



## **MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**11.00am, Wednesday 3rd November 2021**

**Loch Fyne Hotel**

Attendees: Andrew Barker (AB, Chairperson), Jane Wright (JW), Alan Kettle White (Senior Biologist, AKW), Roger Brook (RB), Robert Younger (RY), Stephen Austin (SA), David Stewart (DS), Edward Campbell Preston (ECP), Andrew Wales (AW), Virginia Sumsion (VS), Jonathan Brown (JB), Alastair Reynolds (AR), Caroline Fleming (via Team, CF), Alyssa Stewart (AS Secretary), Ian Tegner (IT), Piran Crago (PC), Graeme Anderson (GA), Tuggy Delap (TD), Tom Turnbull (TT), Ian Tegner (IT)

Apologies: David Sutherland, Lucy Abel Smith, Charles Forde, David Milburn, Richard Jones, Duncan Rogers, Frans Van Bommel, Bebe Corbett, Charles Forde, Gordon Stephens, Pandora Buchanan-Jardine, Johnny Buchanan-Jardine, David Milburn, Johan Pezold, Sascha Klengel, Richard Jones, David Parker, Benedict Justin, Stephen Beale, Rebecca Nicholson, Hugh Nicol

### **Introduction from the Chair**

Andrew Barker welcomed the attendees both in person and on Teams.

### **Election/ re-election of Directors**

One Director, Jane Wright, retires by rota and is up for re-election. Proposed by AW, seconded by JB.

### **Election of new Chairperson**

AB will be standing down as Chair and Director, leaving the space for 2 new Directors. It would be good to have local and younger blood if there are any suggestions.

AW proposed that JW and AR be added as signatories and given access to online banking. Seconded by TK and JB.

AB proposed JW as the new Chair, seconded by RB and JB.

JW and AR were voted on as Executive Directors.



AB stated that the finances of the Trust are in better shape than they have ever been.

The Scottish Government have continued to expand aquaculture and salmon farming on the West Coast with as few restrictions as possible, they have agreed in principle to the recommendations of the Salmon Interactions Working Group but AB is cynical as to whether their implementation will ever happen.

AB read the statement below from Salmon and Trout Conservation Scotland.

***Guy Linley-Adams, solicitor to S&TCS***

*“Despite the overwhelming evidence that open-net salmon farming as practiced in Scotland is unsustainable, it has become ever more apparent that Scottish Ministers are not minded to alter their position from one of almost total support for the industry, whatever it seeks to do. The time has come to make it clear that open-net farms should be closed down as soon as is practicable. And make no mistake, the reason we feel we must make this call is due to the failure of Scottish Government to act to protect the Scottish aquatic environment and its wildlife.”*

AB hopes that the Trust will consider being more pro-active in ways to improve the situation with Argyll and aquaculture.

The dedication, wisdom and expertise of AKW has been a rock on which the Trust has stood for many years, AB thanked AKW for all he has done.

JW thanked AB for all his hard work and dedication in giving 12 years to the Trust.

**Minutes of 2020 AGM [6/11/20]**

The minutes were approved by RB and seconded by AR.

No matters arising.

**Minutes of Directors meeting 28/6/21**

The minutes were approved by RB and seconded by AR.



No matters arising.

## **Accounts 2020/21**

TK presented the accounts for FY21 which will be circulated with the minutes and will be available on the Argyll Fisheries Trust website.

For the year to 31st March 2021 , Trust activities resulted in a net surplus of £56,625 compared to a deficit of £5,034 for 2020. A remarkable second half to the year.

Expenditure was marginally higher than budget; £94,630 compared to £87,188 due to costs for Mingury Burn costs not budgeted and AKW accrual of holidays

Thanks to Aly, the Trust received a Business Support Grant of £10,000 and Job Retention Scheme payments (Furlough) of £7,678.

Highlights for financial year were discussed.

Due to the accounts being circulated so close to the meeting, enough time had not been allowed to consider them properly. JW suggested that the accounts could be approved by e-mail once members had had time to read them.

It was agreed that the accounts will be circulated for approval by email.

Accounts were approved by JW and seconded by JB.

## **Forecast financial position 2021/22**

TK presented the budget for FY22 to be circulated with the minutes.

TK presented the financial report to be circulated with the minutes.

A deficit is forecast of £12,612 in FY22 , compared to a budgeted deficit of £53,454.

