

Lochaber Fisheries Trust

Minutes of Director's Meeting, 5th June 2009, Torlundy

Present

Viv de Fresnes (VdF), Chairman

Grace Henderson (GH), Vice-chairman

Sandy Grierson (SG), Treasurer

Barbara Collins (BC), Company Secretary

Simon Boulton (SB)

Diane Baum (DB)

Lucy Smith (LS)

Apologies

Donnie MacBeth

Minutes from previous meeting

Health and Safety

The Trust Health and Safety review has been completed. Copies of the document have been signed and filed in the Trust offices.

Sedimentation on the Beasdale Burn

No further signs of sedimentation have been seen, though BC felt the streambed gravels had been altered due to the roadwork.

Slice treatment of Lochy smolts

SEPA permission to treat Lochy smolts with slice on the Arkaig farm site had been refused at the last minute. Expected that the RLA will reapply for permission in future years. SB asked how long salmon smolts take to move down Loch Linnhe. DB said this was not known and an investigation into smolt movements down the loch is urgently needed.

LDSFB

VdF spoke to Jon Gibb and was reassured that the LDSFB were asking for monitoring work to support stocking applications. DB stated that most stocked fish in Lochaber were now reared at the Drimsallie hatchery, which was run on a more professional basis adhering to current best practice. The general consensus was that this could only be a good thing for Lochaber.

Angler's logbooks

LS and DB have produced logbooks to distribute to local anglers along with scale packets so they can record catches of primarily brown trout on lochs. SB took three logbooks to give to anglers that regularly fish Loch Arkaig. VdF has already distributed four to anglers on Loch Morar. **DB and LS to distribute logbooks to other local anglers.**

Electrofishing equipment

The Trust has agreed to lease the RLA electrofishing backpack in return for two days electrofishing on the Lochy per year. LS had used a kit with long anode and cathode cables on a recent electrofishing course that allowed the backpack to be left on the bank. The cost of additional cables to allow the Trust's equipment to be used like this would be £350. All agreed this would be worth doing. **DB to buy long anode and cathode cables.**

Coe Boulder

LS had made contact with Glensanda quarry and was trying to get hold of the relevant person. Permission in principle had been given by the fishery owner and angling club. **LS to pursue Glensanda contact.**

Plankton trawls

DB sent plans of proposed plankton trawls to MH and SSF. Strong winds in early May had delayed the start of the sampling and to date no samples have been analysed due to difficulty obtaining a stempel pipette.

Invasive species

DB had sent biosecurity questionnaire to VdF and SB. SB had returned the completed questionnaire.

Aline Barriers

SB, DB and LS had visited the barriers on the Aline system.

Lochy smolt farm

DB stated change of use from rainbow trout to salmon smolt facility had gone through without consultation. There would be a consultation on use of medicines in the future and DB had asked SEPA to keep the Trust informed of the process.

Annual report

BC has approached a number of local companies for financial support for the annual report. Due to the current economic climate no companies had agreed to provide funding.

LDSFB Meeting

DB had received a very warm welcome at the recent LDSFB meeting. DB had explained the role of the Trust and felt attending such meetings in the future would be productive. The LDSFB now only has two meetings a year.

RAFTS Subscription

SG had written to Andrew Wallace stating the Trust's objection to the increase from 5 to 7% in the amount charged by RAFTS. AW will attend a future Trust meeting to explain RAFTS work and the reason for the increase. SG to inform AW of the date of the next Trust meeting.

Biologist's report

See attached

Treasurer's report

SG stated that the projected Trust income for 2009/10 was £2,500 short of the predicted outgoings, but that we are in a stronger position than we were at this time last year. DB said that contract work often came later in the season and was impossible to predict.

The Trust currently pays about £1,200 as a subscription to the SFCC. DB stated that many of the previous functions of the SFCC were now being carried out by RAFTS and some Trusts had not paid last year's subscription. **DB to look into benefits of SFCC membership.**

Secretary's report

BC had secured the lease on the Trust offices for the next three years at no increase in the rent. All agreed this was a good deal.

