

**TRIPARTITE WORKING GROUP (TWG) – 13 NOVEMBER 2003  
SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE, ST. ANDREW'S HOUSE, EDINBURGH**

**In attendance:**

**Scottish Executive:** Paul Brady (Chairman)  
Gordon Brown  
Ron Stagg – FRS  
Dave Wyman  
Mandie Currie [TWG National Development Officer (NDO)]  
Liz Moir  
Richard Gustar (Minutes Secretary)

Andy Rosie – SEPA

**Industry:** Jamie Lindsay – SQS  
John Webster – SQS  
Alex Adrian – Lighthouse Scotland

**Wild fishery bodies:** Andrew Wallace – ASFB  
Jeremy Read – AST  
David Mackay – SANA  
Jane Wright – SANA  
Jon Watt – AWCFT  
Nina Hakanpaa – WIFT [TWG Regional Development Officer (RDO)]  
Kjersti Birkeland – AFT (TWG RDO)

**Others:** George Hamilton – COSLA

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

1.1 The Chairman opened the meeting at 10.40. He welcomed the new RDOs, Nina Hakanpaa and Kjersti Birkeland, to the Group, and introduced Gordon Brown as the new Head of the Freshwater Fisheries and Aquaculture Division. The Chairman also welcomed Jeremy Read's presence – the Group noted that his successor was soon to be appointed. Alex Adrian, Lighthouse Scotland, was also welcomed upon arrival.

**2. Apologies**

2.1 Apologies were received from Malcolm Beveridge (FRS), Colin Bean (SNH), Pauline Munro (FRS), Hector Martin (Stolt), Alan Anderson (WISCO), Robin Miller (Aquascot) and Iain Sutherland (HIE).

**3. Minutes of Previous Meeting:**

3.1 The minutes were approved with no amendments.

#### 4. Matters Arising:

##### Wild Catch Statistics

4.1 Andrew Wallace said that catch statistics would only be given to existing Area Management Groups (AMG) under the usual conditions of confidentiality. John Webster asked about areas without an AMG, to which Andrew Wallace replied that permission would be needed from the TWG Management Group (MG). The Chairman said he hoped to reach a situation where there was relatively free access of data. David Mackay expressed some concern about lack of transparency. There was some further discussion about data protection, accessibility and presentation. Ron Stagg agreed that the statistics could be made available on the FRS website, and he said he would look into the matter. George Hamilton suggested that the proposed TWG Newsletter would be an effective communicative tool. Paul Brady said that a qualitative assessment of where and how progress is being made is what is needed. He reverted the matter to the TWG MG and asked Ron and Andrew to take the lead.

**ACTION: Ron Stagg and Andrew Wallace to consider accessibility and presentation of catch statistics.**

##### Sea Lice Seminars

4.2 John Webster informed the group that a joint technical seminar for SQS members and other nominated organisations was to be held in Perth, in January. Andrew Wallace added that a further meeting would be convened for SQS to present sea lice data to the ASFB, and that SQS members were already involved at a local level. Gordon Brown suggested a series of TWG MG and SEPA road shows could be organised to embrace the Industry's sea lice strategy. David Mackay stated that the issue was of great interest throughout the UK, not just in Scotland. Paul Brady said he welcomed the event scheduled for January, and invited the TWG MG to develop further opportunities for delivery.

**ACTION: TWG MG to develop opportunities for presenting the Industry's sea lice strategy.**

##### Engaging with Local Authority (LA) Planners

4.3 Mandie Currie said she wanted the Industry and planners to come together to discuss the issues. She proposed initially holding a planning workshop, after which considering the need to establish another sub-committee. Jamie Lindsay expressed his concerns about the present number of lease renewals and the timescales involved in progressing these. George Hamilton said it was important to meet with LA members, and a workshop seemed a good idea. Gordon Brown stated that George now sat on the TWG MG, and that mechanisms to engage with planners were taking shape. Mandie Currie pointed out that the LAs are already closely involved in the AMA process in some areas, for example, in the Western Isles, the fisheries officer participates in AMAs as an observer and sits on the Regional Project Steering Group. In Orkney, the LA is becoming involved in the Area Management Agreement (AMA) process right from the beginning. Paul Brady recognised all the activity, but suggested the Aquaculture Forum offered the most suitable vehicle for engaging with planners.

