

KYLE OF SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST



MEETING TITLE: TRUST ORDINARY MEETING

Meeting Date: Thursday 25th March 2021

Meeting Time: 3.00 pm

MEETING MINUTES *(Draft)*

Chair/Facilitator: Ashe Windham

Minute taker: Recorded and transcribed by Jacqui Hamblin.

In Attendance

Trustees	Attending
Ashe Windham (AW) Chairman Richard Sankey (RS) Steven McKenzie (SM) Michael Brown (MB) John Green (JG) Robbie Douglas Miller (RDM)	Keith Williams (KW) Director Sean Robertson (SR) Member Michael Baird (MBrd) Member
Apologies	Guests
Finlay McCulloch	

1. Welcome and apologies.

The Chair welcomed attendees to the meeting and accepted apologies.

2. Presentation – Climate Change Fishmongers Project – Sean Robertson, KSFT.

A PowerPoint presentation was made by Sean Robertson KSFT – A copy of which will be circulated with the completed minutes. **Action SR (8)**

AW thanked SR and expressed that the presentation was fascinating, if not rather alarming. RDM- Firstly congratulations to Sean on a fantastic piece of work; it is a very good example of how MS produce some very useful information which needs to be used intelligently. With the help of The Fishmongers' Company, we have turned the information into something that we can add structure and a long-term plan to, so many congratulations to Sean. RDM recommended that AW, as chairman, drop Andrew Wallace a note to thank him for the ability to energise our team in this area and be right at the very front of this work. Be under no illusion that once this gets around Scotland, there is going to be a rush at the door, and we are right at the front of the queue, which is the right place to be. RDM - Two questions. Firstly, The National Forest Inventory (NFI) is already covering parts of our area. Can you clarify if the right trees are in the right place? Secondly, do you have any feel on the difference in value for the carbon credits between 5 metre strips at 43 million pounds spend to the 30 metre at 63 million pounds spend? It may be easier to fund, in terms of carbon credits, the wider buffer strip. SR – It was a broad-brush way of constraining areas where you cannot plant at the moment. Some NFI mapping is really good and has the edges of the forest within 20 -30

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metres away. This would allow us to plant around these areas. A wider buffer is better value for carbon credit schemes and is absolutely the way to go. Definitely the more trees, as part of our riparian planting scheme, the higher the carbon credit value. RDM - More cost efficient as well, the biggest cost is the fencing whether you are fencing 5m or 30m it is essentially the same cost.

RS- The expression 'right trees in the right place' is now common language inside government agencies and is becoming quite the catchphrase. Government advisors are beginning to grasp this, particularly in the case of the aquatic environment. A lot of work streams are going on behind the scenes to ensure that we get eligibility into existing funding schemes as well as new ones. Much of what we would like to do is not eligible for the available funding schemes at the moment. This is a big step forward and whilst the situation looks horrendous, well done to Sean in getting this first stab at a catchment scale solution. It looks like a very big number, but given the priority shift that is taking place, I believe that it is not that onerous to aspire to these numbers and support the view that the wider the buffer strip the better. Just hope that the deer-proof fencing is also beaver proof!

RDM- There is a programme that you can watch on iPlayer called Beavers Behaving Badly. This is regarding the release of beavers in Montana. They have basically clear-felled Montana. You could put up 2-inch weld mesh and they go through it like toothpaste.

RS- If you have ever flown over the bottom of Tierra del Fuego, it looks like a nuclear holocaust. It is beyond comprehension. It is wrong to get side-tracked into north American beavers. What is sad is we are seeing a polarisation between beavers, bad v good beavers. That is not helpful, and advocates think they are good for fish, whilst fish people are often very anti beavers for lots of good reasons. We should not worry too much as if there were any beavers, they would die of starvation fairly quickly in our headwaters. We must learn to live with them and the issue will be, what would be the appropriate management of beavers in the future. I do not think they will be a problem in our uplands certainly for a few generations. The impact on the lower Kyle for example could be pretty devastating. What we really need to do is ensure that if we do have beavers that we need to have a management strategy that is both accepted and licensed.

KW- One thing I am concerned about are these groups being set up trying to bring money to the sector to help tackle these problems and get carbon capture funding etc., One group involves the Dee, Forth & Tweed. I am concerned that they might not understand our area, and because we are such a high priority they may well want to go for the very big blocks of forestry. If that is what was rolled out as the ideal way, in some of our areas we might only be able to put in small pockets between areas of deep peat. We have planted at a micro level before within areas of deep peat because we did the probing and were able to plant in quite small areas. Concerned that these techniques and our local issues might get lost unless we stand up and get ourselves right into this process at an early stage. SMK- Is the issue with deep peat not just for commercial planting? SR- You cannot qualify for carbon credit if you are planting on peat deeper

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than 50cm. Carbon sequestration research shows planting on deep peat can release more carbon than it saves. AW- Am I right in saying that there are no grants for riparian planting? RS- Exactly the problem, deemed not fitting within policy, so not eligible at this stage. That is something that FMS is discussing at a very senior level and have a lot of sympathetic ears. A number of Government agencies are feeding back into that process, we make these riparian strips the highest priority in these schemes not only just eligible, but also a priority. If that can happen it will unlock a lot of funding and quite senior people in this process are supportive.

