

England and Wales Fisheries Group

Tuesday 11 October 2011 (11.00-16.00) - Mary Sumner House, London

Meeting notes

Present: Andy Brown Group chair and Deputy Chair of the Environment Agency Board;
 Geoff Bateman Head of Fisheries, Environment Agency;
 Janina Gray Salmon & Trout Association;
 Graeme Harris Fisheries, Ecology and Recreation Advisory Committee Wales;
 Peter Hartley Angling Development Board;
 Mike Heylin Angling Trust;
 Ivor Llewelyn Atlantic Salmon Trust;
 Mark Lloyd Angling Trust;
 Mark Owen Angling Trust;
 Peter Spillett Institute of Fisheries Management.

In attendance: Paul Lidgett; Andy Schofield; Adrian Taylor; Godfrey Williams.

Apologies: Jim Glasspool (Angling Trust);
 Paul Knight (Salmon & Trout Association);
 David Moore (Angling Development Board).

Andy Thomas of the Wild Trout Trust (WTT), attended for Item 2. The Environment Agency's Ed Mitchell (Director of Environment & Business) and Ian Barker (Head of Land & Water) joined the meeting during Item 3.

Specific actions are shown in bold and summarised at the end of these notes.

1. Welcome and introductions

Andy Brown opened the Group's third meeting and welcomed Peter Hartley and Janina Gray who were deputising for the Angling Development Board and Salmon & Trout Association, respectively.

The Group raised two items from the minutes of the last meeting (6 July 2011).

- Whether the Agency had made any progress with gaining grant awarding powers (in England).

The Agency has been pursuing this, but without a change in primary legislation, it is unlikely to happen. Instead, it has been working with the Defra Big Society group to make it easier to build strategic partnerships. A briefing note is appended to these minutes.

- Clarification of the Defra stakeholder meetings referred to in the minutes and whether these are the same as the Angling Summit.

They are, though it wasn't known when Defra scheduled the next meeting. **Paul Lidgett to**

find out any proposals for further stakeholder meetings from Defra and inform the Group.

Actions from the last meeting - reviewed by exception and progress is summarised at the end of these notes.

2. National Trout & Grayling Fisheries Strategy – progress report

Godfrey Williams introduced the paper and took the opportunity to relay a message from the British Trout Association, that the trout stocking industry would be capable of meeting the demand for triploid fish in 2015 (when only triploid fish may be stocked to rivers and open waters).

He asked the Group; what aspects could be delivered better by partners; and how sustainable fisheries might be promoted. He also asked what opportunities the Agency and others could take to raise awareness of the work needing to be done to protect and enhance trout, grayling and char fisheries.

Andy Thomas of the WTT said;

- The strategy's aim to conserve and improve wild trout stocks is consistent with the WTT's objectives. The WTT believes strongly in separating the management of stocked fish and wild fish;
- The WTT's programme of advisory and practical visits put it in day to day contact with clubs and fisheries affected by the change in stocking rules.
- Although many clubs had already ceased to stock with diploids, they were stocking with fewer and smaller triploids and various clubs had run "blind trials" of marked diploid and triploid stocked fish and detected no difference in performance;
- Some clubs had reported that triploids did not hold position as readily, which may cause them to "spook" more easily, but this meant they did not compete with wild fish;
- Although some anglers claim that triploid trout do not rise freely to dry flies, it was Andy's view that where there was a healthy fly hatch, triploids rose as readily as stocked diploid trout;
- Some clubs had reported an improvement in wild stocks, but there was no evidence that this was as a result of a change in stocking practice or a greater focus on habitat improvement;
- The WTT has been invited to give advice and practical help to several marginal trout fisheries (where coarse fishing is the predominant interest);
- Many clubs preference for continued stocking with diploid trout was based on the views of several significant trout suppliers. Yet, when asked, they were more interested in improving trout habitats than stocking more fish;
- Andy suggested that the Group had a pivotal role in supporting the strategy, and that it and its member organisations must give clear messages to trout and grayling anglers.

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The Salmon & Trout Association confirmed that it fully supports the strategy.

The Angling Trust was concerned that the progress report was too promotional, focusing on what the Agency is doing, rather than on outcomes, for example, it was “working towards effective enforcement”. On hydropower, the report claims 75% of installations in 2010 have improved trout passage around obstacles, but does not report on the other 25% - do these hinder migration. All hydropower installations should be at least not damaging. Geoff Bateman agreed that current evidence on the impact of low head hydropower in the UK was limited, but more monitoring was being carried out which would provide better information on impacts in future.