## 5. Progress Report from National Development Officer

### Progress on AMAs

- 5.1 Mandie Currie advised that all AMGs, and the TWG Plenary Group, now received a regular status report. She went on to describe the present situation with the following proposed AMAs:
- East Lewis/Harris – Alan Wilson MSP will attend the signing on 5 December;
  - Loch Roag – The advice of FRS is pending regarding the division of the AMA into east and west Loch Roag. One small organic farmer, whose sites are in the mouth of the Loch, has refused to attend meetings. The Crown Estate and the Soil Association have been asked to encourage him to participate;
  - 2 Brooms – At a deadlock. The wild fish lobby are not willing to sign in the absence of synchronization. A further meeting will be held in February 2004, to either agree a way forward or to bring closure to the process for the time being, with a review of the position at agreed periods;
  - Orkney – MG visited in September. The main players are in support and a further meeting is planned for the new year;
  - Loch Duart/Loch Ewe – Signing not far away; and
  - West Mull – The RDO has been involved in the early stages - Kjersti has arranged a meeting for just after Christmas.

### Regional Projects

- 5.2 Mandie Currie said the projects were on schedule and delivering on the ground. She was pleased to say that all reports and all grant claims had been submitted, but emphasised that all parties had a responsibility to participate and provide information when asked. All three project steering groups will be reviewing their projects over the next two months, to identify possible changes to budgets or outputs. Forward work programmes and revised budgets for 2004 will be produced by the end of January 2004.

### Reporting Procedures and Confidentiality and Information Flow

- 5.3 Mandie Currie informed the Group that, whilst reports had been received from AMGs, they differed in format. She said the type of information provided varied and there was also some evidence of non co-operation between the parties. The standard reporting proforma is still being revised (awaiting outcome of the scientific sub group) but that there had been difficulties in getting AMGs to use the interim proforma. Paul Brady asked how these issues could be progressed. John Webster mentioned that the process requires a significant resource commitment on the part of the fish farm companies. He said some senior managers were spending a day a week on wild fish related matters. He also said that some trust issues needed resolving. Jon Watt acknowledged the resource commitment, but meanwhile he was not persuaded by concerns of farmers regarding sea lice data. Paul Brady explicitly stated that if the TWG did not work, then other options would be looked at. Jamie Lindsay said some companies were having difficulties supplying the information in the right format, but that progress was being made and would continue. Paul Brady said the message from the NDO report was one of problems at all levels. Alex Adrian said that the role of the RDOs was critical – they had to be seen to be facilitators in the process. Gordon Brown said there needed to be an improvement in the flow of information, otherwise the TWG process would be undermined. He asked what the industry could deliver, if it thinks the present reporting requirements are too onerous, and where the problem areas are and which companies are involved.

John Webster said again that companies could not support the resources presently required by the TWG. Andy Rosie questioned why it was the senior managers who were collating the data, and suggested it was really an issue of trust. There was continued discussion on the issues of both resources and trust. Paul Brady suggested the following solutions: find out from the companies what their actual concerns are; look into a new format for the reporting pro forma; and issue more explicit assurances about what will happen with the data. The Group agreed, but wanted it recognised how much had already been achieved, as well as what remains to be done. Paul Brady advised he would let the Plenary Group see what was sent out. Regarding information flow, the Group agreed that papers should be sent to the contacts in the AMGs, who's responsibility it was to distribute at the local level.

**ACTION: Mandie Currie to revise pro forma and write to AMGs regarding reporting and information flow (provide TWG Plenary Group with a copy).**

#### Communications Strategy

5.4 Mandie Currie listed the following initiatives, contained in the strategy, that are targeted for progress in the first quarter of 2004:

- organisation of local events for communities and local stakeholders;
- establishing more contact with planners;
- organising a workshop with planners and industry representatives;
- production of briefs for LAs;
- planners to attend specific AMG meetings;
- TWG MG to identify a list of activities worth funding; and
- TWG Newsletter to be published on key organisations' websites

Jane Wright asked about access to sub-committee reports and minutes of meetings. Gordon Brown advised that these were available on the SE website. The idea of a TWG website was mooted, and the Group agreed to it so long as key information could be made available. Mandie Currie added that the Communications Strategy included deadlines for meeting these targets. She also said that other stakeholders should be invited to AMG meetings on occasion, to discuss specific issues. George Hamilton suggested some of these events could be organised by the LAs. Paul Brady welcomed this offer.

#### Organic Issues

5.4 It was noted that representatives from the Soil Association attended the last TWG MG meeting, and that a further meeting has been arranged for early December. Mandie Currie said that AMAs were seen as an important prerequisite for soil association accreditation.

