

**MINUTES of the MEETING of the
NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT
SALMON FISHERY BOARD held on
THURSDAY 6th November 2019 at
10.30am at the MACPHAIL CENTRE,
ULLAPOOL**

Present: Mr R Vestey (Convener)
Mr D Davies (Vice Convener)
Mr A Adamson
Mr A Balfour
Mr C Macleod
Mr G Osborne
Ms K Bontoft

In attendance: Mr R Whitson (Clerk, Bell Ingram)
Dr S Marshall (WSFT)

Ms Sara Nason (Part)
Mrs Gabi Rex
Ms Sonja Brown (Loch Duart - part)

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from, Mr C Marsham, MR D Lindsay, Mr R Bradford.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No adjustments were required to existing Members declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 16th MAY 2019

The Convener took those present through the minutes of the meeting held on 16th May 2019, which were approved by the Board and signed by the Convener who chaired the meeting.

4. MATTERS ARISING

Whilst the majority of the matters arising had been dealt with, there was one question regarding the production of Fishery Management Plans, Shona explained that FMP's are still being discussed, and that a Fisheries Pressure Mapping tool had been launched, which

is a GIS based system illustrating what pressures exist that affect wild fish, and where they exist within catchments. It covers a total of 49 pressures, including poaching, industry, intensive forestry including woodland creation and re-planting.

There is a section in the software that allows users to discuss degrees of confidence in the severity of a given impact and allows users to prioritise actions or identify grant applications based on the impacts described.

5. DIONARD AND GUALIN MANDATORY

As discussed at the Meeting of Qualified Proprietors, Kathryn Bontoft was elected as the mandatory for the Gualin Estate and for the River Dionard.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk took those present through the Financial Report showing income of £36,036 against a budget of £36,120, outgoings were £3,918.70, against a budget of £34,170; much of this was due to timing. The account is showing a present surplus of £32,117.30 against a budgeted surplus of £1,950.

There was one outstanding debtor which will be pursued, and the bank balance as at 11th October 2019 was £45,692.91.

7. PROPOSED FISH FARM DEVELOPMENTS

Sonja Brown joined the meeting and gave those present a briefing on Loch Duart's proposals within Sutherland.

She started the presentation discussing their present production, sea lice levels and measures to counter them, including using cleaner fish such as Ballan Wrasse. She went on to look at production cycles, and how in certain sites, better survival is leading to the Company requesting permission to expand their biomass limits.

An example is the site at Reintraid, with a present consented production of 950 tonnes. Loch Duart is seeking permission to increase production to 1300 tonnes. Smolt introduction would remain unchanged, however the increase in biomass would be due to improved survival and better husbandry. Sonja fielded various questions from Board Members about the implications and impacts of the expansion, and she finished in stating that Loch Duart had signed up to conducting an EMP as part of the planning process and to cooperate with the ecologists to further understand any ecological impacts on the sea bed and within the wider marine environment.

The second site she discussed was Oldany; presently a 1,000 tonne consent over 12 pens, with a proposal to increase standing biomass to 1,600 tonnes, with no additional smolt input numbers. This would also be subject to an EMP and further pearl mussel monitoring, in burn and coastal monitoring, protected species modelling and surveying for Mearle, etc.

The EMPs are living documents and if, as a result of the increased production, adverse impacts are detected, SNH have the power to amend both biomass and management techniques.

The third site discussed was Badcall Calbha which has been discussed at a previous Board Meeting. There are presently 8 CAR Licenses within the cluster and there is a proposal to modernise and amalgamate sites resulting in an uplift of biomass of 200 tonnes within the main production site, but with a reduction of 600 tonnes of biomass over other pen sites. The reduction will be written into the CAR licence.

When asked about progress to date on the Enard Bay proposal Sonja stated that there was no further progress and no survey devices had been deployed.

8. WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST - REPORT

Shona Marshall discussed the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust report.

9. SEAL MANAGEMENT LICENCE APPLICATIONS

The Clerk confirmed that the annual applications had been submitted to Marine Scotland for the two Seal Management Licences, and we await the outcome.

10. MISSION BLUE

Sara Nason joined the meeting at this point and gave a very interesting presentation on “Mission Blue”, which is a survey group as opposed to an action group. The purpose of the Group is to undertake detailed scientific survey of the sea bed to create Hope Spots; areas where enhanced conservation measures such as the creation of MPAs can be pursued on the basis of strong scientific evidence.

In order to achieve their goals, there is a need for funding to enable a part time scientist to be employed to manage the project and to manage the data. Costs are estimated at c. £25,000 to £30,000 per annum. Sara’s aspiration was initially that the Board or Members of the Board individually might contribute to the costs of this individual.

Alan Balfour asked for a summary of the proposed job description for the project manager and some more detail surrounding the proposal prior to considering if it would be appropriate to contribute to the funding.

It was agreed that the Board would not be able to support the project financially, as it lies out with the Board’s financial remit. However, it was unanimously agreed, that the Board would put its’ name to supporting the project, as the possible outcomes are in line with much of what the Board is seeking to achieve in terms of scientific evidence gathering to protect Salmonids.

The Clerk offered to scan the hand out from Sara to accompany the Minutes.

Sara agreed to produce a job spec for the role of project manager and further detail for individuals to consider funding.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Andrew Adamson informed the Board that in 2020, Wildland Ltd were considering running an International year of salmon event, much the same as last year.

David Davies suggested that the Board review the Loch Duart proposals, in particular the Reintraid biomass increases once the planning application is lodged and the Clerk receives it. It can then be circulated round the Board for consideration, and a decision made as to whether to support it at that time.

As regards to Mission Blue and support to it, the Clerk will speak to the Wester Ross Fishery Board to see if they contribute any money to the project and to report to the Board when he has done that.

10. DATE OF AGM AND NEXT BOARD MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Board Meeting will be held at The MacPhail Centre, Ullapool on Wednesday the 14th May 2020. The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors will start at 12pm and be followed by the Board at about 12:30pm.

ACTION PLAN

Scan the hand out from Sara Nason to accompany the Minutes	RSMW
Contact WRFB to see if they contribute to Mission Blue project	RSMW
Circulate planning application for Duart proposals to Board	RSMW
Organise May Meetings	RSMW