



**Minutes of Western Isles District Salmon Fisheries Board Meeting 27<sup>th</sup> August 2019 5.30pm.  
Meeting Room 3 Stornoway Council Offices.**

**Present:**

Dickon Green (Chairman)  
Jason Laing (Clerk to the Board)  
Carolyn Ferguson (Admin assistant)  
Sir Peter Cresswell (U&HE)  
Richard Kershaw (Soval)  
Donnie MacDonald (Rodel)  
Stephen Hodges (Grimersta)  
Iain Roxburgh (Gress Angling Club)  
Innes Morrison (Amhunnsuidh and Morsgail)  
Donnie Whiteford (Garynahyne)  
Sally Reynolds (Carloway)  
Mark MacDonald (SNH)  
Paul Hopper (OHFT)

**Apologies**

Victor Beamish (Grimersta)  
Dr Jan Abel (Stockinish)  
Fred Martin (Aline)  
Chris Macrae (Eisken)  
Iain Maciver (Stornoway Trust)  
Iain Trayner (Stornoway AA)  
Ivar Mcary (Soval AC)

**Chairmans Introduction**

Dickon Green welcomed everyone and thanked them for coming. He voiced thanks to the Clerk to the Board as well as Peter Cresswell and Richard Kershaw for their support as the steering group.

It was agreed that the steering group should continue to work together on behalf of the board for the next twelve months.

He stated that although this was a challenging time for Migratory fisheries there were also positives and opportunities through habitat improvement, nutrient enrichment programmes, better regulation of aquaculture and new technologies like those involved in big projects currently underway, some of which may come to the Western Isles in the future. He also thanked the Outer Hebrides Fisheries Trust (OHFT) for all the good work they do.

**Update From The Clerk To The Board**

Jason Laing updated the board on the way minutes are to be approved and distributed. As the Scottish Government requires minutes to be submitted within three months of meetings and the Board only meets every six months, minutes are to be emailed round for comment, Board members will have one month to comment or raise any points then the minutes will be signed off and submitted.

It was agreed that with the exception of Levy invoices which should also be posted, all correspondence should be through email.

JL asked if any members had any new interests to declare or existing interests to amend. There were none.

Interim accounts and an interim report were distributed, JL said that the Boards account stood at

£29,798.28 but that a bank error meant this was £271.20 higher than it should be. This error was being rectified and the bank had apologised. There are still £29,208.34 of Levy payments outstanding, £9008.34 of which is instalments arranged by fisheries and £20,200.00 is overdue.

There is £42,000 of the £57,000 core funding that the Board had agreed to provide OHFT for 2019/20 still to be transferred.

It was agreed that fisheries had had more than enough time to pay the invoices and that a final demand should be issued for immediate payment, should this not be received in reasonable time then legal action should be taken.

\*AP. Carolyn to send out final payment reminders. Draft the letter for approval by JL and DG first.

JL briefed the Board that a total of 14 water bailiffs had been appointed since the formation of the Board in February.

The Board was informed that the new website was up and running at [www.widsfb.org](http://www.widsfb.org) and Carolyn Ferguson was thanked for her hard work setting it up. It is to be updated regularly.

JL briefed on the planning applications that the board was consulted on and that Paul Hopper would expand on later in the meeting.

### **Review of the 2019 season so far**

Dickon asked those present what their impression of the fishing season so far had been. He felt that the grilse run had become more condensed. Several fisheries felt that the grilse had arrived early, aided by the high water levels, but that the Sea Trout and Finnock had been very late but were now appearing in decent numbers. Paul Hopper confirmed that this was supported by the results of OHFT's sweep netting programme. Richard Kershaw agreed this was the same at Soval.

Iain Roxburgh said that no salmon or grilse had been seen or caught on the Gress river. Although the high water would have enabled them to run through very quickly he felt it had been a very poor run.

Peter Cresswell said that although the exceptional high water this year had helped it was vital to protect fish from seals and poaching in those years that water levels are low.