BC said that she needed to receive copies of minutes from all meetings attended by the Trust. DB to send BC all minutes from TWG, RAFTS, AMA etc. Meetings.

AOCB

RDO

BC unhappy that Trust employs the RDO and is responsible for them, but they are managed and their job description is determined by other organisations. DB said that she understood the concerns but that other Trusts seemed prepared to accept the arrangement.

SB said the Trust should decide if they wanted an RDO in Lochaber or not. All agreed that the Trust could cover the core functions of an RDO and the money saved could be put to better use. SG stated that this was a hardening of the Trust's position and this would be conveyed at the TWG meeting on the 18th, which GH, DB and possibly VdF would attend for the Trust.

Pay rise for LS

VdF confirmed that LS had received a pay rise.

Date of next meeting

The next Director's meeting will be on 25th September 2009

Biologists report

Lice monitoring

We have attempted netting at Kinlocheil, Camas na Gaul, Strontian, Loch Leven, Loch Ailort, Cuil Bay and Loch Aline. So far we have only achieved the target 30 fish at Kinlocheil. Lice levels appear to be low everywhere, even in upper Linnhe where farms are in their 2nd year of production.

Plankton trawls have been carried out at Kinlocheil, Strontian, Morar, Loch Ailort, Loch Aline, Loch Moidart, Shiel mouth. Strong winds in early May limited the number of samples that could be taken. Analysis of samples has not been carried out yet.

In the absence of an RDO, I have been carrying out farm visits in the area. I have visited Linnhe, Gorsten, Leven and the Loch Nevis farms. Lice levels were low at all sites. The future of the Skye/Lochaber RDO post will be decided at a meeting on 17th June.

Salmon in the Classroom

2008/9 project is coming to a close with electrofishing and kick sampling sessions at the 9 schools involved. Lucy has done a fantastic job running the project and all the teachers are full of praise for her work. The children are sometimes a little too enthusiastic. This year we introduced a prize for the school that raised the most eggs and the RLA donated a trophy, which will now be awarded each year. This year it was won by St Brides, Onich.

We have put in a grant application to SNH to continue the project for a further 3 years. A final decision has not yet been made, but it is looking hopeful.

Grigadale dam

Having great difficulty finding a contractor to make and install the dam for the price I was quoted when the application went in. Likely we may have to return the SEPA funding for this project.

Loch Shiel trout project

We'll be collecting samples of trout, eels, minnow and invertebrates from Loch Shiel in mid June. These and farm fish and pellet samples will be analysed by an MSc student at

Bangor University to look for evidence of wild trout feeding on farm pellets. Preliminary results should be available by October.

Angler's logbooks

We have produced logbooks for anglers based on Jon Watts design. These will be issued to keen and reliable anglers who fish Lochs Morar, Arkaig, Shiel, Lochy and Arienas so they can record the number and size of trout caught and take scale samples for aging. This information should allow us to estimate growth rates of the trout populations in the various lochs.

Website

The LFT now has a website, but it needs a bit of work. At present all we have is a basic template with no content. This was done for free via a small organisation that works with community groups. The structure allows us to add content and pictures quite easily, but our ability to change the general layout is more limited. We hope to work on this through the summer to produce a dazzling, informative website by the end of the year.

Eel project

The three year survey of eels at 50 sites in 10 river catchments will continue in 2009.

Electrofishing

Thanks largely to the LDSFB's insistence that stocking licences will only be issued if monitoring is in place, a number of proprietors have approached the Trust for electrofishing surveys. These will be on the Morar, Lochy, Ailort, Aline and Shiel catchments. Data from the eel survey will be used to supplement these surveys.

Biosecurity

Currently working on a biosecurity plan for the region. Questionnaires have been sent out to river managers to assess the extent of non-native species in the area. We are planning a walk along the River Nevis to raise awareness about non-native species and their impacts and possibly a talk at the Trust office for interested members of the public.

Glensanda

Possibility of electrofishing surveys to look at the impact of sedimentation from the quarry on juvenile fish densities and the effect of installing groynes to increase water flow. Approx value £3 000.

