

Minutes

RAFTS/ASFB Joint Working Group

10th Meeting: Birnam Institute, Birnam

30 October 2015

Present:

Alasdair Laing
Andrew Wallace, Chair
Chris Horrill
Brian Davidson
Jamie Ribbens
Nick Yonge
Simon McKelvey
Roger Knight
Mark Bilsby

Marshall Halliday
Alison Baker
Jim Henderson
Mark Bilsby

Apologies:

Craig MacIntyre

1. Minutes of last meeting

These were approved. Following a later request from Scottish Government, it was agreed to amend paragraph 4.5 as follows, with additions made in red:

*“That **the overall management priorities** will not be materially different....”*

2. Matters Arising

Future professional advice – this will be further considered, with one of the potential areas likely to focus on how existing staff, resources and property of boards and trusts are dealt with in terms of transfer to a new system.

Proposed conservation limits – the new proposals for a conservation limit approach to regulation had raised concerns across the network particularly the effects on angling in some rivers. These concerns had also been articulated in the joint ASFB/RAFTS response to the proposals.

JR provided an update on a recent meeting convened by Marine Scotland Science (MSS). This meeting was not organised to discuss the detail of individual district categories, but to consider the overall methodology being used and to organise a wider meeting with representative biologists from all areas of Scotland. The methodology was discussed with the over-reliance on MSS held rod catch data and some of the data corrections being used in the model raised as concerns. The wider meeting proposed will allow MSS to explain the methodology and consider concerns about it. In particular the meeting is looking at what locally held data could be used or collected in the future to refine the model as it is to be re-run annually. It was widely recognised that the overall concept

of applying CLs was sound, but that further work was required to ensure the best available data informed the methodology. It was noted that some adjustments have been made – particularly in relation to lochs within main river channels and that some DSFBs have been requested to provide more information on catches for the districts highlighted with an asterisk in the original consultation. It was accepted that the process is a start – albeit with very limited data, and it is encouraging that the DSFB/Trust biologists are now engaged in the process with the opportunity to help refine the approach further. The use of CL for sea trout stocks was also mentioned as worth pursuing with MSS but it is recognised that the complex relationship between resident and migratory forms of trout will make this more complicated to achieve than for salmon.

Update on progress with WFR

3.1 Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG) – update

MB reported that the SRG is functioning well. In terms of developmental thinking, the ASFB/RAFTS sector are clearly being proactive, and may at times appear to be ‘ahead’ of official thinking. The SRG are currently examining the principle of close times, finance and constitutional matters. It was recognised that there needs to be close integration between the various stakeholder groups, in particular the SRG and the recently formed Strategy Working Group (SWG). It was agreed by all that there may be merit in these two groups becoming one. A draft version of the Wild Fisheries Strategy is being developed by this group, and it was agreed that it would be beneficial for the JWG to consider this draft. A copy had already been circulated (with the agreement of Scottish Government) and comments should be provided to BD by 4 November. **ACTION: ALL**

3.2 Professional advice - Future needs

It was reported that advice had been provided from OSCR to Government on constitutional matters, and this may be influential in terms of future structures. MB agreed to facilitate the sharing of this advice with the agreement of Scottish Government. **ACTION: MB**

In terms of future structures, it appeared to be the case that options could be wide-ranging, with the likely exception of non-departmental body status. It was suggested that the ‘approved body’ status procedure might be open to a range of legal options and this open-ended outcome was considered undesirable. It was agreed to look at the structure provided by the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) which may look promising though the group agreed that it was the structure rather than the SCIO vehicle itself which was of interest. It was agreed that this structure would be circulated to the JWG for comment by Wed 4th Nov after which AW would discuss with legal advisers to determine whether there was further advice that might be useful when considering constitutional arrangements. Roger Knight agreed to assist with drafting any instructions should they be necessary and it was agreed that a discussion should also be had with Scottish Government to determine what advice, if any, they had had from their solicitors. **ACTION: SMcK to circulate SCIO documentation. All to provide input. AW to take up with ScotGov and legal advisers.**

3.3 FMOs

- **Local discussions – report**

AW and AL reported that they had met with a range of groupings of Boards/Trusts in the past months, and these meetings had been generally positive. Such meetings had stimulated thinking on future change and rationalisation. It was recognised that some form of steer and guidance from Government on the general parameters for FMOs would be very helpful and will help further influence change. It was noted that the time for this was not yet right, but it was hoped that at some point in the near future there would be some official recognition of what may or may not be desirable in terms of geographic scale for FMOs. AW and AL agreed to continue to assist with discussions where required. **Action: AWa/AL**

- **Work on Ness, Beaulieu & Lochaber**

Chris Conroy was welcomed to the meeting to provide an outline of the exploratory work in the Ness, Beaulieu and Lochaber areas. It was made clear that this was a critical analysis, and not a proposal for a pilot FMO region. CC outlined that the model examined for the 3 areas suggested that co-ordinated management would provide critical mass and makes operational sense – but still suffered a funding shortfall. It was recognised that project funding will not be as predictable – and that raised a challenge of how that could be reflected in modelling? CC was commended for the work undertaken so far and it was agreed the approach undertaken should be examined further with the view to producing a template from which other areas might make similar analyses. CC agreed to look into this in conjunction with a small group (see action under ‘finance’ below). It was also agreed that it would be useful to share this work with officials, and AWa offered to facilitate this. It was also agreed that Chris Conroy should join the JWG for future meetings. **ACTION: CC/AWa**

- **Other matters**

Finance - current income & expenditure – work is underway to analyse the existing income streams to Boards/trusts and identify where that money is spent, how much is ‘restricted’ funds etc. Care is being taken to identify the transfer of funds between Boards/Trusts to ensure that there is no double counting. The aim is to have this information compiled and presented at the next SRG. **ACTION: CH**

Taking this approach down to a regional level, and using the model being used by Ness, Beaulieu & Lochaber, it was agreed to aim to have similar detailed analyses compiled by the end of the year of those FMO areas where discussions were progressing positively. It was accepted that this exercise is likely to show a funding deficit in many areas, including areas currently in existence and not necessarily likely to be subject to change, and running such models for other areas will help demonstrate this. A small group will be formed to develop the template and run similar models in conjunction with the appropriate areas. It was also agreed that running these models may help people with their discussions about the size of FMO areas and also with negotiations with Government about funding shortfalls. **ACTION: CH/CC/AB**

Enforcement & compliance – The ASFB Bailiff Development Group is assisting with legal and enforcement matters in relation to reform. There is an ongoing discussion around the future name

of bailiffs. BD emphasised the importance of maintaining a core enforcement role and to ensure that the key enforcement powers and duties – albeit modernised – are maintained and strengthened in the new system. Future updates will be provided from JH/BD in this area. **ACTION: JH/BD**

Close times – MB reported that the SRG are considering close times and how a future structure might govern these – work is needed to scope out ideas on how local and national close times might be managed. MB agreed to prepare a short paper to help reach a position within the JWG. **ACTION: MB**

3. **Communications** – Everyone is content with current level and frequency of communications from ASFB, RAFTS and the JWG. It was agreed that there would be some sense in clarifying the remit and structure of the increasing amount of stakeholder groups, and who was representing RAFTS and ASFB and in what capacity. **ACTION: BD**
4. **Update on rod licence discussions** – AWA reported that a meeting has now been organised with angling representatives/governing bodies later in November and that a report will be provided. **ACTION: AWa**
5. **Any other business** - none.
6. **Date of next meeting** – 3 December, Birnam – 10.00