

## **ARGYLL DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

Annual General Meeting

Teams' Online Meeting

30<sup>th</sup> March 2021, 10:30am

Board Attendees: Roger Brook (RB, Chairperson), Robert Younger (RY, Clerk), Andrew Barker (AB), Hugh Nicol (HN), Tim King (TK), Jonathan Brown (JB), Tuggy Delap (TD), Caroline Fleming (CF)

Agency Representatives: Rebecca Smith (RS, Forestry Commission), Stephen Austin (SA, Nature Scot)

Public Attendees: Helen MacIntyre (HM), Alexander McGrigor (AM), Edward Campbell Preston (ECP), Andy Macgregor (AMC, Angling Scotland), Jack Degman (JD), , Dan Edwards (DE), Alastair Reynolds (AR), David Stewart (DS), Beth Nicholson (BN), Jamie Mellor (JM), , Jane Wright (JW),

Apologies: Andrew Sanderson, Tom Turnbull, Anne Craig, Ian Tegner, Duncan Rogers, Elizabeth Drummond Young, Anthony Groenen, Mr Forde

RB welcomed everyone to the meeting and stated that the meeting will be recorded for the purpose of minutes and deleted once drafted.

### **APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES, 6<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2020**

The minutes were approved by TK and seconded by AB.

### **DECLARATION OF MEMBERS' INTEREST**

### **MATTERS ARISING**

RB spoke of the Awe barrage count, he still does not believe the figures, there is the ability for them to be verified by going through all the electronic data which can be done by AKW at the Trust to some point.

Polly Burns has resigned from FMS as an advisor on aquaculture, she has been a great asset to Argyll and other west coast Trusts and boards and will be missed. FMS will be recruiting a replacement.

Seal control licence applications have been submitted, but we are still waiting to hear from Marine Scotland. The purpose being to only control seals that enter rivers when salmon are migrating.

### **FINANCE & CLERK'S ANNUAL REPORT**

Both reports were circulated with the paperwork. There were no further comments.

## **Approval of Accounts 2020**

Accounts were approved by DS.

Accounts show a significant surplus. This is due to the Clerk and the Chairman conducting the board's business free of charge and the Trust Biologist (AKW) being on furlough during lockdown 1, which has resulted in less money being spent on AKW's time on consultations, meetings, and negotiations with fish farmers and developers. BY and RB attended online meetings regarding EMP's and did not charge the Board for their time.

There are options available to reduce the surplus as follows:

1. - Carry on and build reserves, however it is doubtful that the Trust will be able to spend all the money on improvements this year.
2. - The Argyll levy could be reduced by 40% and would probably break even. Awe and Ruel are different however, as they have Bailiffs.
3. - A break could be taken from the levy and the Board will probably lose about £8000. Awe and Ruel would remain as it is today as agreed by JB and AB.

JB asked what the restricted funds are, RB explained that they are not a charity and therefore do not have restricted reserves, however the money is there for fishery improvement in Argyll.

RB asked participants to vote on the options suggested.

Option 3 received 9 votes

Option 2 received 0 votes

Option 1 received 0 votes

A 'holiday' from the Argyll levy will be taken in 2021-22 other than the Awe and Ruel levies.

JW questions the SSE money, which has not increased lately, RB explained that it did increase 4 years ago, and is inflation related which is low at the moment. AS will contact SSE for a purchase order.

It has been a particularly busy time and it is not tenable for RY and RB to continue as it is. RB will make arrangements for the Trust to take on more work on behalf of the Argyll DSFB.

## **AQUACULTURE UPDATE AND DISCUSSION**

The proposal for a new salmon farm made by Scottish Salmon Company in North East Arran was rejected by North Ayrshire Council. CF explained that Sally and John

Campbell put a huge amount of work into the objection. The objectors were very well organised and knowledgeable, there was a very effective campaign.

RB stated that the lesson to be learned is the local community objections are far more effective than any other wild fish contributions. CF added that there is also a need for scientific backup which they have been very lucky to have.

The follow-up from the escape of 48,500 farmed salmon from the site at Carradale escape was handled well by Mowi, who reacted quickly and were supportive of all the initiatives taken by FMS. FMS coordinated all the Firth of Clyde Trusts, including Argyll, in a scientific research project with Marine Scotland to assess introgression of farm salmon in wild salmon populations. A review will be taken in two-years' time to assess the research. There were not many escapees caught by anglers in Argyll, but this could be a result of the lack of fishing. More information can be found here: <http://fms.scot/north-carradale-escape/>

There is a proposed second farm in Carradale, and several applications for an increase in tonnage at existing sites in the Firth of Lorn. The Board will be submitting their responses to these applications, which can be seen on the Council's planning portal.

AR asked if there had been any development of the application for new rainbow trout farm sites at the Cumbraes and Loch Long by Dawnfresh. RB had not heard anything more than the initial scoping done by Dawnfresh. There has been a strong local campaign (AFF the Clyde) against the development. AR suggested that it would be worthwhile to send the scientific report regarding impact on housing properties to the Ardentinn Community Council.

