

**TWG Plenary Group Meeting, 30 November
LHH Conference Lounge
Heriot-Watt University**

Chairman David Wilson

Welcome and apologies

1. A welcome was extended to new attendees Ian Pritchard (Crown Estate), Peter Kinloch (Skye District Salmon Fishery Board), Lucy Fry (RDO (Argyll and Lochaber), Neil Trotter (ERAD Press), Eric Verspoor (FRS deputising for John Armstrong), Neil Purvis (FRS deputising for Pauline Munro)¹. Apologies were received from Ben Hadfield (Marine Harvest Scotland), David Mackay (SANA), John Armstrong (FRS), Sarah Bayley (RAFTS), Ailsa Hayes (RDO West Sutherland & Wester Ross) & Laurence Larmour (RDO Lochaber).

Summary of recent Policy Developments

2. Phil Gilmour briefed Members on recent policy developments

Aquaculture and Fisheries Bill.

3. Members had before them information paper 1 which set out future process and timing for the bill. It was noted that the Stage 1 debate was likely to take place on 13 December.

Proposed Pan Fish/ Marine Harvest Merger

4. Scottish Executive Ministers had fully engaged with the Competition Commission regarding implications for the Scottish industry. The Competition Commission had published a statement that it has provisionally cleared the anticipated acquisition by Pan Fish ASA of marine harvest NV. (<http://www.competition-commission.org.uk/inquiries/ref2006/panfish/index.htm>). The Commission are required to publish a final position by 20 December. A meeting to finalise the process is scheduled for mid-December in Geneva. Members will be kept informed of the outcome.

Planning Bill

5. Fish farms will be covered by the planning Bill and new applications will be handled by the relevant local authority. Authorisation of existing farms will be reviewed and audited to ensure there is compliance with the 1999 EIA recommendations and natural heritage requirements.

Trade Defence

6. A complaint had been raised by the European Union Salmon Producers Group against Norway of dumping i.e. placing salmon on the European market at a price lower than production. An MIP of 2.80 Euros per kilo, whole fish weight. However, five Member States have put forward a proposal to suspend this.

¹ Attendees shown at Annex 1.

Relocation

7. The Scottish Executive had made available £500K per year until the end of financial year 07/08 to facilitate applications for relocation of farms. To date Bryan Wallace is actively assisting Pan Fish, Lakeland, West Minch Salmon and Hebridean Salmon with applications for funding.

Draft minute of March 2006 meeting

8. One minor amendment was recommended to paragraph 2 of the draft minute. It was noted that Scottish Quality Salmon had not been closed. It was still in existence but the SSPO had taken over as the representative body for the Scottish industry. It was agreed that the Secretariat should amend the minute accordingly and post on the Scottish Executive Website and the TWG Website once up and running in early 2007.

Action Secretariat

Actions arising from previous meeting

9. All actions arising from the previous meeting in March 2006 had been delivered or had been subsumed within the new management practices of Management Group as recommended by Monro, Wallace & Webster in their review of TWG October 2005. The issue of sterilisation of imported salmon eggs against *Gyrodactylus salaris* was clarified. Eggs are not imported from Norwegian catchments affected by *Gs*. Where eggs are exported from *Gs* free areas of Norway there is a requirement to disinfect under the EU Fish Health Directive. The SSPO has established risk-based guidance for producers wishing to import. Members were informed that all PO Members disinfect all imported eggs on receipt, thus providing added risk reduction. It was noted that the *Gs* Task Force would publish its findings on 7 December. A web-link will be circulated to all Members.

Action Secretariat

10. Jean Balfour had tendered her resignation from TWG Plenary activity to the Secretariat on 29 November. The Chairman expressed his thanks to Jean for her contribution to the work of the Group and it was agreed that he would write to Jean to express the Group's thanks for her work.

Action Secretariat and David Wilson

TWG Restoration Sub-Group Review

11. Phil Gilmour introduced Discussion Paper 1, which was the output from his review on behalf of Management Group. The review sets out the views of the TWG Management Group on the Restoration Sub-Group's role and remit. Revised policy objectives, procedures, processes, outputs and programme for delivery are identified. Any funding gaps which might impede delivery should be identified and addressed by AST, SNH, SEPA and TWG. SEPA were encouraged to become more involved in the process. There was also a stated need for greater co-ordination between SNH/SEPA and FRS with respect to data collection.

