

SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION AGENCY

Minutes of SEPA Finfish Aquaculture Advisory Panel

30 October 2019
Golden Lion Hotel
Stirling

Attendees: **SEPA, Environmental NGO** - (Marine Conservation Society) Scottish Environment LINK), **Buyer** - (Aquascot), **COSLA** - (The Highland Council), **Local community** - (COAST)/(Coastal Communities Network), **Marine Scotland (Planning)**, **Fish Producers** - (Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation), Mowi, The Scottish Salmon Company, **Scottish Natural Heritage**

Apologies: British Trout Association
Fisheries Management Scotland
Salmon and Trout Conservation
Friends of the Sound of Jura
SNH)

1.	Welcome and introductions
	<p>The Chair welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the SEPA Finfish Aquaculture Advisory Panel and outlined the purpose of the Advisory Panel:</p> <p><i>SEPA is responsible for the regulation of discharges from finfish farms. All farm developments, including site expansions, require a permit from SEPA. SEPA determines whether to grant or refuse permits, and the conditions of those permits, based on environmental risk. It then checks and, where necessary, takes action to enforce compliance with permit conditions. Law, policy and evidence guide SEPA's decisions.</i></p> <p>The Advisory Panel will not provide advice on individual regulatory decisions. However, where there are disagreements and strongly held views about regulation of a sector, a forum such as the Advisory Panel can help build shared understanding about the issues and find common ground. This can help inform the further development of SEPA's regulatory approach.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel members introduced themselves; shared their backgrounds; and outlined their perspectives on, and expectations for, the Advisory Panel.</p>
2.	Terms of Reference
	<p><u>Aim</u> It was agreed that the aim of the Advisory Panel would be:</p> <p>To provide advice to SEPA on the implementation of its regulation of the finfish aquaculture sector under its sector plan in order to ensure SEPA's decision making is fully informed.</p> <p><u>Membership</u> It was agreed that the membership of the Advisory Panel would be:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. SEPA (Chair)2. Four representatives of fish producers:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 from Scottish Salmon Producers Organisation• 1 from each of 2 salmon producing companies• 1 from either a trout producing company or the British Trout Association

3. Four representatives of national environmental NGOs & wild fisheries interests:
 - 2 from national environmental NGOs
 - 1 from Fisheries Management Scotland
 - 1 from Salmon & Trout Conservation
4. Two representatives of local community groups
5. Two representatives of finfish buyers
6. Four representatives of other regulators:
 - 1 COSLA representative
 - 1 Scottish Natural Heritage representative
 - 1 representative from Marine Scotland's fish farm planning function
 - 1 representative from Crown Estate Scotland

The Advisory Panel also **agreed** to invite representatives of Crowne Estate Scotland and inshore fishing interests.

Action: The representative from Aquascot to provide advice on a potential second representative of a buyer to join the Advisory Panel.

Action: SEPA to invite representatives of the Scottish Creel Fishermen's Federation and a relevant Regional Inshore Fisheries Group (RIFG) to join the Advisory Panel.

Ways of working

It was **agreed** that the Advisory Panel will be chaired by SEPA's Chief Executive Officer or a delegated substitute.

It was **agreed** that the secretariat for the Advisory Panel will be provided by SEPA.

It was **agreed** that the members will be responsible for bringing their own expertise and will endeavour to ensure that their advice represents the views of the stakeholders they represent.

It was **agreed** that the members will not receive payments for serving on the Advisory Panel.

It was **agreed** that to help ensure local community group representatives are able to attend Advisory Panel meetings, SEPA will reimburse reasonable travel costs incurred by community group representatives.

It was **agreed** that the Advisory Panel will meet quarterly.

It was **agreed** that the meetings will proceed where at least 50% of members; and where each group outlined in the terms of reference, are represented.

It was **agreed** that the papers and agendas will be circulated at least 3 weeks in advance of each meeting.

It was **agreed** that, by agreement of the Chair, the Advisory Panel may invite other bodies and organisations (e.g. supply chain businesses; buyers; research providers; other users of the marine or freshwater environment; etc.) to attend Advisory Panel meetings in order to assist the Advisory Panel in preparing its advice

It was **agreed** that the minutes of meetings will be recorded; circulated to the Advisory Panel within a week; and made public via SEPA's website once agreed by the Advisory Panel (by the end of week 2).

	<p>It was agreed that the Advisory Panel is not a decision making body, but the minutes Of its meetings should still accurately record the group views and capture disagreement where it occurs. The views expressed will not be attributed to individuals.</p> <p>It was agreed that all communications by members (with media, public or Government) about the Advisory Panel or its work will be agreed with the Advisory Panel.</p> <p>It was agreed that none of the advice provided by the Advisory Panel will be binding on anybody or organisation. Where a decision taken by SEPA differs to the advice of the Advisory Panel, SEPA will explain why this is.</p> <p>It was agreed that the remit and future operation of the Advisory Panel will be reviewed annually.</p>
3.	<p>Sector future strategy</p>
	<p>Representatives of the sector gave their perspectives on the future development of the sector.</p> <p>The Advisory Panel discussed the status of the strategy, Aquaculture Growth to 2030, and the vision it sets out.</p> <p>Action: SSPO to provide advice to on the sector’s ambitions for its development over the next decade and how these relate to the delivery of the targets in Aquaculture Growth to 2030.</p> <p>The panel also agreed to gain clarity on the opinion from the producers present that the ‘Aquaculture Growth to 2030’ plan is to meet a Government-led target rather than an industry-led target.</p> <p>Action: SEPA to seek advice on whether the plan to double the sector by 2030 is a Government or industry-led plan.</p>
4.	<p>Update and discussion on new regulatory framework</p>
	<p>SEPA gave a presentation updating the Advisory Panel on SEPA’s new regulatory framework. SEPA explained the main findings of the consultation and steps being taken to address the concerns that were raised.</p> <p>Action: SEPA to circulate the presentation to the Advisory Panel members.</p> <p>The following agenda items were not presented or discussed formally before the meeting closed on time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update on other work streams • Wildfish • Scotland’s Aquaculture Website • Wellboats <p>These items will be discussed at a future meeting.</p>
5.	<p>Next meeting</p>
	<p>It was agreed that the next meeting would take place early in the New Year.</p> <p>It was agreed that that future agendas would include 1 or 2 topics to allow time for full discussion. A number of topics were suggested, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial planning support; and

- The strategic focus and priorities for regulation

It was **agreed** that SEPA will suggest a schedule of future agendas to the Advisory Panel.