TK suggested there may be need for more local education and the risks of fish farms, as there is little understanding of the impacts.

JW has heard of a potential new site further up Loch Long. RB explained that The Loch Long Salmon Company are planning a new site on Loch Long which will be a semi contained unit. This uses water pumped into an impermeable membrane rather than a net or recirculation. The water is pumped from a depth which in theory would not have lice so should reduce the risk to wild fish. The waste food and excrement will be pumped to a tank and filtered on land. It is a step in the right direction and there is a real dilemma of whether to support this or not. It is disappointing that they have chosen to use Loch Long, however their argument is that they do not want to be situated amongst other farms and need deep water close to the shore.

JW asked if there could be any funding for the Trust to do any work on the Glen Mallan Burn as it used to be very good for sea trout. RB assured JW that the Board has been in discussions with the company via FMS and we would be monitoring pre and post development as part of an Environment Management Plan (EMP) if planning permission is granted.

Mowi are trying to ensure that all their sites meet the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC) standard, so they have a cleaner image and possibly a marketing advantage on their competitors. Part of the standard is related to numbers of sea lice

on the fish, which are currently quite low to protect wild fish (less than 0.1 lice per fish). Disappointingly the ASC are reviewing their standards which will be changed to 0.5 lice per fish, which is the same as the current voluntary code of Good Practice and therefore will make no improvement.

There has been talks ongoing for years that the Salmon farming industry (through SSPO) will be supporting wild fish by donating money for freshwater habitat improvement projects on the West Coast rivers. They are currently donating £300,000 to support the West Coast salmon tracking project, however next year, there could be some money available, for Trusts and boards to apply for. However, they will not pay for any staff costs, which causes a problem for these organisations. RB stated that the Board has reserves which could be used for staff costs if the Trust is able to identify and agree some suitable habitat projects.

The Salmon Interactions Work Group submitted their report to Marine Scotland months ago, but they have failed to act on the recommendations identified in the report. Nothing can be done until after the election in May. The Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee published an end of term report and they strongly regret the lack of government action.

## **FMS UPDATE**

The FMS online conference was held on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of March. The presentations will be available to view online this week. Those that RB recommends are Riparian Planting by Lorraine Hawkins, Mark Stutter on Riparian work and Rewilding by Peter Karnes.

Project funding has been granted to the Trust for updating MSS fishery management plans which identify and grade the pressure acting on wild salmon populations around Scotland (on a map-based system). The most important output is that it will be visible to politicians and communicate the issues causing the decline in salmon at a local, regional and Scotland-wide scale.

The Government has formed a Wild Salmon Strategy Group which is to advise the government on having a wild salmon strategy.

FMS will be holding members meeting this summer online this year. They report a three-fold upsurge of poaching last year during the lockdown 1.

SEPA have had a cyber-attack on their computer systems at Christmas and are still affected to date. SEPA have therefore, struggled to enforce any action of infringement on the environment, particularly on the east coast.

The FMS annual review is available online here:  
<http://fms.scot/category/publications/annual-review/>

The Missing Salmon Alliance have asked FMS to join their organisation along with all the key salmon management bodies who are fundraising to do big science projects and lobbying for government action on behalf of salmon. The West Coast Salmon

Smolt Tracking Project is tagging salmon in rivers all along the West Coast, including the River Awe and the River Etive in Argyll and the Lomond and Clyde in the Firth of Clyde. An array of receivers is being deployed up the coast to record the tagged fish. It is hoped that the migration routes of the smolts up the west coast can be identified in year one and possibly a better idea of what might be affecting them in years 2 and possibly 3. It is a major project run by Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) that AKW is playing a key role in collecting and tagging smolts.

## **AOB**

No other business.

## **Water Bailiff**

Mark Shone has asked for a warrant card from the Board, he is qualified as a bailiff, and will have the power of search and arrest. He has applied for a disclosure. It was agreed that support will be given to warrant Mark assuming that documents are in order.

## **ELECTION OF BOARD MEMBERS**

### ***Elected Board members***

Arran, Mrs Caroline Fleming  
Awe, Roger Brook (CHAIR)  
Creran, David Stewart  
Fyne, Tuggy Delap  
Nell, Beth Nicholson  
Nell, James Mellor  
Ruel, Andrew Barker  
Awe, Edward Campbell Preston  
Nell, Dan Edwards

Hugh Whittle has resigned from the Board was thanked for his efforts by RB.

Dan Edwards gave a brief introduction to the group who was nominated by Malcolm Robertson, a qualified proprietor to act on his behalf.

### **Co-option of additional members**

Loch Fyne Angling Club, Craig McIntyre  
Angler's representative, Tim King  
Forestry Commission, Rebecca Smith  
Nature Scot, Stephen Austin

### ***Election of convener***

Roger Brook was confirmed as convenor.

### **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

TBC

RB passed the meeting to AB.

### **INTRODUCTION FROM ANDY MACGREGOR OF ANGLING SCOTLAND**

Andy gave a short presentation.

