

Fish and Fisheries Advisory Group Meeting

1 December 2015, 10:15- 14:30
Strathearn House, Perth

Minutes

Present

Richard Fyfe (RF) (Chair)	SEPA
Eilidh Johnston (EJ)	SEPA
David Summers (DS)	Tay DSFB
Colin Bean (CB)	Scottish Natural Heritage
Rob Mitchell (RM)	RAFTS
Kjersti Birkeland (KB)	SEPA
Brian Davidson (BD)	ASFB
Alistair Duguid (AD)	SEPA
Alan Wells (AW)	Scottish Government
Jeff Gibbons (JG)	Scottish Government
Scott Crawford (item 5 only)	SEPA
John Armstrong (JA)	Scottish Government Marine Scotland Freshwater
Joyce Carr	Scottish Government
David Harley	SEPA
Roy Richardson	SEPA
Willie Cowan	Scottish Government
Ross Gardiner	Scottish Government Marine Scotland Freshwater

No.	Item	Action by
1	<p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>RF welcomed everyone to the meeting and made round table introductions. Colin Adams and Jeff Gibbons were welcomed to the meeting for the first time. It was noted that John Armstrong was attending in place of Ross Gardiner, and would now become the lead contact for Marine Scotland Freshwater.</p>	
2	<p>Update on second river basin plans development (EJ)</p> <p>EJ gave an update presentation on the forthcoming second river basin management plans, highlighting that the plan documents will be supplemented by technical appendices and an online data tool (the Water Environment Hub). She outlined how objectives have been set for key pressures. The plans are on schedule for publication just before 22 December 2015.</p> <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AW asked about the role of area advisory groups, and EJ responded that it was likely that delivery of the second RBMP would require a stronger focus on catchment and sector level engagement. The role of national and expert advisory groups would continue to focus on strategic delivery of RBMPs. • JA asked about diffuse pollution standards and the potential to compare these with CEFAS findings. 	

	<p>Action: AD to provide a summary of diffuse pollution standards with SEPA chemistry, and check whether research is being carried out.</p>	<p>AD</p>
<p>3</p>	<p>Wild Fisheries Reform</p> <p>AW introduced this item, noting that reform of wild fisheries was being delivered by the 2013 act, and that commissioning of an independent wild fisheries review had produced 53 recommendations. Engagement with the sector has included a large stakeholder reference group and events programme, with meetings held as part of the process.</p> <p>The Government will consult on the Wild Fisheries Bill in 2016, and a wild fisheries strategy.</p> <p>The consultation will cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring a balance between national and local functions and resources • A remit which covers all species, and how to fund this • Developing a system where everyone is aware of their responsibilities. This may require better co-ordination and links, and could interact with SEPA RBMP networks. <p>Discussion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The group discussed the timescale for the Bill, and the transition process to new systems of management. AW noted that October 2016 is the earliest possible time that the Bill could be finalised. • There was also discussion about engagement with the sector, and future development of Fishery Management Organisation structures. BD and CB noted that fishery organisations are already considering their role and coverage, and balance between national and local work, and that clarity is needed on these structures. AW confirmed that a decision re numbers of FMOs is still being developed with stakeholders. • DS noted that it is important to be clear about the involvement required for the fishery management process, then set up groups to deliver this. <p>RF asked what FFAG could offer to the wild fisheries reform programme. JG indicated that consultation feedback would be helpful, and that comments could be provided via strategy and stakeholder groups, or directly to wildfisheriesreform@scotland.gsi.gov.uk.</p>	
<p>4</p>	<p>RAFTS barriers project</p> <p>RM outlined progress on this project, highlighting some projects which showed the complex work needed to restore fish access. He noted that the second and third RBMP cycles will require more time and resources than RAFTS alone can deliver. Discussion is therefore needed on how to build similar project management skills in fishery management organisations, and the role of a national organisation in providing some key specialist skills and resources.</p> <p>AD asked about monitoring of projects, and RM noted that monitoring is included in the project specifications, with a 12 month monitoring programme forming part of this.</p> <p>Action: Add monitoring item to FFAG agenda in 2016.</p>	<p>EJ</p>
<p>5</p>	<p>Fish barriers technical working group (TWG)</p>	

	<p>Scott Crawford joined the meeting to give an update on this internal SEPA group, which had been set up to co-ordinate and deliver improvements to fish access in Scotland's water bodies. He noted that the prioritisation of fish barriers has been discussed previously with FFAG, but that the technical working group is focused on delivery.</p> <p>SC reminded that fish barriers were the single biggest pressure on the water environment in the RBMP, and that barriers were classed as active, assets or historical, with different delivery approaches for each type. SEPA's approach on fish barriers will be part of a whole catchment approach, delivered in partnership.</p> <p>The TWG is working on analysing priorities, planning and co-ordinating delivery of improvements, monitoring and reporting. Recent action includes a meeting with Transport Scotland to look at its assets.</p> <p>RF noted that we would like to see monitoring built strongly into this process. SC explained that the process on fish barriers should be screening, scoping, optioneering, design, build and evaluation.</p> <p>JA asked about how barrier designs were selected. AD and KB explained their involvement in this process, and the use of the EA fish passage manual for guidance. RF noted that a study showing how the decision process works would be valuable</p> <p>There was discussion about the EA's work on developing standards for monitoring fish passes, which defines key principles.- Action: Provide further information to the group on this.</p> <p>CB emphasised that it was important to share this process and principles with asset owners, and JA noted that good practice guidance would help with this. AD noted the option to offer training to local authority engineers and others in local authorities. The Scottish Executive document on culvert design http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0038/00388163.doc could help with this. EJ noted that some engagement had taken place in 2015, and that FFAG could help the development of this engagement as the programme of fish barrier work progressed.</p> <p>Action: Consider how to engage further with asset owners as part of this programme of work.</p>	<p>AD</p> <p>EJ</p>
6	<p>Research update - IBIS project</p> <p>Colin Adams gave an update on the IBIS project, an EU Interreg project with University of Glasgow, Loughs Agency and Queens University Belfast as partners. The aim is to provide knowledge on sustainable management of water quality resources, and develop training.</p> <p>The research element looks at 70 years of research on applied aquatic management, and has involved around 35 studentships. 50 separate projects were developed. This is summarised in a research publication (add link).</p> <p>The project has worked with a range of organisations and developed partnership benefits. It is now finished, but some work is still ongoing.</p> <p>Projects of particular interest to FFAG involve the management and conservation of species (further information available on the Loughs Agency website – www.loughs-agency.org). There is also specific research on fish barriers that could be presented to</p>	

