

ARGYLL DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

Annual General Meeting
Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray
29th March 2023, 10:30am

ATTENDANCE: ROGER BROOK (RB, CHAIRPERSON), ALASDAIR REYNOLDS (AR), ROBERT YOUNGER (CLERK, RY), HUGH NICOL (HN), JOHNNY BROWN (JB), ALAN KETTLE WHITE (AFT BIOLOGIST, AKW), GRAEME ANDERSON (AFT BIOLOGIST, GA), JANE WRIGHT (JW), TIM KING (TK), REBECCA SMITH (RS, FORRESTRY AND LAND), FINBARR ROSE (FORRESTRY AND LAND),

APOLOGIES: MR FORDE, WALLY WALES, ANDREW BARKER, COLIN ROBERTSON, DAVID STEWART, FRANS VAN BOMMELL, MICHELLE KELSO, IAN AMORY, DAVID SUTHERLAND, ROSIE CAMPBELL-PRESTON, ROBIN DIXON, IAN TEGNER, ALASDAIR ROSS, DAVID MILBURN, DUNCAN BYATT, CALUMN MACFARLANE, ALEXANDER BYATT, RAYMOND DOONAN, JAMIE MCGRIGOR, CAROLINE FLEMING, BRIAN HAMILTON, TUGGY DELAP

APPROVAL OF THE PREVIOUS MINUTES, 8TH NOVEMBER 2022

The minutes were approved by TK and JB.

DECLARATION OF MEMBERS 'INTERESTS

None were declared.

MATTERS ARISING

None.

FINANCE & CLERK'S ANNUAL REPORT

RB stated that the Board is the recipient of various funds which are held as ringfenced for habitat restoration and the Awe. Although the bottom line is a significant loss, that is because the trust is busy, and the Board has been able to fund project work.

The budget has been prepared for 2023, the surplus is for habitat restoration which is small compared to the geographical size of Argyll.

The operating profit is still in a moderate surplus.

The Clerk's report was circulated prior to the meeting and is self-explanatory.

APPROVAL OF ACCOUNTS 2022

Accounts were circulated prior to the meeting.

Accounts were approved by TK and seconded by JB.

ACTIVITIES 2022

Circulated and self-explanatory.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES 2023

Circulated and self-explanatory.

LEVY 2023

The re-evaluation has been going on for about 18 months and is not concluded, therefore the levy rate cannot be changed for this year.

AS has worked on a budget for 2023.

The main cost is for AKW's services for consultations, this is difficult to budget as it is difficult to predict for the year ahead.

AKW's fee has increased by 40%, this may result in an increase of the levy to cover costs. It was agreed that the levy would remain the same for 2023.

Proportionally the increase is high for AKW's fees for the Board. AKW added that this could be discussed with the AFT budget. RB feels that the rate needs to be renegotiated and should be adjusted because charging a full rate is inappropriate. TK agreed and will discuss at the Trust Board meeting. AR agreed that it should be reviewed.

RB proposes that the 2023 levy can remain at £0.65/£ for non-bailiff districts, with exception of the Ruel and Awe who have bailiffs, the levy will remain at £2.40.

The proposed levy was agreed.

AQUACULTURE UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

DAWNFRESH

Dawnfresh have been bought by MOWI. MOWI will need new planning applications and wants to meet with the Board, RB is pleased, however this does not mean they will agree with the outcome.

AKW, JB and RB will attend. RB asked if BY and AR would like to attend, it was agreed that the selected 3 would be adequate.

JB stated that there is a question regarding the monopoly.

Salmon Farming in the Etive may be a staged production, Etive may be used for post smolts, that will then be transferred to sea. Scottish Sea Farms are also looking into producing smolts onshore.

The second year of fish are heavy with sea lice, so this is potentially a good move. There is connectivity with lice numbers between the firth of Lorne, Dunstaffnage and Kerrera.

LOCH LONG SALMON FARM CONSULTATION

The Loch Long consultation has been appealed to ministers, it could result in a political decision and is difficult to know which way it will go. They are also pushing on with Loch Linnhe which could be the biggest fish farm in Scotland.

They are calling for an open meeting in Oban with the public.

The dilemma for RB is that it was the location that was the problem, and he suggested that it should be in an aquaculture region, which Loch Linnhe is. If the one-year cycle is good, it could be a benefit. AKW would like a meeting with FMS to discuss where things are going. HN thinks that RB should represent the Board and their views.

BY added that the options have expired, therefore applications in the Clyde have lapsed.