Angling Scotland Ltd is the umbrella structure formed by the three Scottish Angling Governing Bodies, Scottish Anglers National Association (SANA), Scottish Federation for Coarse Angling (SFCA) and Scottish Federation of Sea Anglers (SFSA).

The is director from each governing body on the Board.

There is a new branch of the Angling Scotland Media, with following on Instagram, Facebook, and twitter.

Core objective is to protect and promote fishing.

Angling Scotland will aim to:

- Provide a central structure for all clubs and associations
- Promote and support fishing events on an international level
- Seek to collaborate and protect our environment and sport
- Seek out potential new members markets
- Expand delivery of Club Angling across Scotland
- Continue to maintain and develop partnerships, both formal and informal, with stakeholders within Scottish Government

RB questioned the membership of Salmon Anglers and suspects that there are not many members like him, AM is aware that the membership model needs to be revised and repositioned to be all inclusive.

AB asked whether they work with SANDS, which Angling Scotland do not. More information can be found here: <https://www.anglingscotland.org.uk/>

### **ARGYLL FISHERIES TRUST PRESENTATION**

The Biologist report will be circulated with the minutes.

The work planned for the early part of the year was affected by the lockdown 1, of which AKW was furloughed for 3 months (April through June).

The planned work that was significantly affected by lockdown 1 was:

The West Coast Salmon Smolt Tracking Project  
Monitoring sea lice burdens of Sea Trout  
National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland  
Nutrient and Juvenile Productivity Project  
River Ruel Habitat Improvement Works

#### *West Coast Salmon Smolt Migration Tracking Program (Atlantic Salmon Trust)*

This work program seeks to identify the migration routes of salmon smolts on the west coast of Scotland. The project was postponed last spring due to the Covid-19 pandemic, but plans are in place for starting in 2021. Rotary Screw Traps (RSTs) will be operated in the River Orchy and Etive to capture smolts. AFT have been given 200 acoustic tags to implant into smolts prior to release. Tag signal receivers will be located in the River Awe and River Etive and inshore waters from Malin Head (Ireland) to the Minch (Outer Hebrides) to track their movements. AKW has obtained a personal Home Office licence for this project.

#### *Juvenile Fish Monitoring*

Total of 129 electrofishing surveys were undertaken in 13 catchments.

To summarise, low densities of salmon fry were found at most sites (60 % of the sites surveyed) in the Loch Fyne rivers, while low densities were found at fewer sites (avg. 35 % of sites) in the rivers further north (Add, Barbreck, Awe, Etive and Creran). Relatively high densities of salmon fry were found at fewer sites (17 % of sites surveyed) in Loch Fyne compared to the rest of Argyll (average 40 % of sites).

Separate reports have been published for Loch Fyne Rivers, the Awe and Etive catchments and the Sound of Shuna Rivers (Add and Barbreck) which provide some comparison of the 2020 survey with previous results.

AR asked if the reports show a change over the years. AKW summarised that the numbers of juvenile salmon found in surveys have declined along with the number of adults returning to our rivers to the point where the output of smolts is probably sub-optimal.

#### *Habitat Improvement on River Gail*

The Gail is a fairly typical river on the Cowal Peninsular where a combination of the loss of bankside vegetation due to grazing pressure and the sandy soils resulting in

long sections of eroding and collapsed banks. Consequently, bank cover for fish is lost and the soil clogs up the riverbed substrates, reducing survival of incubating eggs and habitat available for invertebrates and young fish. The Trust worked with volunteers from the community to complete 100 m length of green revetment which should restore the integrity of the bank and increase the quantity and quality of habitat for fish.

#### *BCF Project (Nature Scot funded)*

The Mingary Burn (Isle of Mull) habitat improvement project was not fully completed due to the Covid pandemic restrictions, however in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland there were some 1 km length of deer fencing erected and 1,000 trees planted once lockdown 1 was lifted.

#### *Farm & wild Salmon Introgression – Carradale Escapes Project*

Fisheries Management Scotland coordinated a genetic study (paid for by MOWI) with Marine Scotland Science (MSS) after 48.8k salmon escaped from a fish farm at Carradale, Kintyre. AFT have collected over 1,000 non-lethal samples from salmon fry from rivers across Arran, Kintyre, and Argyll. This work will be repeated over the next two years. This is the first official government study into possible introgression of escaped farmed salmon into wild populations.

#### *Contract Surveys*

Several contracts were fulfilled, the largest of which are:

- Kintarbet sea trout migration
- River Nant habitat survey
- Cour Hydro habitat survey
- Mapping pressures on Atlantic Salmon

#### *2021-22 Work Program*

- AST West Coast Salmon Tracking Project
- Sea Trout netting surveys
- Sound of Shuna sea lice modelling
- Juvenile Surveys and NEPS 2021
- Carradale genetic sampling
- Water temperature monitoring
- EMP development
- Argyll DSFB consultations
- Contracts

AB thanked AKW for his report.