

Minutes of Directors Meeting, Torlundy 16th November 2010

Present

Viv de Fresnes (VdF) Chairman
Grace Henderson (GH) Vice-chairman
Sandy Grierson (SG) Treasurer
Donnie MacBeth (DM)
Simon Boulton (SB)
Diane Baum (DB)
Lucy Smith (LS)

Apologies

Barbara Collins (BC)

Minutes from Previous meeting

No matters arising. GH proposes accepting minutes, SG seconds

Biologists Report.

Mucomir smolt tracking project

DB stated that Jon Gibb had pulled out (in the second of three years) of this project monitoring the comparative return rates of smolts released from above and below Mucomir dam.

TWG update

DB updated everyone on the aquaculture bid. RAFTS submitted the bid to Scottish Government (SG) without taking on board any of the feedback from LFT and possibly other Trusts. It was generally agreed that this was a bad move on RAFTS part as they are meant to represent the Trusts. No-one could see that anything could really be done now as RAFTS had already submitted proposal to government. GH asked why the Trust's comments hadn't been dealt with, DB replied that she didn't know. It was agreed we should let RAFTS know we were unhappy with their actions. SG asked if the Directors should send a letter to RAFTS expressing our disappointment that they had acted in such a way. Everyone agreed. VdF asked what the timescale on the aquaculture bid was, and whether there was likely to be much money coming from government. DB replied no-one was sure, but any funding would be for the next financial year. DB asked what she should reply if Brian Dornan asked any questions about the proposal during his visit to LFT's salmon seminar. Everyone agreed that the Trust shouldn't say it supported the proposal as it didn't. It was suggested that, if asked, we would say we hadn't seen the final draft. GH suggested the Trust should write to RAFTS to let them know how we feel, SG agreed and stated the directors would draft a letter in the next day or so.

RLA relations

LS/DB circulated a copy of an email sent from the RLA stating that it would no longer provide eggs to the Trust for its education project. The letter stated this was due to the Trust's attack of the RLA's application for Aquaculture Fund money to fund a hatchery expansion. DB pointed out the Trust had never attacked Jon's hatchery expansion plans, in contrast she has always encouraged other Trusts and RAFTS to consider them. Although the Trust doesn't agree that the RLA's hatchery expansion should be funded with money from the Aquaculture Fund, and have stated this at a meeting convened by RAFTS, we have always stated the proposal shouldn't be dismissed without consideration by all Trusts involved in the Funding Bid. Other Trusts did consider the Hatchery expansion and none of them supported it or wanted to be involved with gene banking via the RLA hatchery.

Jon Gibb stated the RLA would no longer assist the Trust with any project requiring use of the RLA hatchery or its output. He also stated at the end of the email that he saw it as impossible for the RLA to have partnership agreements with the Trust. DB and LS pointed out that although the Trust weren't financially dependent on getting work from the RLA, as the Lochy is the largest river in our catchment it would hinder the Trusts ability to protect wild fish if we were unable to work the RLA. Some of our biggest and most significant projects are in conjunction with the Lochy. It was suggested that the Trust should reply to all RLA directors to set out the Trusts reasons for not supporting Jon's hatchery expansion. VdF and SB pointed out that they weren't against stocking per se but did feel the RLA shouldn't be given money from the Aquaculture Fund to expand a commercial hatchery. DB agreed that it should be made clear to everyone that the Trust aren't against responsible stocking, as river managers must do what they think is best, but we can't support the proposal to use money from this fund.

GH suggested that the letter to RLA directors could be written at the same time as the letter to RAFTS and that she, SG and VdF would meet the next day to draft the letters.

SG, VdF and GH to draft letter to RAFTS & RLA

There was no secretary's report as BC was absent.

Treasurers Report

SG announced that the Insurance company had paid for the recent claim to repair the van, so the Trust were only £700 out of pocket for the hire of a replacement van for the time it took to fix ours. The finances look like they are on track to break even this year.

