

**Minutes of Western Isles District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting**

**9th March 2023 at 3pm.**

**Willow Room, Caberfeidh Hotel and Via Zoom**

**Present:**

Jason Laing (Clerk to the Board)

Dickon Green (WIDSFB Chairman, Uig Lodge)

Innes Morrison (Amhuinnsuidhe and Morsgail)

Gail Tunnah (Finsbay)

Richard Kershaw (Soval)

George Morris (Finsbay)

Donnie Macdonald (Rodel)

Kenny Maclennan (Carloway)

Donnie Whiteford (Garynahine)

Chris Macrae (Eishken)

Iain Roxburgh (Gress AA)

Richard Davies (OHFT)

Simon Hunt (Hamanavay)

Jason Hill (Morsgail)

Angus Mackenzie (Scaliscro)

Alex Davies (Aline)

Iain Trayner (SAA)

**Apologies**

Mark Macdonald (NatueScot)

Stuart Baird (SEPA)

Victor Beamish (Grimersta)

Paul Hopper (OHFT)

Robert Stewart (Aline)

Laurent Hilde (Garynahine & Barvas)

1. **Levy rate for 2023/24**

Chairman Dickon Green told the meeting that the revaluation of fisheries rateable value by the assessor had not yet been completed. He proposed that the Board meet again in April once the new valuation role is complete to agree the rate per £ for the coming year.

He proposed that the Board aim to keep the income generated the same as the 2022/23 financial year, and that the Board also commits to providing the same amount of core funding for OHFT (£60,000). Richard Kershaw suggested it might be sensible to aim for a small increase in the amount raised, around 2%, so as not to fall too far behind the rate of inflation.

This was agreed by all present.

This is to be discussed again and confirmed at the meeting in April.

1. **Update from the Clerk to the Board**

Jason Laing briefed the meeting on the Boards accounts which are looking reasonably healthy, with a small surplus projected for the financial year.

He updated on Bailiifs – there has been one new warrant card issued since the last meeting and there are currently 25 bailiffs in the Western Isles.

He then updated the meeting on a freedom of information request received by Don Staniford relating to aquaculture and the West coast tracking project.

1. **Bailiffing and enforcement**

Donnie Whiteford told the meeting that Adam Mott and Gordon Mackenzie were not likely to be available as extra watchers for this coming season. He noted that the Board had previously agreed to continue with this and asked that Board members and estates assist with trying to recruit a suitable person for the role. It was noted that it is important that it is the right sort of person who can work well unsupervised.

The issue of accommodation for seasonal watchers was also raised. Richard Kershaw said that Soval could provide accommodation if required.

AP – Clerk to email estates requesting assistance with recruiting and accommodating an extra watcher

Donnie Macdonald asked if there would be a pre-season meeting of bailiffs as in previous years and it was agreed this should take place in late April, date TBC.

Innes Morrison said that if no suitable individuals were found more resources should be put towards other anti-poaching measures such as sea patrols.

It was agreed that the Board should invest in more equipment this year. Donnie Whiteford will again provide a useful list of surveillance equipment to all estates.

1. **Members Interests**

No new interests were declared.

1. **Update from Richard Davies on OHFT**

Richard Davies updated the meeting on the West Coast Tracking Project which is set to continue in Loch Roag and Loch Erisort this Spring. He said that there were plans to expand the project with regard to the Sea Trout tags, with as many deployed as possible.

He said that there were no results available for the 2023 tagging yet, partly due to unavoidable delays retrieving the receivers but also because there is so much data to analyse it does take time, but he will update the Board as soon as preliminary results are available.

He updated the meeting on work that is planned for the coming year, including some monitoring work which has still to be confirmed such the National Electrofishing Progranmme, the FMS (Fisheries Management Scotland) Costal Fyke Net and sweep netting.

He noted that it was going to be an extremely busy time for OHFT and they are looking to take on an apprentice. He said that the Trust admin assistant Rebecca had handed in her notice, and they were looking at options to replace the post with a combined admin /fieldwork role.

He expressed the appreciation for the volunteers that assist OHFT with their work, from Angling clubs and estates.

He updated on the financial position of the Trust.

He then talked about the EMP’s that are in place and the monitoring work required and still to be agreed.

He briefed on the Isotope study that could possibly identify sites that sea lice have originated, which has taken place but results are not yet available.

He thanked the Board for its continued support.

He then updated on the new Hebrides fishing website that is currently being developed. He said that FishPal had not worked particularly well for many fisheries and that the new site would be tailored to fisheries in the Hebrides.

Gail Tunnah noted that FishPal were very disappointed to lose the Hebrides. Richard said that there was still dialogue with FishPal and there may be options for cooperation going forward.

Gail said that the Finsbay Fishery still planned to continue with FishPal.

Dickon asked Richard if had a view of where he would like the Trust to be in 5 years.

Richard said that while expansion was necessary he didn’t want it getting too big, but be fit for purpose. He also noted the risk of OHFT becoming little more than a monitoring tool for SEPA and the Scottish Government and that it was important to try and avoid that so they can maintain their core aims.

1. **AOB**

Dickon raised the subject of whether the role of Clerk to the Board should be a paid position. He said that it had previously been agreed that this should be the case, but the clerk had waived the salary for the previous two years. At this point the Clerk left the meeting to allow the Board to discuss the matter.

The Board agreed that the clerk should invoice the Board for the amount of £2,500 for the current financial year and thereafter invoice for the amount of £250 per month. A record should also be kept of hours worked by the Clerk and that this would be reviewed on an annual basis.

Kenny Maclennan said that Carloway estate had been contacted by a writer looking to write a book on wild fishing. He said he had directed the writer to Donnie Maciver at OHFT but that Donnie should ensure the writer contacts the proprietor of any lochs or rivers he visits.

Richard Davies told the meeting that the latest BBC Attenborough programme ‘Wild Isles’ is due to air and that the series contains footage of Salmon filmed by Richard in the Hebrides.

**Date of Next Meeting**

The date for the next meeting of the WIDSFB was set for Wednesday 26th April 2023 at 3pm, this being the meeting to confirm Levy rates and donation to OHFT and will be via Zoom.

The Autumn meeting date will be confirmed at the above meeting in April.

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

Dickon Green

Dickon Green  **Date 12/04/2023**

Jason Laing

Jason Laing **Date 12/03/2023**