Costs are broadly in line with budget, where as income is well in excess, validating our staffing decisions.

Contract and project income is significantly over budget.



Contractor costs are also over budget. Tom Bonniwell has been used to cover for Piran or Graeme as one or both of them were needed to work on the Sound of Shuna EMP contract 2 days per week.

Vehicle costs were lower than anticipated due to high trade-in value of old vehicle.

Bank balance is still healthy at £111,985 (as of 27th October 2021)

The budget is set on known work which is okay, and tends to improve greatly as the year goes on. This may be something that needs to be worked on in the future.

TP contractors have been relied on which have been an asset to the Trust and now there are two new members of staff to move projects forward.

AKW has a new vehicle for which Ewan McLellan from ADRIA negotiated a good deal for.

## **Staffing**

The Executive Board approved a recruitment drive, and consequently Greame and Piran were initially employed on a temporary basis, and have now been offered permanent contracts.

The outstanding work easily justifies the recruitment and their skills will be developed to the point where AKW will develop and manage projects, leaving PC and GA for fieldwork.

## **AOB**

AR asked if a column could be added to the accounts to indicate how far projects have progressed against budget and together with the expected income each project is expected to generate.

Projects tend to be completed and invoiced towards the year end.

JB asked when the budget will be set for next year. TK explained that the budget will be worked on earlier than normal as the tendency has been to leave it too late in the year, creating pressure for all involved.

*At this stage the AFT AGM will combine with the ADSFB Board Meeting*



## **Biologists Report**

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

### *West Coast Salmon Tracking Project*

Project to identify the migration routes of salmon smolts funded through the AST, FMS and MSS.

Rotary screw traps used to catch and tag 200 smolts in the Awe & Orchy catchments between mid-April and mid-May 2021. Tagging carried out under aseptic conditions, under home office license managed by Glasgow University and Atlantic Salmon Trust. A total 113 were tagged on the River Orchy and 87 on River Etive.

Preliminary results show some Orchy and Etive fish migrating West rather than the expected route through the Minch, via both west of Mull and fewer in the Sound of Mull. One tagged fish was identified in the far northwest beyond the Outer Hebrides by a drone.

It is possible some of our fish are spreading out when migrating. The tags also allow for data to be collected on different smolts from different catchments and how long the fish are spending in areas, and their likelihood of picking up larvae and sea lice. Final report is expected by Mid-December which will be published on the website.

RY asked if choosing big fish affects the result? Possibly as there may be some selection for larger smolts which may behave differently to smaller ones. Hopefully as tag technology improved smaller fish can be tagged in future. The battery of the tags last for 3 months maximum. The tags are small to minimise impact on the fish's survival. The batteries do not last long enough to monitor their return. This is a three-year project depending on funding.

There is a video online on the Atlantic Salmon Trust website describing the project. Smaller fish trapped were tagged and released in the River Awe by scientists from Marine Scotland, those tags will be kept for their lifetime and inform marine survival.

### *Habitat Improvement*

Habitat improvement work on-going on the Rivers Ruel and the Goil and work projects are being developed on River Eachaig through Lomond & Trossachs National Park.



Characteristics of the Cowal rivers are sandy soils which are easily eroded, tend to get wider and shallower and fine sediment affect habitat for fish. This results in low number of Juvenile fish as the riverbed becomes compacted with finer sediment. Green revetment work started in 2015/16 on River Goil to stabilise the banks and buy time for trees and vegetation to recover through green engineering to protect the bank through use of brush, planting trees, and fencing to help the bank recover. Fish are now spawning in areas where they weren't before. More work planned 2022/23.

There has also been work carried out annually on the R. Ruel since 2018 by coppicing of large trees and using woody debris to provide fish cover and protect banks from further erosion. Further work planned in 2022/23 supported by RRIA, SSE and CWFT.

#### *Mingury Burn Habitat Project*

Biodiversity Challenge fund with supported by Nature Scotland could not be completed due to covid-19 lockdown in 2020/21, but some fencing and tree planting was completed.

#### *Fisheries Surveys*

Carradale Escapes Project – A further 36 genetic sampling sites surveyed in 2021, which will give information on the interactions between wild and farmed salmon. Temperature monitoring is carried out by AFT on local (ADRIA) and national level (Marine Scotland). Information is used to map and predict where trees should be planted, showing where water is getting too warm for the fish.

Fish stock monitoring in Awe Catchment as part of ADRIA with funding from Scottish and Southern Energy.

