a protection order then you are deciding that the fishery has value.

Next steps are the reaction from the government and then a consultation for a Green Paper, hopefully later this year. We have to try to support the good in the review. CM said the funding moving from east to west should help.

8. Stocking of hatchery reared salmon

There have been big changes across Britain in attitudes to stocking since the last AGM. AKW explained that DNA technology has allowed us to understand fish populations much better, and see how problems can be caused by introducing hatchery reared salmon to wild populations. Restoration stocking is a short term method to boost numbers of populations with very few numbers of fish left. This has been used successfully to reintroduce salmon into the River Kinglas. Enhancement stocking is used to increase numbers of salmon in a river, and mitigation stocking is used if breeding grounds have been lost. These two methods of stocking are long term and can harm populations by either inbreeding or outbreeding. Numbers of fish may improve but it undermines the genetic health of the populations. Studies in England and Wales have shown this to be the case. A hatchery on a large river with lots of salmon has a smaller effect on genetics than on a small river because of the numbers involved.

RAFTS has a new policy of presumption against enhancement stocking, and that mitigation stocking needs close monitoring. Salmon have been shown to recognise close relatives and avoid breeding with them, but with stocking we cannot tell which salmon are closely related. In restoration stocking we try to cross breed as many fish from the local environment as possible to increase the genetic mix. Natural selection is the best way for salmon to develop the genetic diversity that will help them adapt to climate change. RMck described how the LAIA have stopped their stocking as a result of advice from AKW, and the money will now be put into habitat improvement schemes. RBu asked if changes in habitat adversely affect the salmon. RB explained that fish can adapt quickly to habitat changes, but if you change the fish through stocking they can't adapt.

AKW explained about current stocking in Argyll. The enhancement hatchery on the Etive has been closed whilst they investigate using unfed fry with more genetic diversity. There is some restoration stocking on the Creran, and another hatchery on the River Kinglass (Etive) which is small scale and AFT are working with them. RB explained that the ADSFB can permit or deny use of hatcheries, and that they will support the Creran but the others are doubtful, and will need scientific evidence to support them.

9. Any Other Business

Chinese Mitten Crab have been found in the Clyde, which is close to Loch Long and Loch Goil. They are an invasive species that eat salmon eggs and bury into river banks, changing the habitat. Please keep an eye out for them and let AFT know if you find any. AKW is looking into using environmental DNA, where you can test the water in a river to find out what species are present.

Trawling in Loch Fyne – CM caught the Margarita trawling and sent photos to the Clyde Fishermen's Association, and the boat has now stopped. The new Upper Loch Fyne MPA means that no trawling is allowed north of Inveraray.

New Upper Loch Fyne Angling Association – has been set up so local anglers with permits can fish for sea trout, with all fish returned, and they will look out for illegal fishermen. TD suggested they be issued with a car sticker so anyone can check the cars parked near people fishing.

The Awe counter shows that salmon numbers are up 50% this year, but numbers caught have been low.

10. Biologist's Report

AKW gave a presentation on the work that AFT have been doing over the past year, including:

Loch Etive Rivers Project – Assessment of habitat and fish populations so improvements and recommendations can be put forward.

Managing Interactions Aquaculture Project – RAFTS project looking at sea lice infestations.

Scottish Beaver Trial – Monitoring impacts on fish populations, suggests no impact on fish at the one site with a dam that has been monitored.

EU Invasive Plants (CIRB) Project – Treating Japanese Knotweed and Rhododendrum Ponticum.

Consultations have made up a third of AFT's work, which subsidises their charitable work.

More information about project work can be found on the AFT website.

11. Date of next meeting – Wed 25th February was proposed for the next AFT meeting.