12. The Core Restoration Sub Group was largely content with the output from the review but acknowledged the paper required some further fine tuning. Members agreed that the paper should take account of the ongoing restoration projects the Restoration Co-ordinator was currently contributing to. Several draft publications were nearing completion and would be published jointly by AST & FRS. It was also acknowledged that the roles of the three scientific advisory committees (TWG Scientific Sub Group, Restoration Sub Group Scientific Advisory

Group & the TWG *ad hoc* Scientific Advisory Group) should be clarified in the Review paper. Seymour Monro agreed to provide information on the current projects underway and to circulate, via Secretariat, reports when published. **Action Seymour Monro and Secretariat**

13. Eric Verspoor updated the Group on DNA testing work that FRS Freshwater labs had been conducting, for the Argyll Fisheries Trust, on the genetic structuring of both juvenile and breeding salmon populations in the Loch Feochan Rivers. The results have demonstrated a significant degree of structuring within the catchment, that is, population samples from all rivers were genetically discrete from each other. The Feochan tributaries also formed a distinct unit when compared to other Scottish west coast salmon populations. The same genetic methods were applied to adult samples in order to assign individuals to their river of origin. Adults from the 2005 fishery could unambiguously be assigned to all three rivers, the majority to the Euchar; proportions were similar for the 2006 catch sample.

14. The Group acknowledged the DNA testing regime used in this work potentially had significant implications for wider restoration work and fisheries management. It was noted that SNH sponsored work on SACs could usefully dovetail into wider DNA work on other west coast salmon populations. The Group was informed that there was still further work to be done on the study and that the Restoration Sub Group would be asked to opine once the detailed report was finalised. It was recommended that, with the permission of the AFT, the finalised report would also be circulated to Plenary Group Members. The Group recommended that all relevant scientists, biologists and sponsoring bodies should liaise and consider what further work was required with a view to identifying funding requirements.

Action Eric Verspoor and Secretariat

15. Members were asked to comment on the Review paper to be amended by Phil Gilmour and Secretariat. This should reflect the DNA work, the current work of the Core Group and possible resource implications for wider restoration work. It was agreed that the Restoration Sub Group Co-ordinator would prepare a report and deliver a presentation, for the next Plenary meeting, on the higher level outcomes of the Core Group's activities. Once agreed by the Restoration Core Group, to include SEPA, the Review paper would be put back to Management Group with the view of having a final paper for Plenary Group early in the New Year.

Action all Members and Secretariat

TWG Business Plan Outputs

16. Stuart Baxter introduced Discussion Paper 2. Management Group endorsed the finalised Business Plan at its' meeting of 26 September 06. The Business Plan will form the mechanism by which solutions can be delivered. There will be an annual appraisal of the objectives raised in the Business Plan. The Group noted the progress that had been made since June 2006. There was general agreement that the management restructuring and change to more open and inclusive working by Management Group was now improving delivery of business objectives.

17. It was noted that regional Steering Committees had now been established for the four regions covered by TWG and that where they had the time to bed in were working well. It was acknowledged that the balance of Steering Committee Members was important and that this forum was the first point of contact to exert influence where local issues or difficulties developed. This has worked well recently in the Western Isles with the Loch Roag AMG. The Committees also provided the checks and balances necessary for the management of RDOs.

18. It was acknowledged that the proposals for the revised European Fish Health Directive had now been published in the Official Journal for consultation. Both the Freshwater Fisheries Forum and the Ministerial Working Group had been briefed. DEFRA were the lead UK representative and it was acknowledged the Scottish Executive should consult widely to try to ensure all Scottish issues were fed back to the Commission. It was agreed that TWG should now engage and it was agreed that the consultation paper should be circulated to all TWG and AMG Members.

Action Secretariat

19. It was agreed that the Business Plan should be updated to clarify the roles of scientific advisory Groups, set an objective to advance further DNA work on salmon population structures and to note local reporting and future funding for the TWG Programme under risks. The Chairman explained the SE Spending Round policy and informed Members that evidence, in the form of the cost benefit study, to support a bid for further funding would be required by May 2007. The outcome of that bid would be known in September 2007.

AMG Bi-annual reporting

20. John Webster introduced discussion paper 3 AMA Reporting. The proposal for Bi-annual Reporting had been circulated to all AMG partners. Some AMGs were content to publish data and others were less inclined to do so. Management Group had agreed at its September 06 meeting to proceed with the proposal and to publish reports on the TWG Website. Members were informed that a formal tendering process, co-ordinated by FRS Procurement, for a commercial web developer had been underway and that three companies had been selected to provide demonstrations of a TWG mock up website in December 06. The final recommendation on awarding the contract would be made thereafter to Management Group with the view to having the website up and running by early 2007.

21. The Group acknowledged that the reporting process was likely to evolve and develop over time as confidence grew within AMGs to report. It was agreed that the information that was reported should be as comprehensive as possible but that it should be meaningful. Reporting of raw data sets was not what was required. Pan Fish in the Loch Fynne and Fjord Seafood in the Loch Seaforth had expressed willingness to report and it was recommended that reporting from these producers should be taken forward as a pilot to test data collation, including historical, reporting format and web data upload. Development of common reporting format was already underway with RDOs and it was acknowledged there was also a need for RDOs to provide resource support for data collation where necessary. There was an equal view expressed that encouragement of the wild fish sector should continue to similarly report on the web site.