### **Stocking**

Dickon Green talked about the fact that stocking was a contentious and difficult subject, he felt that each case should be looked at in its own rights and on a case by case basis. He acknowledged that while fishery owners wishing to stock only have their fisheries best interests at heart, inappropriate stocking can be counter productive and stressed that it was important to follow the best principles of stocking as there was a danger that powers to grant permission to stock could be taken away from Fisheries Boards if guidelines were not followed.

He said that a sub-committee was to be formed to look at any future applications and it was important that there was a good balance of views represented. Paul Hopper agreed that each case should be looked at on its own merits and gave a brief run down on the types of stocking that could be looked at, Mitigation, Restoration, scientific and enhancement.

Dickon then asked for volunteers to sit on this sub-committee. Peter Cresswell and Iain Roxburgh put themselves forward, Innes Morrison suggested that Iain Maciver be asked and Sally Reynolds suggested Kenny MacLennan of Carloway Estate Trust. It was agreed Iain and Kenny would be asked to sit alongside those present who had put themselves forward. They are to be advised by Paul Hopper, and Mark Macdonald also agreed to act as an advisor.

\*AP Jason to approach Kenny and Iain on joining the Stocking Sub-committee.

Innes Morrison said that any member of the sub-committee who put in an application to stock should stand down and all present agreed.

It was agreed that applications should be dealt with by email where meetings were not possible and that any recommendations made would need to be agreed by the Board.

### **Discussion on how to improve sea patrols and the appointment of a superintendent**

JL noted that the previous board had appointed a superintendent to co-ordinate bailiffing effort and act as a point of contact for poaching matters and felt it would be beneficial if this position was reinstated. He suggested that Donnie Whiteford would be a good candidate and all present agreed. Donnie agreed to accept the position.

A general discussion on sea patrols and areas that were still not patrolled followed. It was noted that some estates did a good job patrolling their areas but there was more that could be done.

On behalf of Grimersta estate, JL raised the issue of funding for the Loch Roag sea patrol. It was felt that this should continue to be on a voluntary contribution basis from Loch Roag and Langavat proprietors. Peter Cresswell stated that while UHE patrol their own coastline he recognised the good work done by the Grimersta boat and offered increase the UHE contribution to £500 per year. Dickon Green said that Uig Lodge Estate would also like to contribute £500 towards it.

JL informed the meeting that Bill Whyte of the Wester Ross Fisheries Board had a RIB that could be brought across for patrolling areas in the Western Isles that were otherwise not covered. The cost of this would be £400 per patrol/day plus any extra expenses involved in getting the boat and crew to the islands. It was felt that this could be a very good option for next season and that the Board should fund this for a one year trial, Dickon asked JL to get a price for a weeks trip. Richard Kershaw felt that it would be worth spending up to £5000. It was noted that in order for this to be fair to all Board members the trips should cover several key areas including the Uists and that further consultation with fisheries to identify key areas would take place.

\*AP JL to do a costing including the quote from Bill Whyte, any other travel, accommodation and any other necessary expenses.

Peter Cresswell asked about the possibility of drone patrols and a discussion was had about this. It was noted that while it could be a useful tool for identifying illegal nets, drone footage was inadmissible as evidence.

### **Disease Control**

In light of on ongoing concerns regarding Gyrodactylus Salaris and the unidentified skin disease that affected salmon in some river in Scotland this year it was felt that the Board should have a disease control policy in place.

Paul Hopper said he would check what the latest information from FMS was regarding this. He said that googling "Clean, dry, check" was the best source of information regarding stopping the spread of GS. Peter Cresswell said that at Uig and Hamanway they made visiting anglers disinfect their tackle and suggested this should happen elsewhere. Paul Hopper said that the Trust had all the necessary equipment for disinfecting should it be needed. It was noted by Iain Roxburgh that getting all visiting anglers to disinfect once on the island was not practical for fisheries like the Gress.

It was agreed that the latest GS declaration form from FMS should be available on the Board website and from the clerk for fisheries to adapt and distribute.