There was no information in the report on the success of the Restoring Sustainable Abstraction programme. Geoff Bateman agreed that the Agency needed to quantify the size of the problem to set the progress in context.

The Angling Trust also raised concerns over the selective use of evidence in the report, suggesting that whilst the Agency has based the change in stocking rules on a very wide evidence base, including evidence from European studies, it was not taking the same approach to hydropower. It reported there were many examples from Europe where hydropower schemes are being decommissioned because of marginal energy returns and the risk to aquatic ecology.

The Angling Trust also reported that the Agency was considering giving consent to stock barbel in what would otherwise be natural trout rivers. Barbel could prevent trout from re-establishing. Adrian Taylor said the Agency would only give consent to stock barbel in rivers within its natural range and considered the balance between species' abundance when consenting additional stocking.

Graeme Harris suggested a detailed study of the predatory impacts of stocked fish on wild fry/parr would be helpful. The WTT referred to an unpublished Cefas study which showed no evidence of predation. He also asked about Wild Fishery Protection Zones. The concept had been welcomed in Wales, but with little visible progress. Godfrey Williams reported only one or two had been established in England and that it was for local fisheries interests to come forward with proposals. Once established, they would be regulated through stocking consents.

Graeme Harris reminded the Group that the strategy included sea trout and stressed the importance of understanding the basic biology of both forms of trout. The Celtic Sea Trout and other projects are providing this, but these need to be drawn together. The Atlantic Salmon Trust agreed with the need to develop conservation objectives for sea trout, but more targeted research was needed before this could be done. The value of monitoring sea trout stock performance based on rod catch was questioned. The Group suggested a concept paper on sea trout biological reference points would be useful, to see what was involved and whether they were realistic. Geoff Bateman suggested the alternative of a working group being set up to work on this topic. **Godfrey Williams to organise.**

Graeme also recommended that research is also needed on the impact of genetic introgression between stocked fish and sea trout.

The WTT felt that many clubs do not view brown trout and sea trout as the same species, but should. The Group could encourage this through the media.

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Godfrey Williams asked the Group how key messages could be communicated to the wider trout angling community. The Atlantic Salmon Trust suggested this paper should be published, as an impartial, evidence based report on progress, whilst the NGOs are better placed to act as advocates.

The Angling Trust agreed to coordinate messages about trout and the outcomes of the Trout and Grayling Strategy to anglers.

The Angling Trust questioned whether trout farms would be able to meet the demand for triploids from 2015, as it understood only a few farms produced triploid ova. Paul Lidgett reported on figures provided by the Fish Health Inspectorate, that there is little difference in the number of farms producing diploid and triploid eggs. In the last 4 years, the majority of triploid eggs sold for restocking came from between 3 and 5 farms per year, whereas around 6 farms per year (range 4 to 9) produce diploid eggs.

In summing up, Andy Brown said:

- the report needed to be clear about what was fact and what was opinion and should use all available evidence;
- the Agency to set up a small workshop of interested parties to look at the emerging information on sea trout stocks and how this can assist their management;
- the Agency's Board had considered carefully hydropower and abstraction and looked forward to the Water White Paper which was expected in early December;
- the evidence base for hydropower was improving and monitoring was beginning to provide results, but that we need to wait to see the outputs. **He would ask the Agency's Director of Evidence, Miranda Kavanagh to look at the European evidence base.**

3. Business Planning

Geoff Bateman gave a brief presentation (attached) giving the context and background to planning the Agency's fisheries business and invited the Group to identify work areas to be focussed on in the next two or three years.

The Angling Trust expressed disappointment that the detailed business plan was not presented. The Institute of Fisheries Management asked whether it was more difficult to access GiA funding, now that it was no longer ring-fenced to fisheries, but part of a wider and larger Environment & Business "pot". Geoff Bateman responded that the Water Framework Directive gave greater weight for funding achievement of good status for biology that included fisheries (and biodiversity) projects. The Agency was delivering more fisheries outcomes in 2011/12 as a result of the Environment Programme, for example in Midlands, where spending totalled £2.5 million, compared with around £200k in previous years.

