Stakeholder Reference Group

21st April 2016

Minutes

**Attending**

Willie Cowan (Scottish Government) Chair

Jeff Gibbons (Scottish Government)

Alan Wells (Scottish Government)

Mark Bilsby (ASFB)

Jonathan Swift (ASSF)

Simon McKelvey (IFM)

Andrew Wallace (RAFTS)

Craig Campbell (SANA)

Ron Woods (SFCA)

Duncan Ferguson (SGA)

James Mackay (SNFAS)

Alister Jack (Representative of fishery proprietors)

Nick Main (Scottish Government) Minutes

**Technical Working Groups**

There was a discussion about the potential membership of the Technical Working Groups. Matters identified included:

* The absence of sufficient representation by bailiffs/ ghillies
* The need to factor in economic/business interests
* An appropriate balance between science and management
* Potential for overlap and need for coordination between some groups

Following any further feedback from group members, invitations to become group members would be sent out with the question of where, when, and how to bring in expertise left to each group to determine. It was also recognised that there would be some overlap between groups. The time commitment required to join these groups was recognised. Where possible teleconference and video conference facilities would be made available.

**National Unit – proposed functions**

A paper, based on work by the SRG, but incorporating input from Marine Scotland, SEPA and SNH, was circulated prior to the meeting. This set out the proposed functions of a National Unit. A number of comments were made:

* Helpful if the document could be prefaced by a short summary explaining the background behind the paper – this would emphasise the facilitation role envisaged for the National Unit and might help to ease fears of a centralising agenda
* The role of the national unit and FMOs in consent of stocking activities, and the potential danger of FMOs consent their own activities.

**Action: Marine Scotland will circulate revised text with a view to publication on the WFR website**

**FMO Expenditure**

Marine Scotland have asked ASFB and RAFTS to consider the number of staff required on an area by area basis (based on potential scenarios being developed by the sector). This would allow a baseline calculation as to the potential staff and wider resource costs to be made. The aim would be to complete this in time for the group to consider at the next meeting.

Willie Cowan and Jeff Gibbons had visited the Ribble Rivers Trust to look at their Fishery Management processes. Examples of how funding from multiple sources for wider catchment management could be undertaken were discussed. There followed a discussion on funding, including whether access to charitable funding needs to be specifically built into the system. The conclusion drawn was that adequate core funding should be the starting point in the setting up of FMO’s - this would give FMOs the critical mass to allow them to pursue other funding sources appropriate to their management needs.

**Pilot Fishery Management Organisations (FMO’s)**

The possibility of establishing pilot FMO(s) had been discussed in previous meetings. It was recognised that it was important to ensure that the pilots engaged all those with an interest in fish and fisheries. Concern was raised that there was a danger that the pilot FMOs would simply involve the same people as currently involved in fishery management and that greater consideration need to be made to ensure that a wider representation was included from the start.

**Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill – discussion on members views of the detailed Bill provisions**

There was a discussion on the range of responses so far.

The Chair stated he was surprised at the low level of engagement from within the angling community, despite efforts to engage with anglers by Government and members of the group.

Issues raised included:

* There was confusion among some stakeholders between the conservation measures and the wider consultation on the reform process
* Concern around the decline in the number of anglers in the sport.
* The level of engagement with the angling community through posters, web pages, Facebook, and yet the response level remined low
* Protection of coarse fish species
* There is a perception that FMO’s will end up being the same as Fishery Boards, and until anglers see them working, this perception is likely to remain.

Some members of the group expressed concern at the term, Fishery Management Organisation. The group was invited to consider alternatives.

**Fishing without permission/Protection Orders**

* There are concerns, particularly from anglers who currently fish within Protection Orders, that the proposal for the criminal offence to fish for, take or kill fish without legal right or written permission to be extended across all species would result in a loss of access to waters.
* The limitation of the PO system were discussed, including the limited coverage across Scotland - it was noted that freshwater fisheries needed protection across Scotland.
* Some group members consider that protection of fish, and access to fisheries are two distinct issues and should to addressed through different mechanisms. It was recognised that further work was required, in conjunction with stakeholders, to develop and communicate these mechanisms.
* The current linkage between the draft National Strategy and draft Bill was emphasised. The draft National Strategy includes the theme of ‘*Promotion*’ and makes specific reference to *Marketing and promoting opportunities for angling across Scotland*, and *Develop and provide guidance on the concept of responsible access to angling for all species and fisheries management best practice in Scotland*. In the draft Bill, Fishery Management Organisations would be under a general duty to *act in accordance with the National Wild Fisheries Strategy* (section 9) and *the objectives, priorities and activities set out in Local Fisheries Management plans must contribute to the pursuit of the objectives, priorities and policies set out in the National Wild Fisheries Strategy and the plan must explain how they do that* (section 10).
* There was a need to better understand what the real problems are. Was the problem one of access or an absence of information about the availability of fishing/decline in interest in angling. A strategy based on developing angling in Scotland with its principal identified constraint being a “lack of access” would be very different one from a strategy based on the constraint of there being “a lack of anglers”.
* It was suggested that Marine Scotland should contact PO liaison committees

**Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 2 June at Victoria Quay. Meeting space will be made available for the group for discussion prior to the next meeting.