There is also work being completed on the River Creran which is funded by CAF America. There are restricted funds available which will be used for developing larger scale replanting projects.

GA and PC have brought new skills to the Trust, and work will be done on invertebrate sampling.

#### *Commercial Contracts*

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Alyssa Stewart (Administrative Bookkeeper) [as@argyllfisheriestrust.co.uk](mailto:as@argyllfisheriestrust.co.uk)



AFT undertake contracts to inform developers and regulators of fish & fish habitat considerations.

BY asked, regarding climate work, if offset schemes could be used as there are clear stacked benefits on top of carbon benefits. TT has been approached by companies interested in tree planting and riparian work as carbon offset plans. This is an area that should be looked into further, Luke Cummings may be worth contacting.

AKW stated that the temperature monitoring work shows that the uplands are the ones needing focused on.

RB suggested that habitat work is critical. Co-operation of landowners is key, and often an obstacle. TT thinks this is changing, and landowners are becoming more interested.

## **Update on aquaculture**

AKW's presentation will be circulated with minutes.

The government's response to Interactions Working Group is to appoint SEPA as the regulator for aquaculture, rather than the planning department. It is an interesting new area. BY agreed that there has been a technical argument, and they will be taking this forward.

Sea Lice on wild fish will be part of this process, the timing for the framework has not been published.

EMP's are in place to collect information on wild fish and on farm management. If the Interactions group are enacted, EMPS's will not be required in the future, but will move into a CAR licence scenario. We don't know when the government will enact this. The EMP may be absorbed into the CAR licence, rather than a voluntary agreement.

### *Farm Sea Lice Counts*

The Norwegian Aquaculture risk assessment process means that AFT can estimate the impact of sea lice on the sea trout being monitored.

Loch Fyne & Loch Riddon- the lice-related risk is estimated to be quite low for smaller fish risk in 2021, but moderate risk for larger fish. Second year of salmon



farm production shows an increase in lice-related risk but appears to be reduced over recent years. This year, fish were caught that had few lice but some did have the appearance of a lice burden that had been cleared.

Firth of Lorn- Again, sea lice numbers were higher than code of good practice when harvesting sites in spring 2021. Subsequently, high lice-related risk found on sea trout at Dunstaffnage- no improvement in recent years, with high mortality rate.

Sea Trout remain in inshore waters for most of their lives, whereas salmon are passing through, possibly reducing their risk.

Sound of Shuna- Mowi trialling a new snorkel cage where fish were farmed in a lower point of the column. The high on-farm lice numbers suggest that the experiment has not worked to date.

West Mull- are in a different cycle, numbers are relatively low.

Loch Etive- Lice numbers increased exponentially from July, with an average number of 19 lice per fish by October. Numbers may drop with more freshwater now in Loch Etive. If this had happened in the spring, every smolt may have been lost. There has been an underlying health issue for farm fish preventing effective lice treatment and Dawnfresh lost control of the situation. FHI were contacted.

Loch Linnhe- Lice numbers were high, but SSF were harvesting fish around this time, there are some gaps in the data and will take up with FMS to see why there are gaps in data.

Sound of Mull- crowded area for fish farms, higher numbers of lice than we would like.

Escapes - No reported escape this year although last year was horrendous with nearly 145k fish escaping. There has been one report of potential escaped rainbow trout in Loch Etive. Any RT caught to be recorded and reported to FHI.





A national assessment of the influence of farmed salmon escapes on the genetic integrity of wild Scottish salmon population was carried out on 22 sites in Argyll in 2018/19. There was evidence on integration at 27% of sites. The River Awe was very poor, but there were only two samples tested.

AFT & ADSFB have always highlighted this issue to the government, so the integration report is important. Mowi have paid out for work done on the Carradale escapes project which has cost Mowi over £200k.

The consultation responses to regulators of fish farming by ADSFB is now coordinated through FMS and the standard of representation has been improved significantly.

The Trust has applied for and received grant money from WSSF which is a fund coming from Fish Farmers, the tracking project has substantial funding from fish farmers, RB asked if there are objections to the Trust taking this money. CF commented that the tracking project is fascinating and can only be done with the funding and this may be the way forward. RB is in favour of it. JB added that it was discussed at ADRIA and the general view was that money should be taken but will not stop criticism of the industry, RY agreed as it is directed at science, and allows us to hold them accountable. Support was given.