In relation to expenditure on enforcement, the Angling Trust asked how many fisheries prosecutions the Agency had taken in 2010/11 and whether this reflected a reduction in enforcement. Adrian Taylor responded that he would provide the figures, but that prosecutions were not necessarily a good indicator of activity – fewer prosecutions might be indicative of less enforcement activity or greater compliance. **Adrian Taylor to provide enforcement figures.** The Angling Development Board reported that there had been a visible reduction in licence checking, especially early in the season, and

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this could lead to increased evasion. Geoff Bateman stated that funding for enforcement had not changed, though enforcement practices might, for example, enforcement patrols might be focused on high evasion waters. **The Group agreed enforcement was a priority area needing additional funding in the future.**

The Institute of Fisheries Management asked whether the Agency's fisheries monitoring was still for fisheries purposes and has any change in the programme compromised its statistical precision. Godfrey Williams said the monitoring programme had been adjusted in recent years to accommodate Water Framework Directive needs, but that the precision remained known and acceptable. Andy Brown was more concerned about the volume of fisheries monitoring data that was of value to others, but that remained inaccessible.

The Angling Trust commented that there had been significant shifts in Agency expenditure in 2011/12, but little evidence of where the money was being spent. It asked whether the Agency should produce a separate fisheries business plan to show how the money is being spent, allowing the Trust to encourage others to support the Agency's work. Geoff Bateman responded that the Agency operates as a single integrated business and this is reflected in its business planning. **He agreed to meet with the Angling Trust to determine how presentation of the fisheries business could be improved.**

The Institute of Fisheries Management asked whether corporate plan priorities had changed in 2011/12. They have not – the Agency's ambition remained the same, despite reduced funding. **Paul Lidgett to circulate copies of the Corporate Plan 2011-15 to the Group.**

Ed Mitchell suggested that the Agency could use the annual report on the previous year to provide a narrative on any changes in activity in the coming year, but that this would need careful planning. The Angling Trust felt this would help anglers to support the Agency, especially during times of recession, when licence sales might be vulnerable. The Atlantic Salmon Trust agreed this could help bridge the gap left by the Regional Fisheries, Ecology & Recreation Advisory Committees.

In summing up, Andy Brown:

- asked the Agency to examine whether it could include a forward look in its fisheries annual reports, explaining how it would use its funds over the medium term and any changes in priority.
- asked the Group to identify any priority changes in activity to feed into the business plan. **Group to send comments to Paul Lidgett by 21 November.**

4. Fisheries Evidence Programme

Adrian Taylor introduced the paper. The paper describes progress with the current fisheries evidence programme (using the Red/Amber/Green or RAG notation); and other programmes/projects providing evidence to support delivery of fisheries outcomes; and invited the Group to consider additional evidence priorities.

The Group agreed it was useful to see the whole picture, but expressed concern at the number of projects which were flagged as "red" with little explanation of why, in particular the project concerned with the cumulative impacts of hydropower.

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Geoff Bateman explained that “red” did not necessarily mean they would not be delivered in 2011/12, rather that they had not met certain milestones. He receives regular reports on the evidence programme, allowing him to actively manage progress.

The Institute of Fisheries Management asked if there was a wider understanding of fisheries and related research work being carried out outside the Environment Agency. Paul Lidgett reported that the Agency had started to collate information on research being done by academia, the third sector and other government agencies. **Andy Brown asked this to be added to the Group’s forward look.**

The Angling Trust asked to see which projects were funded by rod licence income. Paul Lidgett agreed to provide this detail. It also asked whether there had been any progress on developing a common tool for monitoring rivers (fish and other biota). **Godfrey Williams agreed to look into this and report back to the Group.**

Andy Brown suggested the Agency could routinely provide similar reports to the Group. Ed Mitchell asked that this explain the criteria used to set the RAG status. **Godfrey Williams agreed to provide a paper and discussion on monitoring will be put on the agenda of the next meeting.**

5. Directors’ session on fisheries

Geoff Bateman presented the paper. The Agency’s Directors used the meeting with fisheries staff to brief themselves on the fisheries business and to debate a number of issues, which will become discussion papers for presentation to this Group and other partners. Graeme Harris said this sent out a strong message about the Agency’s high level support for fisheries work.

The Atlantic Salmon Trust advised that the paper should refer to enhancing, rather than maximising social and economic benefits. **Paul Lidgett to correct the paper.**

The Angling Development Board welcomed the work that has been done to increase angling participation, but asked whether government is asking the Agency to increase its effort in this area. Ed Mitchell replied that the Agency could switch its focus towards sustainable fisheries, whilst the third sector focussed on angling participation, but this needed further debate. The Angling Trust felt only the Agency currently had the communications resource to reach the wider non-angling market.

Andy Brown suggested the next meeting could include a session on monitoring. This should review the current fisheries monitoring programme; how it delivers against its aims; set fisheries monitoring in the context of the wider Environment Agency and others’ monitoring activities. The Rivers Trusts should be invited to participate. **Paul Lidgett to circulate the proceedings from earlier workshop, hosted by the Institute of Fisheries Management, to the Group.**

6. Local engagement

Adrian Taylor introduced the paper and reminded the Group that this would be the subject of a Defra consultation later this year.