Electrofishing data has been sold to MOWI but could be related to Carradale.

RS asked if data can be accessed from other countries regarding the new technology, such as Norway.

JW suggested that RB speaks to DS.

AKW added that this technology could be an opportunity, not a problem.

ASC STANDARDS

RB has been a big supporter of the ASC standards, MOWI and Bakkafrøst are operating to ASC standards.

However, ASC have recently raised their sea lice load 5 folds, from 0.1 to 0.5.

HN asked AKW if, from a scientific view, is this problematic. AKW explained that the code of good practice voluntary number is 0.5 for treatment, whether companies can achieve that is debatable. Spring is a sensitive time as smolts are leaving rivers.

SEPA

SEPA has been appointed as regulator, they have come up with an ambitious framework.

AKW explained that the WCSTP is important, detailing how long the fish take to enter the sea and get past the last farm, this evidences how long the fish are exposed to lice and how quickly they accumulate.

We need to be in the position to monitor as a contractor. RB is confident we are doing everything we can at this stage.

The danger is that some trusts may not be as prepared or as eager to do the contract work, however RB and AKW have spoken to FMS regarding a sub-contracting contingency plan.

FMS UPDATE

The FMS conference is on Friday.

FMS is working closer with the Rivers Trust, who are very professional and offer expertise in large grants as they deal with wider catchments.

A Head of Natural Capital Investment post has been created, which is what we need.

Wild Salmon Strategy Plan is underway.

FMS are working with offshore wind farms and keeping an eye on progress.

AOB

JB asked about the unpaid levies were discussed, there is a dispute of ownership with a proprietor which is not the Boards role to decipher. BY will offer a small rivers exemption.

RS is responsible for Cowal, East Loch Lomond and Creran, stopping at Loch Fyne Oysters. RS added that if the rainforest projects and funding will go ahead it would tie in with the Riverwoods. There is a project at the rest and be thankful, planting trees by burns that do not have any shading.

AKW added that he has been working on a scoping project with Argyll Countryside Trust on rainforest restoration in Argyll.

HN asked if there were financial opportunities. RS stated that there may be funding to ensure that projects are not in a deficit, but not necessarily as a financial gain.

JW asked how the private forestry companies will be drawn into this, RS thinks that positions will be developed to deliver projects.

JB thanks the Chair, RB.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

TBC

The Argyll Fisheries Trust Board meeting joined the meeting at this point.

ARGYLL FISHERIES TRUST PRESENTATION WITH ARGYLL AND WEST CATCH STATISTICS ANALYSIS

AK covered the main points; the presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

WEST COAST SALMON TRACKING PROJECT

RB stated that it would be interesting to know the survival rate between the south and north of Mull. AKW explained that it is not possible just now.

AKW added that acoustic tracking has provided a new set of skills. The barrage is an obstacle, he has been working on a pilot study using 26 tags from Glasgow University. The pilot study showed there is an issue with passage of smolts through the barrage.

2023-24 RIVER WORK PROGRAM

AK covered the main points; the presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

AWE BARRAGE

SSE will possibly pay for tags in 2024 to collect data from the barrage.

This will support SSE's work on helping the smolt passage through the barrage.

HABITAT RESTORATION

The difficulty of landlord permission was discussed, as farmers are losing land with the restoration of riverbanks. HN explained that the landlord paying scheme will be changing in the future and is less concentrated on how much land is owned, more on how it is managed.

FISHERY MANAGEMENT

Will be key to securing bigger catchment grants.

TK asked if there if any data anglers could provide. AKW stated that reporting catches would be a start. This is a controlled project and accurate information is required.

GA is working on phase 1 of the story map.

AQUACULTURE UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

The presentation will be circulated with the minutes.

Loch Fyne

Seems to be managed well, with a 6-week break.

Carradale

The figures are misleading as during lockdown there were no samples take AKW will investigate how to indicate no data over lockdown.

Sound of Shuna

Fyke Net provides a better sample site.

Two companies are working in the area that are not syncing their fallow data.

Lower Linnhe

A very powerful 2-year cycle, in the 'even' years there are low to moderate risk. Concerningly, sea lice numbers have got worse. JW asked why Dunstaffnage is such a bad site, it seems to be a hot spot for sea lice.

This data has been shown to MOWI. AKW sent a report in October and has not heard back.

Loch Creran

Sites have been closed this year with lice related issues.

Loch Etive

Low salinity which sea lice don't like.

Monitoring is in spring, does not show results in autumn where the salinity increases.

AKW was thanked for his presentation.