Action Secretariat and RDOs

Regional updates

Western Isles

22. Anne Marie MacIver provided a presentation on activity in the Western Isles. The Group was informed that a project proposal to examine distributions and movements of sea lice would be put to MG for approval. This would be subject to scientific review.

Action Anne Marie MacIver & Secretariat

23. The observation of apparent reduction in efficacy of SLICE and Exis treatments was noted. VMD had been notified and bioassay work was underway. Certain producers had started

to source and use Calicide as an alternative. SEPA were asked to review their discharge licences to allow the use of greater quantities of this treatment. However, Calicide is a comparatively inefficient medicine with a large proportion of the dose given to fish being rapidly excreted. This results in tight constraints on use to avoid environmental impact. The appearance of an amoebic parasite was also reported to have been identified in the Western Isles. The view of the group was that general health standards would be covered through adherence to the SSPOs code of good practice. A forthcoming audit of the Code should identify where problems may exist but small-scale and organic operators may not necessarily be members. However, the Soil Association was reviewing its guidance and the inclusion in the AMA process was a pre-requisite for accreditation. It was agreed treatment efficacy and health status should be referred to MG to take a view at its next meeting in February. **Action Secretariat**

24. Concern was raised that CalMac were apparently unwilling to post *Gs* guidance literature on their Western isles connection without substantial cost. Members were informed that the Port Authorities had been engaged and were supportive of the *Gs* publicity initiative. Members were informed the SE would approach CalMac to identify what the issue was and seek resolution.

Action Gordon Brown and Secretariat

West Sutherland & Wester Ross

25. Alex Adrian, as a Steering Committee Member, provided a presentation on activity in West Sutherland & Wester Ross.

26. There remains sensitivity regarding the reporting of data. Ian Pritchard suggested any published information could be subject to copy right. The Crown Estate had previously used such an approach. This may assist in AMA reporting and could be relevant to prevent inappropriate use of information once published on the website. It was agreed to examine this further with the Crown Estate. **Action Secretariat**

Argyll

27. Lucy Fry provided a presentation on Argyll activity.

28. There is a desire to adopt certain Hardanger Fjord principles to augment current effort. There is a proposal to merge Loch Fyne and Lower Clyde AMAs to produce one large area where synchronised treatments could be applied. Discussions were still ongoing with all AMG partners with a view to moving towards a synchronised treatment in spring 2007. Panfish Scotland is also examining the use of wrasse and is currently breeding up brood stock. There is the potential to remove the need for one or possibly two lice treatments per production cycle. However, there are welfare issues to be addressed with the use of wrasse

29. The use of alternative treatments was discussed. Although currently in use in Norway, Alphamax and Betamax are still at the stage of laboratory testing for use in the UK. Given that these compounds are structurally very similar to slice and Exis there is the possibility of resistance also developing rapidly to these treatments. There are also discharge licensing issues that need to be addressed because of the higher toxicity of these alternative products. Well-boat treatments may be a more useful tool to allow effective treatment, with these compounds and as such an approach is not regulated under the Water Environment (Controlled Activities) (Scotland) Regulations 2005 and may offer the possibility of pre-treatment of residues before discharge. The Group was informed that the SSPO and SEPA had held a discussion on innovation projects to examine possible alternatives to chemical lice treatments. It was noted that SEPA would be willing to be as flexible as possible in the licensing of medicines and

consideration of alternative approaches whilst acknowledging the constraint imposed by the need to consider environmental protection. It was agreed that the issue of alternative treatments should be examined more closely at Management Group and at the Ministerial Working Group.

Action SEERAD & Secretariat

30. The group was informed that escapes from Marine Harvest and Panfish sites had caused problems for wild fish interests, particularly Argyll Fisheries Trust. The most recent escape in the Kyles of Bute area from a Panfish site had resulted in farmed salmon being observed by wild fish interests to be running up local rivers. Panfish had examined the circumstances of the escape when this became apparent from harvesting counts and had determined human error was the cause. Panfish had responded very positively by changing standard operating procedures and in working with the wild fish sector on carrying out and fully funding remediation work to remove farmed salmon from several river sites. This was particularly welcome given wild fish were running for the autumn spawning.

31. The Group noted that identification of the origin of escapees was an obstacle. Panfish were examining options, including a genetic approach and monitoring stock in versus stock out as a means of identifying the origins of fish should escapees be reported. Work was also underway on the genetic identification approach at the European level. Differentiation of farmed salmon was possible but further refinement was required. It was noted that the same genetic stock may be used by more than one producer or at more than one site thus posing a difficulty for definitive identification of the source of escapees. The Group recommended that the AMA process was the most appropriate vehicle to address this precautionary work TWG-wide and that Management Group should take this forward and keep progress under regular review. It was also noted that there was an opportunity to require monitoring and remediation plans to be reviewed by PO Members as part of the review of the Code of Good Practice.