The Institute of Fisheries Management was not convinced that River Basin Liaison Panels were an adequate replacement for FERACs – they are not strategic and not evolving fast enough. Andy Brown agreed they were only part of a package of changes relating to stakeholder engagement and participation and that the Panels did need to become more strategic to help direct local delivery.

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The Atlantic Salmon Trust advised the Agency to think about how it was going to disseminate relevant information to the wider fisheries community, as the loss of FERACs will erode the established network of contacts. The Angling Trust suggested that fisheries consultatives and similar groups had been in limbo for 12 months. The Angling Trust forums are establishing themselves to fill this gap, but will need investment to develop. They will need clear lines of engagement between the Fisheries Forums and the County Angling Action Groups.

Andy Brown said the Agency would update the Group as the situation develops. He is confident that the regional arrangements, combined with the Angling Trust forums, will plug most gaps, but the Group needs to look at what else is necessary. More attention needed to be given to communications and consultation from national through to local level. **He stressed the need for Group members to respond to the Defra consultation.**

7. Annual report

Adrian Taylor outlined the Agency's proposal for future annual reports.

The Group welcomed the examples of local newsletters provided. The Angling Trust offered to help disseminate these to a wider audience.

The Angling Trust stressed that newsletters need to operate at the level of the angler, and not be confined to area or regional boundaries.

8. Head of Fisheries & Biodiversity update

Geoff Bateman gave a short presentation on current issues of note. These included –

- the response to the consultation on charges for fisheries authorisations;
- the position on current licence sales – we are 0.2% down on 2010/11;
- two successful prosecutions on a) coarse fish removal; and b) unauthorised elver fishing;
- the England Biodiversity Strategy (link to the England Biodiversity Strategy - <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/2011/08/19/pb13583-biodiversity-strategy-2020/>)

The Group asked what changes had been made to the Defra fisheries team. **Paul Lidgett will to circulate a note on the fisheries staff changes in Defra (and Welsh Government) team.**

9. Forward look.

Items to include on the forward look include –

- Fisheries monitoring;
- Law Commission review of wildlife management;
- Water White Paper;
- Periodic Review 2014

Paul Lidgett to update the Forward Look and circulate.

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10. Any other business

The Angling Trust had requested a briefing on the changes in the Northwest enforcement arrangements. This had been circulated. Geoff Bateman stressed that neither funding nor the priority attached to enforcement had changed. Local operational managers have been consolidating enforcement in fewer, dedicated officers and he had requested a review of high impact fisheries enforcement which will be shared with the group.

Paul Lidgett to chase payment of Angling Development Board invoice.

11. Date of next meetings

The 2012 meetings are scheduled for 24 January, 24 April, 11 July and 10 October. Venues to be decided.

Summary of actions and decisions

- Paul Lidgett to find out any proposals for further stakeholder meetings from Defra and inform the Group.
- Godfrey Williams to organise a working group to examine the issues around biological reference points for sea trout.
- The Angling Trust agreed to coordinate messages about trout and the outcomes of the Trout and Grayling Strategy to anglers.
- Andy Brown to ask Miranda Kavanagh (Director of Evidence) to look at the European evidence base for hydropower.
- Adrian Taylor to provide recent enforcement and prosecution figures.
- The Group agreed enforcement was a priority area needing additional funding in the future.
- Geoff Bateman to meet with the Angling Trust to determine how presentation of the fisheries business could be improved.
- Paul Lidgett to circulate copies of the Corporate Plan 2011-15 to the Group.
- The Group to identify any priority changes in activity to feed into the business plan and send to Paul Lidgett by 21 November.
- Paul Lidgett to add an item on fisheries research being done by academia, etc, to the Group's forward look.
- Paul Lidgett to provide detail on which Evidence projects were funded by rod licence income.
- Godfrey Williams to examine what progress had been made on developing a common tool for monitoring rivers (fish and other biota) and report back to the Group.

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- Godfrey Williams agreed to provide a paper and lead a discussion on monitoring at the next meeting.
- Paul Lidgett to correct the Directors' paper (enhancing, not maximising social and economic benefits).
- Paul Lidgett to circulate the proceedings from earlier monitoring workshop, hosted by the Institute of Fisheries Management, to the Group.
- Agency to update the Group on local engagement arrangements, as the situation develops.
- The Group are encouraged to respond to the Defra consultation on local engagement.
- Paul Lidgett to circulate a note on changes to the fisheries team in Defra (and update on Welsh Government team).
- Paul Lidgett to update the Forward Look with items on fisheries monitoring; the Law Commission review of wildlife management; Water White Paper; and Periodic Review 2014.
- Paul Lidgett to chase payment of the Angling Development Board invoice.