## **6. Scientific Sub Group**

Ron Stagg informed the Group that a meeting had been held on 26 September to look at the problems associated with the large areas and sea lice monitoring. He said 4 tools were available to define discreet biological areas: the tidal excursion model; hydro dynamic models which involved detailed hydrographic measurements; biological area concepts; and arbitrary distance parameters. He added that on balance, and in most cases, the tidal excursion model provided a reasonable tool, and that the sub group had concluded that a modification of the model using biological area concepts, as developed by Marine Harvest, offered a solution for large areas. Ron said considerable effort would be required (e.g.

gathering data – hydrography, lice counts – in order to assess whether an area can be considered a discreet unit) and he asked for the TWG’s endorsement. Andy Rosie said that if synchronous year classes were important, then identifying biological areas was very important, i.e. large areas pose great difficulties in achieving synchronicity. Paul Brady concluded that there was general consensus that this was the way forward. It was also agreed that the concept should be tested where positive management outcomes could be achieved, and Loch Roag and Lochs Linnhe/Lorn and the Sound of Mull/Sunart were put forward. Paul Brady asked what scientific support FRS could offer, assuming data is available. Ron Stagg suggested that FRS should continue to be involved, as should fish farm health managers and WCFT biologists. Regarding the issue of gathering data, he said it may be necessary to go directly to the companies. Jon Watt mentioned that Crawford Revie had access to good sea lice data from all over Scotland. Paul Brady said that FRS should take the initial lead, with assistance from the Industry (John Webster agreed), and perhaps there was a role to play for Crawford Revie as well (there was general agreement from the Group). He asked Ron Stagg and the TWG MG to report back. It was recognised that the scientific sub group and the location/relocation working group should be aware of each others work.

**ACTION: Ron Stagg, with assistance from the TWG MG, to move forward with developing and testing a new model for identifying single biological areas. TWG MG to report progress at next Plenary Group meeting.**

## **7. Synchronisation Issues**

Mandie Currie said that all members of the TWG were signed up to the principles of synchronisation. She said that many AMAs were stalling because the issue of synchronisation could not be resolved – some wild fish representatives are not interested in signing AMAs without synchronicity. However, she said this was creating more problems, i.e. where companies were coming into an area without an AMA, they could not be easily made to comply with good management practices, whereas new sites would be expected to adhere to pre-existing conditions within signed AMAs. Mandie Currie stated that it was preferential to sign an AMA even though synchronisation was yet to be achieved, though it must firmly be on the agenda. Paul Brady agreed synchronisation was important, though recognised it was not always readily achievable. He said the TWG should encourage the signing of AMAs even if all its objectives cannot be delivered from the outset. There was general consensus for this amongst the Group. Jon Watt added that AMAs were designed to promote better management practices, therefore there needs to be real benefit to stocks of wild and/or farmed fish of signing. Mandie Currie said that in areas of deadlock, signing an AMA could take the heat out of the situation. Paul Brady said it was for the AMGs to judge the stage at which an AMA can be signed. The TWG agreed to commend the signing of AMAs where the majority (but not all) of the objectives are achieved, provided that unresolved issues - such as synchronisation - remained firmly on the agenda, and that all AMG members agreed to work towards achieving those objectives. Mandie Currie said she would consult the Group on the issue of a paper. Jane Wright stressed that she would not want to see any backsliding of tier 1 areas (with synchrony) to tier 2 (non-synchronous) once an AMA had been signed. Also, she wanted to see assistance from the TWG sub-groups to help tier 2 areas achieve tier 1 status. Alex Adrian wished it to be recognised that during fallow periods, companies had to produce fish on other sites.

**ACTION: Mandie Currie to produce a paper on the issue of synchronisation and submit to the TWG Plenary Group for approval.**

## **8. Restoration Sub Group**

Jeremy Read informed the Group that he had written a report for inclusion in the minutes (annexed). He said that John Webb, the co-ordinator, had given a presentation at an AWCFT seminar in the summer, and visited various Trust biologists to gather information and discuss operating procedures. Jeremy Read outlined the following developments that are being progressed or for which the need has been stated:

- production of profile planning data sheets, to provide a consistent basis for the provision of advice;
- establishment of information elements, reference conditions and management thresholds;
- a review of the status of fish populations and their habitats on the west coast;
- distinguishing between conservation and restoration;
- assessment of risk elements;
- gathering information on the population structure of freshwater lochs; and
- linking policy to research and management.

Jeremy said that the last meeting of the sub group had been held on 17 September, and that a technical group had since met, tasked to address urgent problems and to refine the information requirements. There had also been a meeting with SEERAD to identify resource requirements and availability, in the light of existing programmes and the need for new work. The requirement for a strategic framework for conservation and restoration had been clarified. Paul Brady appreciated the progress being made and acknowledged an excellent report. He encouraged all parties to play their part.