	<p>FFAG.</p> <p>Action: FFAG members to review the research programme and identify projects of interest for future presentations by CA or students.</p> <p>CB emphasised the strong link between science and policy for this research project. AD expressed the hope that there would be a further phase to the project.</p>	All / EJ
7	<p>Previous minutes and AOB</p> <p>Previous minutes were approved for posting on the FFAG web pages.</p> <p><u>Previous actions (please see full action log below):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Action 25 (monitoring and fish counters): JA noted that it would be helpful to look at fish barrier priorities and link this with new counters where possible. CLOSED, but retain watching brief. Action 26: still ongoing Action 27: KB noted that the app is now public, and linked to SEWEB. It can be downloaded from iTunes, Google Play or River Obstacles. CLOSED. <p>Under AOB, Tongland fish pass was discussed briefly, and the need to clarify its status in the new RBMP was emphasised.</p> <p>RF noted that the next meeting was likely to be held around March, with a date to be arranged by correspondence.</p>	

Fish & Fisheries Advisory Group – Action log

Action number	Action	Owner	Date to be completed	Update
1	SEPA to circulate links to document(s) on cost-benefit analysis	RF/CW	End Oct	Complete
2	SEPA to build in better surrogates for habitat suitability including gradient and area as technically feasible	CW/ AD/KB	For final plan	Complete
3	SEPA to provide a summary of the technical methodology for prioritisation process	CW	End Nov	Complete
4	Any comments on prioritisation lists to be sent by email to CW at earliest opportunity.	All	End Oct	Complete
5	RAFTS to update when strategy is available	RM		Complete
6	SEPA and RAFTS to meet/ discuss how to incorporate additional RAFTS data to the process	CW/RM	End Nov	Complete
7	SEPA/ Scottish government to have discussion on visibility of funding strategies	DH/JC		On-going
8	SEPA to make annexes to WEF report available on website	CW	End Oct	Complete
9	SEPA to circulate link to Directions on updated Standards	RF/CW	End Oct	Complete
10	Detail on ecological surveys and indicators to be provided at a future meeting (added to	MW/CW	End Oct	Complete

	future agenda items)			
11	Detail on a specific site to be checked by MW for DS	MW	End Oct	Complete
12	Include the x and y axis info on environmental benefit chart and circulate	MW/CW	End Oct	Complete
13	Invite national lead Pilot catchment co-ordinator (Shona McConnell) to come to this group at a future stage	CW	End Nov	Complete
14	FFAG to feedback on the delivery mechanisms for physical condition consultation work	All	In line with consultation dates	Complete
15	Provide case studies and show what was learned	RF/AD/CW	Jan	Complete
16	May get SEPA hydromorphology experts to present at a future meeting (added to future agenda items)	RF/AD/CW		Complete
17	As work on review of Mimas tool is carried out consider how best to get input of this group	RF/AD/CW		Complete
18	Morphology critique on the first paper to be circulated	RF/CW	End Nov	Complete
19	Consider how best for FFAG to input to SEPA monitoring advice	RF/AD/CW		Complete
20	The group should receive an explanatory note of why large licensed barriers are not shown on the tool, and how this information can be accessed.	CW		Complete
21	Ask a hydromorphologist to present information at next meeting on how they assess morphological impact, and the assumptions which underpin this approach	CW / RF		Complete
22	Give a formal answer on how suspended solids / turbidity are considered as part of environmental standards.	CW / AD		Complete
23	Email correct Scottish Government department titles to CW.	RG		Complete
24	Review wording re 'surrogate habitat' in previous minutes with CW.	AD		Complete
25	Raise issue of installing fish counters in fish passes with the national counter network group. SEPA to provide fish barrier data as appropriate.	AD		Complete
26	List the ecologists who were involved in developing MImAS Module 3 sensitivity (ecological)	CB/RR	June 2015	
27	Notify the group when the fish barrier app becomes available for use / testing	KB	When available	Complete
28	Link the final page of the fish barrier app to SE	KB	asap	Complete

	Web fish barrier page.			
29	Provide a summary of diffuse pollution standards with SEPA chemistry, and check whether research is being carried out	AD	March 2016	
30	Add monitoring item to FFAG agenda in 2016	EJ	March 2016	
31	Provide further information on the EA's work on developing standards for monitoring fish passes, which defines key principles	AD	March 2016	
32	Consider how to engage further with asset owners as part of RBMP implementation	EJ to give update	March 2016	
33	Review the IBIS research programme and identify projects of interest for future presentations by CA or students.	All	March 2016	