Action Secretariat & John Webster

32. The Group was informed that bringing in amendments to the Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Bill to extend powers already available to Scottish Ministers on escapes, at this stage of the Bill process was highly unlikely. It was agreed to confirm what powers were available to Scottish Ministers to take samples to aid identification of escapees.

Action SEERAD

Lochaber

33. Jane Wright reported on Lochaber Activity in the absence of Laurence

34. Laurence Larmour's report highlighted management difficulties which Lochaber Board had encountered and how this had impacted on TWG business. It was agreed that Andrew Wallace would contact the Chairman of the Board to explore what issues remained outstanding and how ASFB might assist in their resolution.

Action Andrew Wallace

Skye

35. Peter Kinloch reported on recent developments to establish a Skye AMA.

36. Members welcomed the initiative and progress of the Skye Board in taking forward planning for the establishment of an AMA. It was noted that the TWG Project manager was now fully engaged and would visit Skye in the New Year to establish working links with AMG Partners. Supported by financial funding from SNH, the Skye Board had commissioned an assessment of the salmon and trout populations of the Isle of Skye and the AMG had a baseline

of evidence to work from. Peter Kinloch agreed that the report could be circulated to TWG Members, on request, as this work could usefully feed into restoration work.

Action Secretariat

37. The Group acknowledged that the Skye AMG would require both the support of an RDO and biologist. The project manager would work with Skye Board to facilitate this for financial year 07/08.

Action Secretariat and Skye Board

PR Strategy Review

38. Andrew Wallace introduced Discussion Paper 4. The Group noted the good progress that had been made and welcomed the fact that TWG PR Strategists were now working together with ERAD Press officials. The strategy was still bedding down and delivery to provide the positive aspects of the TWG Programme at local level were ongoing. It was agreed that the process was now firmly on track but that this was the time now for a review for how the Strategy would be taken forward in parallel with Web page, development, AMA reporting and the cost benefit study. The Chairman requested this should be taken forward by Management Group and that ERAD Press should be involved in that process. **Action Management Group & ERAD Press**

Socio-economic study

39. Phil Gilmour introduced Discussion Paper 5. Ministers have committed to funding Phase III of TWG until the end of financial year 2007/08. The Chairman explained that it will be essential for the SEERAD Bid for further funding in the next Spending Round to be supported by a policy and business case which demonstrated evidence of the wider social and economic benefits of the TWG programme.

40. The Group was informed that SEERAD and TWG Project Manager have begun working with SEERAD economists and social researchers on scoping the Terms of Reference for a socio-economic study of TWG. Field visits had been undertaken in the loch Fyne area to appraise SE researchers of what TWG delivers at the local level. This will help to refine the ToR and to assist in costing the study which will be commissioned to an external contractor to ensure value for money and transparency. Three areas were under consideration for the study, Loch Fynne (well established and delivering benefits), Loch Roag (Developing and beginning to accrue benefit) and Skye (Newly established).

41. It was agreed that the output of the socio-economic study should be discussed at the next Plenary Group meeting. Members were requested to consider the draft terms of reference as set out in discussion paper 5 and feed back comment to Secretariat. **Action all Members**

AOB

42. The Group was informed that the SSPO Code of Good practice was due for an annual review. The Ministerial Working Group will be updated of the outcome of the review in February 2007. Members were invited to write to Phil Thomas with suggested amendments/changes to the Code, particularly on issues that had arisen at the meeting.

Action All Members & Secretariat

Date of next meeting

The Chairman suggested June 2007 for the next meeting of the Group. The Secretariat will trawl for availability.

Action Secretariat

Annex 1 Attendees:

1. David Wilson SEERAD
2. Gordon Brown SEERAD
3. Phil Gilmour SEERAD
4. Andrew Wallace ADSFB
5. John Webster SSPO
6. Sid Patten SSPO
7. Douglas Sinclair SEPA
8. Seymour Monro AST
9. Ronnie Picken SANA
10. James Bromham Highland Council
11. Iain Sutherland HIE
12. Alex Adrian Pan Fish
13. Jane Wright Argyll Fisheries Trust/RAFTS
14. Lucy Fry Argyll and Lochaber RDO
15. Anne Marie MacIver Western Isles RDO
16. Peter Kinloch Skye District Salmon Fisheries Board
17. Ian Pritchard Crown Estate
18. Stuart Baxter Crown Estate
19. Colin Bean SNH
20. Neil Purvis FRS
21. Ron Stagg FRS
22. Alan Anderson Fjord Seafood Scotland
23. Eric Verspoor FRS
24. Neil Trotter SEERAD