## **9. Location/relocation Working Group**

Gordon Brown said that the working group has met twice and that location/relocation is a high level commitment in the Aquaculture Strategy. He said that a paper has been produced on the current regulatory framework for determining the location of farms. Though he said there should be a strong presumption of voluntary relocation in the first instance, he had not entirely ruled out the possibility of compulsory relocation of inappropriately located farms. He suggested that the Industry and wild fish body produce a joint paper for moving the process forward. Andrew Wallace mentioned that perhaps management practices were more important than the location of farms. However, he did suggest that if the Industry was keen to move from certain hot spots then this should not be discouraged, and indeed it may be beneficial to encourage (with or without the offer of compensation) the industry to move from other areas too - for example, to assist with delivering synchronisation. It was agreed that meetings should be convened with the principle fish farmers to assess where farms can be relocated.

**ACTION: Gordon Brown to convene meetings with the principle fish farmers.**

## **10. Date of Next Meeting**

It was agreed the next meeting would be held on Thursday 6 May 2004.

## RESTORATION SUB-GROUP – PROGRESS REPORT TO TWG

Principal developments since the last meeting (17 June) have been:

a. Work by the Co-ordinator

- i. Visits to Trust Biologists have continued as part of information gathering and of the development of operating procedures.
- ii. Project profile and planning data sheets have been drafted (to provide a consistent method of describing situations and projects in order to facilitate assessment and provision of support).
- iii. The need to define information elements and reference conditions for these data sheets has been identified– action is in hand to obtain appropriate input.
- iv. The main genetic issues to be addressed have been identified as:
  - The overall status of salmonid populations and their habitats
  - Development of management action thresholds
  - Clarification of role of artificial propagation
  - Risk assessment
- v. A number of follow-on meetings have been supported and used to progress the task.

b. AWCFT Habitat Seminar in July

John Webb (the Co-ordinator) gave a presentation on his intended method of working to all the Fisheries Trust biologists. This was well received and followed by useful discussion. In a subsequent letter, the Chairman of the Association of West Coast Fisheries Trusts confirmed that the development of an overall strategy was supported, but that it must not delay support of urgent and worthwhile projects in the interim. She confirmed that applications for support/evaluation should be channelled through the Trusts, agreed that Trust Biologists should participate in the review/evaluation group, and stressed the need for assessment of marine survival of wild stocks.

c. TWG3 Meeting 17 September.

Progress was reviewed and information gathering methods were discussed. It was agreed to form a small technical WG to define the information element requirements. The need to collate information on traps/counters and co-ordinate their operations was recognised and marked for action. Particular targets were identified as:

- i. Development of guidelines, taking account of progress with the NASCO Decision Structure, and Guidelines on Restoration and stocking (early versions of these have been circulated to Trust Biologists).
- ii. The need for urgent interim advice on current problems and proposed projects (this would be addressed by the proposed technical WG).
- vii. The need to confirm the availability of resources to provide support.

d. Meeting of Technical WG 13 October (to address urgent problems)

- i. Presentations were given on the phenotypic character and genetic structure of salmon and trout populations.
- ii. Two definitions were proposed:
  - *Conservation*. Action to maintain or regain viable levels in existing populations.
  - *Restoration*. Reintroduction or augmentation of populations to recover previous levels.
- iii. Presentations were given by Trust Biologists on two current scenarios:

- River with no adult or juvenile salmon
  - River with few adults and juveniles, but limited opportunity for management of stocks in natural environment
- and resulting questions were addressed.

iv. The following actions were agreed:

- Initial general guidance would be drafted from points raised in discussion of the scenarios.
- Further scenarios and requests for advice would be called for from the Biologists, and addressed.

e. Resources – SEERAD/FL/AST meeting 7 November

This followed a letter from the Chairman TWG3 to SEERAD, setting out the scope of work that was required. After discussion of this, it was agreed that:

- i. The Co-ordinator should clarify the objectives of the proposed strategic framework for conservation and restoration work.
- ii. SEERAD/FL should identify issues that are covered or can be covered in existing programmes.
- iii. SEERAD/FL should consider developing new programmes for items not addressed – some areas were already in the outline programme.
- iv. There was a need to clarify SNH/SEPA inputs to the work (action is in hand).

It should be possible to fund appropriate contributions or presentations on relevant experience from external sources – the NDO budget was identified as a possible source for this.