

## Minutes of Directors Meeting, Torlundy 25<sup>th</sup> September 2009

### **Present**

Viv de Fresnes (VdF) Chairman

Grace Henderson (GH) Vice-chairman

Sandy Grierson (SG) Treasurer

Barbara Collins (BC) Company Secretary

Donnie MacBeth (DM)

Simon Boulton (SB)

Diane Baum (DB)

Lucy Smith (LS)

### **Apologies**

John Rea

### **Minutes from Previous meeting**

#### **Slice Treatment of Lochy Smolts**

Following SEPAs refusal to let Marine Harvest treat the River Lochy smolts with SLICE the Trust was asked by Jon Gibb to write a letter of support for the use of SLICE addressed to Scottish ministers. The Trust agreed to write a letter condoning the use of SLICE in an experimental, time-limited context, but not for routine treatment of raised smolts. This was sent to Jon Gibb to assess its usefulness in his appeal. He decided not to use the letter and later asked the Trust to justify its position on this issue. DB asked the Directors for their opinion. SB commented that something had to be done to get over the lice problem and as the alternative was moving fish farms, which seems unlikely to happen in the foreseeable future, then perhaps SLICE should be used. He went on to comment that once you have decided to stock smolts it makes sense to do everything you can to improve their survival. DB reasserted that genetic diversity would suffer if stocked smolts were given a survival advantage. VdF agreed with DB and stated that he had an issue with stocked fish getting an advantage. The directors went on to discuss the Trusts stance on stocking and it was decided that DB would produce a document on the risks and benefits of smolt stocking and this would be circulated to the directors for their consideration. VdF

pointed out that the Trust is here to protect wild fish so cannot support anything that would damage them. **DB to circulate document about smolt stocking.**

## **Plankton**

All samples had been analysed and no lice found, though a few samples containing possible lice had been sent to Jim Raffell for checking. DB and LS are planning to go to Shieldaig to look at their lice sampling methods.

## **Aline barriers**

DB had spoken to restoration fund advisor at SEPA and the barriers didn't qualify for SEPA funding as they were manmade barriers to aid passage over natural falls.

## **RAFTS subscriptions**

SG agreed to invite Andrew Wallace to the next Directors meeting so AW could justify the increase in RAFTS subscription. DB commented that the electro-fishing database provided by SFCC was about to be updated, and that access to the new improved database might be worth the SFCC subscription. Subscriptions to both RAFTS and SFCC were to be reassessed at the directors meeting in May, as this was when they were due. **SG to invite Andrew Wallace to the next Directors meeting.**

## **Chairmans Report**

VdF read through a letter written to the TWG (see attached) raising some queries about how the role of RDO was being covered, and what was happening to TWG assets stored at the Trust. He asked the directors if they were happy with the content. Everyone agreed the content was good. SG asked what part of the RDO role the Trust would cover. DB replied we weren't quite sure yet, but it was likely to include all the seine netting. DB raised concern about the Skye RDO managing the Lochailort and Nevis AMA's, as it was unclear how Lochaber would have any input into decisions. SG and VdF agreed with this and it was decided to include the point in the letter (updated version attached). **VdF to update letter and send to Arthur Griffiths.**

BC commented that the wrong letterhead had been used in the letter, and suggested it looked unprofessional and should not be used as it was not registered with company house. VdF questioned if the latter point was a problem. GH suggested that we have both letterheads registered. Everyone agreed this was a good idea. **BC to register new letterhead with Company House.**

DB informed everyone that RAFTS had discussed the worth and future direction of the TWG at a recent meeting, and as a result of this discussion a list of actions had been submitted to the TWG, which RAFTS felt necessary for TWG to carry out if they (RAFTS) were going to continue to support the process.

## **Biologists Report.**

See attached

Biologists asked directors if anyone knew of somewhere that would display artwork so we could have an art exhibition from the Salmon in the Classroom work. BC suggested Fort William Library, which seemed like an excellent idea.

The content of the website was discussed and it was agreed that £750 could be spent on getting a professionally designed website. **LS to contact website designers and get website underway.**

## **Treasurers report**

SG went through the accounts, and explained that the £10,000 from the Grigadale dam project is in the project account whilst the project is on hold. DB asked if the Trust had received any proprietor funding. SG replied that Cona Glen had donated £100. VdF added that the Mackintosh Foundation had given us funding for work in Morar. BC suggested we stop paying the insurance for the Lochy water abstraction project. Everyone agreed. **BC to cancel Lochy water abstraction insurance.**

## **AOB**

It was noted that the Annual Report should have a list of trustees in, and display the company number somewhere. **LS to include this in the next Annual Report.**

VdF noted the Trust vehicle was soon to be up for renewal and suggested we start thinking about whether to keep it, or get a different model.