AOB

VdF asked if anyone had put anymore thought into a candidate for a new director. Two possibilities were suggested and VdF was to contact them.

VdF to make initial contact with potential new directors

Date of next meeting

The next directors meeting will be on March 11th 2011 11.00am

Electrofishing surveys

We have completed reports on all the hydro scheme electrofishing carried out this year and the stock assessment survey carried out for the Lochy.

Eel Survey

The eel survey is now complete and a draft report and final grant claim sent to SNH. Once approved this report will go on our website. The survey suggests functioning eel populations are present throughout Lochaber and that recent recruitment has taken place on most catchments. It has also raised some interesting issues such as the impact of hydro schemes on eel passage that we will try to explore in the future.

Biosecurity

Lucy has compiled all the data we have on non-native plants into a GIS spreadsheet so we are able to map their distribution. We will continue to add to this dataset and it will be used to guide and monitor the spraying funded by SEPA.

Smolt tracking

MSS have discussed some initial findings from the smolt tracking with us. Sea trout from Loch Eil appeared to stay within this loch until the end of June when some were detected in Loch Linnhe. The trout tagged at Camus na Gaul similarly showed only localised movements until the end of June when they began to be detected further away. Not all the salmon tagged made it to the sea – only 7 of the 10 tagged on the Fionn Lighe and 6 of the 20 hatchery-reared smolts from the Lochy were detected in the sea. The Fionn Lighe salmon stayed close to the head of Loch Eil for a few days, then rapidly moved down to and through the Corran Narrows. Some of the Lochy fish showed odd behaviour – moving down to the Corran Narrows then returning to the top of Loch Linnhe, then back down to Corran.

MSS are writing up the results. They would like to continue the project next year tracking wild smolts from the Lochy through upper Loch Linnhe.

Grigadale dam

The fish pass has been built and has withstood the recent heavy rains. It seems to be operating well and should be passable for salmon and sea trout. A draft report has been sent to SNH. Once this has been approved the final claims can be made to SNH and SEPA. SNH are funding some electrofishing of the Allt Grigadale next year to monitor the success of the project.

Lundy barriers

The barriers have now been removed and the Forestry Commission press officer ensured the project got some publicity. FC have also undertaken some felling work to remove conifers along the left bank of the lower Lundy. We will attempt to carry out snorkel and redd surveys above the area to look for evidence of migratory fish. Once these surveys are complete the grant can be claimed from SEPA.

Strontian stocking

The parr taken from the Strontian River to be grown on for broodstock at the Strontian hatchery seem to be doing well. The genetic analysis of fin clips from the fish is underway at the moment and early results suggest they are derived from a very small number of parents and have low genetic diversity. Parr were also taken from the neighbouring River Carnoch and these seem to be more

diverse. By carefully breeding Strontian and Carnoch fish it should be possible to produce viable offspring that can be stocked into the Strontian.

Lochy PIT tagging

Salmon PIT tagged last year have started returning as grilse on the Lochy. So far one tagged fish has been caught by rod and line on the river and two have been detected by the decoder at Mucomir. The RLA have chosen to pull out of this project and we will now not be able to tag smolts as planned next spring. We will continue to download data from the decoder next year to record smolts tagged this spring returning as grilse and any msw fish from the 2009 smolts.

Shiel project

The TWG have funded work on the Shiel catchment looking at the overall health of salmon and trout stocks in the catchment and the potential impact the cages at Glenfinnan are having on trout growth and behaviour. Electrofishing surveys have already been carried out and snorkel surveys are ongoing. The work will continue into next year with gill netting of trout on the loch and radio-tracking trout caught by rod and line at the cages.

Fisheries Workshop

Our fisheries workshop will take place on 25th November. Speakers will include: Andrew Wallace, Brian Dornan, Bob Morgan, Jon Gibb, Lucy Webster and Stuart Middlemas. The aim is to cover topics such as aquaculture, stocking, predators, genetics and hydros. It will be held at the Moorings Hotel and tickets cost £10. There are still some tickets left, so spread the word.