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Progress on actions from 6 July 2011 meeting

Progress indicated in **bold**.

- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to circulate outstanding briefing note on regional representation to the Group – **briefing note appended to Local Engagement paper (Item 6)**;
- The Agency (Geoff Bateman) to keep the Group informed as regional consultative fora develop – **superseded by Local Engagement paper (Item 6)**;
- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to provide more frequent and a wider range of briefing notes to the Group and other stakeholders – **outstanding, Paul Lidgett to chase**;
- The Group to take stock of local and national consultation/representation arrangements at January 2012 meeting, with progress report at October meeting – **progress report completed – further stock-take at January meeting**.
- The Agency (Geoff Bateman) to pursue issues of funding third sector activity – **pursued, but little progress unless statutory powers change. Focusing efforts on making it easier to build strategic partnerships**.
- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to use Directors' Drilldown actions to populate Forward Look - **ongoing**.
- The Agency (Adrian Taylor) to check the per capita CIS costs and circulate to the Group – complete – **briefing appended to these minutes**.
- The Agency (Geoff Bateman) to consider whether wider publicity of increased funding would be beneficial and, if so, when - **Paul Lidgett to chase**.
- The Agency (Adrian Taylor) to provide information on wider fisheries enforcement (non-rod licence compliance) to meeting participants – **partially complete. Briefing note on NW enforcement discussed at the 11 October meeting. Paul Lidgett to discuss outstanding information needs with Group members**;
- The Agency (Adrian Taylor) to check whether it needs to send Direct Debit reminders when it is not proposing any change in duty – **complete – confirmed that we must send out Direct Debit reminders**.
- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to circulate previous progress note on implementing the National Trout & Grayling Fisheries Strategy to the Group – **superseded by paper and discussion at 11 October meeting (Item 2)**.
- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to invite Wild Trout Trust to attend the next meeting for discussion of progress with the National Trout & Grayling Fisheries Strategy - **completed**.
- The Agency to make sure National Trout & Grayling Fisheries Strategy progress paper includes consideration of fish supply economics and focuses on delivering outcomes – **complete (subject to comments in notes above)**.

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- The Agency (Adrian Taylor) to check whether it can place having the landowner's permission as a condition on fisheries authorisation – **briefing to follow.**
- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to use the Angling Trust website to signpost Environment Agency byelaws – **Paul Lidgett following up with the Angling Trust.**
- The Agency (Paul Lidgett) to arrange for the Group to receive future drought briefings – **outstanding – ongoing.**
- The Agency (Geoff Bateman) to share its drought key messages with the Group - **outstanding - complete.**
- The Agency (Geoff Bateman) to keep the Group informed about proposals and developments on new water abstraction regulations - **complete.**

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Fisheries CIS on-costs – briefing from Head of Fisheries & Biodiversity

Background

The England & Wales Fisheries Group commented that the costs being paid by the Fisheries function for Corporate Information Services (CIS) appeared disproportionately expensive.

Context

In 2011/12, Fisheries contributed £2.83m towards CIS from rod licence charges (there was another £650k from Grant in Aid, but as fisheries GiA is now part of an overall Environment & Business GiA pot, it is easier to discount this from the picture). We shared this figure with the Group earlier this year.

Historically, Water Quality paid a disproportionate element of CIS costs and charging schemes, such as Fisheries, paid less. Fisheries contribution increased in 2011/12, as we had been paying too low a proportion in previous years.

We have now moved to standard funding proportions against our corporate services. This means that all funding streams contribute the same proportion of their income. By taking income as the driver for the number of people we have and the work we do, it is a fair way to allocate the split of a service's funding.

The total funding from rod licence income for CIS for future years is:

Year	Fisheries CIS cost	Reduction	
		£k	%
2011/12	£2.83m	-	-
2012/13	£2.03m	800	28.3%
2013/14	£1.87m	160	7.9%
2014/15	£1.78m	90	4.8%

The contribution decreases in the future as the size of CIS reduces, reflecting the convergence programme, and as delivery is provided by Capgemini.

Other points of note

CIS costs this year only relate to its support of our business. Costs for specific projects (for example, enhancements to database systems) are now funded directly by Directorates and have defined funding stream allocations.

While there may be other CIS charges against GiA, these will be allocated against the whole of Environment & Business GiA and, hence, will be attributed pro-rata against FTEs.

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