## **Date of next meeting**

The next directors meeting will be on 30<sup>th</sup> Nov 2009 at 11:00

# **Biologists report**

## **WORK COMPLETED OR IN PROGRESS**

### **Post-smolt lice sampling**

Good sample sizes of sea trout post smolts caught at two sites in Loch Linnhe, Loch Leven and Loch Sunart. Lice levels were generally low, the best seen in a second production year since sampling began. Seine netting will continue throughout the year at Kinlocheil and Camas na Gaul.

### **Plankton trawls**

Analysis of the plankton trawls carried out in Loch Linnhe, Loch Ailort, Loch Sunart, Shiel mouth, Loch Moidart and Morar found no lice. But we do think it is working. We plan to do plankton trawls at Kinlocheil and Camas na Gaul through the year at the same time as seine netting to try to link planktonic densities and burdens on fish. We will repeat the wider trawls during next year's smolt run.

### **Electrofishing**

Five sites on the Aline, Ailort, Moidart, Lochy, Cona & Scaddle, Strontian, Leven, Inverie, Shiel and Nevis were electrofished as part of the eel survey. In addition the Aline, Morar, Ailort, Lochy, Inverie and Shiel have paid for more sites to be fished on these systems. We have nearly finished the surveys and overall salmon fry and parr densities have been much better than seen in 2008. Juvenile trout densities appear to be lower than in previous years.

We are carrying out electrofishing surveys on Corroul Estate, Dubh Lìghe and Slatach as part of the Environmental Impact Assessment for hydro schemes. This pays well and can provide useful data on fish densities and river habitats.

### **Eel survey**

We are in the second year of a three year eel survey funded by SNH. Good numbers of eels were found in the Strontian, Moidart and Shiel. We have recorded eels caught at all sites electrofished this year to widen the scope of the survey. (Monster eels were caught by fyke net on Loch Shiel as part of the isotope study).

### **Trout Isotope project**

Trout were gill netted from Loch Shiel at one site close to the Glenfinnan farm cages and a control site half way down the loch. We caught one very ugly 16lb trout close to the cages. Benthic grabs, plankton samples and eels were also taken at each site. Andy Mackay of Bangor University took the fish away to process and the results are expected in mid October.

### **Website**

We have approached a local web design firm to quote for professional production of the website. Our planned content includes the following pages:

- Home – introduction to the Trust and its aims and remit
- News – Recent events, meetings, new projects, vacancies etc.

- Lochaber and its fish – brief overview of the region and its fish
- Our work – sub-divided into separate pages for different projects or areas of work
- Gallery – lots of pretty pictures
- Membership – pdf membership form to download, benefits of membership
- Contact – contact details for the Trust and other useful links

## **FUTURE PROJECTS**

### **Coe boulder**

Lucy has mobilised the army in to look at this. We don't know at this stage what is possible, but a meeting in early November with Sergeant Major Caldwell, the Coe angling club and the local heritage society should be fun.

### **Salmon in the Classroom**

We have been doing this for years, but Lucy has secured funding for the next three years from SNH and has lots of ideas to extend the project into all areas of the school curriculum. Except dance and drama.

### **Lundy Barriers**

There are two old barriers on the River Lundy that the Trust is looking into. They are owned by FC, but may be eligible for the SEPA restoration fund. The first stage would be to get an engineer to assess options for barrier removal or fish passes.

### **Lochy smolt PIT tagging**

Three thousand artificially-reared Lochy smolts were PIT tagged in spring. Some will hopefully return as grilse next year. A PIT tag decoder is being fitted to the Mucomir counter this winter.

## **TENTATIVE PLANS**

### **Experimental Slice treatment of Lochy smolts**

Following a meeting with Marine Scotland scientists, there is the possibility of experimentally treating reared smolts with Slice. Comparing the return rates of treated and untreated smolts will quantify the effect of lice on smolt survival. The Lochy is an obvious choice for inclusion in this study, but other rivers on the west coast may also be used. I've no idea if or to what extent the Trust would be involved in the work.

### **Sea trout tracking**

Marine Scotland scientists also raised the possibility of using hydrophones to track sea trout smolts in Loch Linnhe. There is hydrographic data on Loch Linnhe from SAMs and this combined with the lice data we currently have could provide a model system similar to Shildaig. I was also thinking of putting in a proposal to the TWG to track sea trout in Loch Linnhe and along the west coast with the money saved from not having an RDO in Lochaber.

