



Wild Fisheries Review: Members Briefing No 1. February 2015

This is the first of a series of briefings to explain the current and developing situation with regard to the Wild Fisheries Review.

1. Introduction - Below is a general background to the review, and following that is a report on the ASFB/RAFTS Joint Working Group (JWG) which has been set up to develop ideas and identify information requirements needed to inform the decision making process within both organisations. The aim is to give the members and their representatives an informed baseline from which to develop their response to proposals arising from the review and ensure they best meet our fishery management interests.

ASFB and RAFTS will be convening the JWG on a regular basis, and its deliberations and output will be reported back to members through these briefings so that you are fully apprised of issues under consideration. We need feedback throughout this process, and we will facilitate that through briefings and events. We would, of course, welcome your views at any time, and the Chairmen and staff will be receptive to any input you may wish to have.

2. General background In January 2014, the First Minister announced that a Wild Fisheries Review would be undertaken during 2014. The aims of the review were to:

- develop and promote a modern, evidence-based management system for wild fisheries fit for purpose in the 21st century, and capable of responding to the changing environment;
- manage, conserve and develop our wild fisheries to maximise the sustainable benefit of Scotland's wild fish resources to the country as a whole and particularly to rural areas

The Chair of the Wild Fisheries Review was Andrew Thin, the current chairman of Scottish Canals and former chair of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The Review panel also included Jane Hope and Michelle Francis, and was supported by a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) drawn from Marine Scotland Science, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and the Institute of Fisheries Management. The remit and scope can be viewed [here](#).

The [report](#) and recommendations of the Wild Fisheries Review Panel were published on 8th October 2014.

The Scottish Government announced its [Programme for Government](#) on 26th November. Paragraph 266 relates to the Wild Fisheries Review and gives an indication of the timetable for the rest of the current Parliamentary session:

...The independent review reported in October 2014 and the Scottish Government will now consider its conclusions and recommendations. We will consult in Spring 2015 on broad policy options for a new fisheries management system, followed by a public consultation on a draft Wild Fisheries Bill before the end of the parliamentary session.

We understand that the Scottish Government will set up an external stakeholder reference group to discuss the detail of the forthcoming consultation and subsequent draft Bill. ASFB and RAFTS circulated a questionnaire to the respective memberships to get an initial view from the DSFBs and Fishery Trusts across Scotland. This will help inform both our approach to the WFR going forward and the areas that the JWG need to look at in detail.

The review falls within the remit of Parliamentary Rural Affairs, Climate Change and Environment Committee (RACCE) and the Committee has taken evidence from the WFR Panel on 18 February and from representatives of DSFBs, Trusts and other wild fish organisations on 25 February – see transcripts of both meetings [HERE](#) and [HERE](#). RACCE invited evidence from the Minister for the Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform on 4 March – see transcript [HERE](#). It is worth noting that the practical value of the RACCE sessions is perhaps limited at this stage and relatively premature – the discussion was based on the report, and not on hard consultation proposals, as we do not expect the consultation proposals to be available until spring. Even then, there will be considerable scope for discussion and negotiation as part of the process leading to a bill, and it is essential that the ASFB and RAFTS network are able to contribute effectively to that process.

3. ASFB/RAFTS Joint Working Group - ASFB and RAFTS have set up a Joint Working Group to develop ideas, as appropriate, on how best to respond to any Government consultation to take forward recommendations from the Review.

The JWG will also consider how best to ensure that any transition period between current, and any potential new arrangements, is efficiently managed. We would emphasise that the JWG is not making any decisions or policy relating to the WFR, but is facilitating discussion and how our respective organisations and members might best contribute to the process. It is worth pointing out that the role of ASFB and RAFTS is formally considered in the review, (Recommendation 23) which states that:

Consideration should be given, in consultation with the ASFB and RAFTS, to developing and implementing a formal transition programme for fisheries management at a local level that involves integrating existing DSFBs and FTs into shadow FMOs ahead of any legislative change arising from this review.

With the support of the ASFB Management Committee and the RAFTS Board, the JWG has held 4 initial meetings (September 2014, November 2014, February 2015 and March 2015) to consider its terms of reference, programme of work, structure and communication strategy with the memberships. It is emphasised that the JWG will work with the authority of both ASFB and RAFTS management, and members of both will be free to participate in the discussions. The core JWG is as follows:

Working Group	Organisation
Andrew Wallace	Chair - RAFTS
Alasdair Laing	Chair - ASFB
Jim Henderson	Nith DSFB and Fishery Trust
Roger Knight	Spey DSFB and Spey Foundation
Mark Bilsby	River Dee
Craig Macintyre	Argyll DSFB and Fishery Trust
Jamie Ribbens	Galloway Fisheries Trust
Alison Baker	Forth Fisheries Trust
Simon McKelvey	Cromarty DSFB and Fishery Trust
In attendance	
Chris Horrill	RAFTS
Brian Davidson	ASFB

A key concern of the JWG is that it should be attentive at all times to communicating effectively with the network both to ensure that the group does not exceed its authority and that it had the backing of the memberships of RAFTS and ASFB. As the process develops, we envisage holding regional meetings to consider how any ideas and solutions can be best developed locally and fed into responses to Government.

The JWG is still at a formative stage and the last meeting considered themes where further work could focus, with the potential for smaller working groups to look at these in more detail. These included:

- **Finance for new structure** - what are funds spent on and what might be needed to service new system? What additional costs may arise?
- **FMO Structure** – This should focus on roles and responsibilities and constitutional matters.
- **Science and data needs** –What is actually required? - core functions. These will flow from and connect to FMO role process above, and should form part of that work.
- **Fisheries development and access** – how might this be delivered? It was agreed that all members should be open to ideas elsewhere.
- **Representation and co-ordination** will need careful thought and in particular how that fits with wider thinking in terms of accountability and transparency

Reporting from the Group

Unless there are exceptional reasons for doing so, the discussions of the Group will not be confidential and communication to the membership will be undertaken regularly. The agreed terms of reference will be made available together with reports from each meeting. News and developments on the WFR will also be provided on a regular basis as part of this, and more frequently if required on an issue-by-issue basis.

The next meeting of the Group will take place on 28 April, following which briefing no.2 will be issued. If you have any comments or questions please do not hesitate to contact ASFB or RAFTS at any time. (brian@asfb.org.uk or chris@rafts.org.uk)

Alasdair Laing
Chairman, ASFB

Andrew Wallace
Chairman, RAFTS