### **Update from Paul Hopper on OHFT**

Paul Hopper updated the Board on the survey work that had taken place this year. OHFT have completed 5 tagging events between Gress and Steinish with 1 remaining at Steinish on 01/10/19. A total of 97 Sea Trout have been tagged and 13 recaptured/previously tagged fish.

He said they now had 9 volunteers to assist with electrofishing and although hampered by constant high water they were a third of the way through the National Electrofishing Programme.

He said that all 22 sweep netting surveys had been completed and showed low sea lice levels but this had been expected due to it being year 1 in the fish farms production cycle.

Innes Morrison stated that he had been told that every MOWI site on the island had Anaemic Gill Disease present.

Paul talked about the emergency licences that the Trust had helped to put in place on some fisheries would allow the use of dams to release fresh water in the event of a drought like that of 2018.

He stated that there has been 5 informal consultations brought to OHFT/WIDSFB attention. There has been 4 formal planning consultations including the Vuia Mor (Loch Roag) and Cheesebay (North Uist) EMP's.

He talked about the environmental management plans (EMP's) being put in place and the challenges that implementing them would bring in terms of work for the Trust but stressed that although they were a temporary measure and more regulatory change was needed they were an important step forward in monitoring the aquaculture industry.

He said that overall the outlook was quite positive and that there were plans for all cages in loch Roag to be empty by May 2020 which would be very welcome.

There has also been preliminary discussions between OHFT and Scottish Water about sensitive catchments ahead of formal applications being submitted following the publication of their drought mitigation plan. He voiced concerns about possible abstraction from the Barvas system and stated that the information being given to other parties by Scottish water didn't reflect the discussions had with OHFT.

## **AOB**

Dickon brought up the subject of salary for Clerk to the Board. Although it had been agreed at the last meeting that this should be a paid position a figure had not been agreed.

Jason Laing agreed to leave the meeting while this was discussed. On his return he was told that an amount of £200 per month had been agreed to be reviewed at the next meeting in February. This will be invoiced by Jason to the Board. It was suggested to do it on a 6 monthly basis since we are half way through the first year. (email invoice to Carolyn and Dickon)

Peter Cresswell raised the subject of the Fishpal website, he stated that he been in touch with them over an issue which had subsequently been corrected. Several others present also said they were very unhappy with it. Innes Morrison said that he could not get the site to put the correct contact details up, he felt it was not fit for purpose and that he was not going to use it for reporting catches. He added that many other fisheries in Scotland had left Fishpal and set up their own systems. There was a discussion about how best to proceed. Paul Hopper said that it would not be practical for Donnie Maciver (OHFT) to administer Fishpal and an alternative as it would be difficult to maintain two sites. Carolyn suggested updating the OHFT website to include fishery pages as an alternative to FishPal to keep everything in house, reduce costs, and have a more user-friendly experience. it was agreed that feedback should be sought from all fisheries in the Western Isles and other options should be looked at although no decisions would be taken at this point

\*AP. Paul to send/email links of other Trusts websites with fishing to Jason.

\*AP. Jason to Seek feedback with regard to the Fishpal website.

Iain Roxburgh brought up the issue of seal predation off the Gress river. He asked if there was anything the Board could do to assist. He said that due to the very public location of the problem it would not be possible for any members of Gress angling club to obtain a licence to shoot seals. He said that non-lethal deterrents had been considered but were not practical either. Jason Laing said that as far as he was aware there were no other options open to the Board on this issue but all present were sympathetic to the problem. Richard Kershaw wanted to remind fisheries that seal licenses must be applied for before 31<sup>st</sup> October.

Richard Kershaw thanked Dickon for all his work as Chairman.

Dickon once again thanked those present for attending and said that the annual meeting of proprietors would follow immediately, this was also a public meeting and anyone wishing to was welcome to attend.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the WIDSFB was set for Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> February 2020 at 2pm, venue TBC.

**These minutes were approved and have been signed by:**

Dickon Green 

**Date 06/11/2019**

---

Jason Laing



**Date 06/11/2019**

---