AW- Noticed on the Blackwater through to Croick that they had done a fair amount of riparian planting but a lot of it has been washed away with heavy flooding and wondered what the fix is for that? SR- I think we do need to be aware of areas with a tendency to flood and need to think of all the constraints. Potentially, although not funded, we can fence off areas to encourage natural regeneration. KW- Some previous planting is in poor condition, maintenance is critical in terms of fencing etc. There are some areas with very good planting which are well maintained, whilst others are not maintained, and we are then back to square one.

AW- One of the stated purposes of the auction was to help with tree planting. It is important that we are seen to be doing something on this front. KW - Upper Oykel to Connacher, we have had a look in closed season and one of the other issues are areas that are fished, another layer to be put on the GIS. KW- We were left a legacy from the McMullen estate of £5K, this is earmarked for tree planting on the Oykel. What we could do is use this to do a demonstration project. It would be good to get a flagship project with an owner that is onsite. We could use that as partly a learning process and testing ground to develop a model that we could then roll out to other people. Mechanisms to roll this out are not quite there yet. In many cases landowners have no fishing interest as they just own the land. At what point do we go to the owners? Need to spend time looking at this.

MB- Really enjoyed Sean's presentation, well done. I can understand the difficulties that is going to be on planting the margins along watercourses and planting in deep peat will become increasingly difficult. Information recently received is that the 50cm is likely to be reduced to an even thinner layer. An area in which we can take a two-pronged approach is peatland restorations, reprofiling of hags, and putting in of dams etc. which provide huge benefits in reducing erosion on riverbanks. A lot of landowners, who perhaps do not have fishing interests, may warm more easily to peatland restoration. The stumbling block is that the emphasis has moved away from paying the landowner to paying the contractor; there is not the same encouragement for the landowner to carry out this work. The message that we have to try and get through to landowners is the benefit for them, not necessarily a financial benefit, but to the habitat and overall land condition.

MB- Attended a conference where there was a Norwegian scientist making a presentation. Do not put fences up, just increase the number of trees, proved beneficial in Norway. There is an excellent online lecture in which it is shown what has been done, and the benefits of 10-15% more trees than they would normally plant and allow the deer to forage. The new wild deer management strategy is calling for serious culls on deer and I think deer numbers will be seriously addressed in the next five years. **Action**

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MB (9) to provide presentation. It drew parallels between the north of Scotland and the area in Norway where they did all the work on tree cover density. MB to send to KW and Jacqui circulate to members. SMK- Observations, great believer in more trees and less fencing. Went to look at the peatland restoration work that has been done up above Loch Craggie; it is unbelievable and the difference that they have made is fantastic.

AW- Fascinating discussion that is central to what we are doing in the Trust. Our view is that the Trust will play a more important part in our overall activities. Happily, given the tax breaks, it is a great deal easier to raise monies for a charitable trust.

3. The minutes from previous meeting of 23rd September 2020 were approved.

4. Open Actions B/Fwd.; and matters arising.

No	Action Title	Actions	Owner	Raised	Complete by
1	SANDS	KW Contact local angling clubs, educators, and potential interested parties to determine interest. KW has spoken to local anglers. RS Iain Robertson is taking a more regional approach. <i>Parked due to Covid.</i>	KW	April 2019	Ongoing
2	SEDIMENT FINGERPRINTING	After many years of heavy sediment, the Oykel this year has clearer waters and very little sediment. Therefore, moved sampling to the Shin where the bed of the Shin, Forestry, Pasture and Peatland will all be sampled. Draft report will be available by the end of 2019. SR: Heard from APEM should be pending. Early results indicate sediment coming from above the dam onto the main stem. Need to wait for report. <i>Most recent report is on website in project reports page</i>	SR	June 2019	Completed
3	HERITAGE NETTING PROJECT	SR advised that Development Trust is keen to be partners in the project and take an active role. SR visited the Ness to observe the netting and tagging. SR suspects that for	SR	April 2019	Ongoing

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		our purposes it will be a combination of sweep netting and the old style. Parked due to COVID. Coble needs work, bailiffs winter work. 2022 project.			
4	VICARIOUS LIABILITY	Liaise with David McKie. Action KW/JH. <i>JH contacted David McKie for possible dates and costs.</i> Ashe going to approach to get webinar. JH send AW email trail. Recording still available on website.	KW/JH	April 2019	Completed on 25 th November 2020
5	Governance - New Trustees	Action KW to speak to the Kyle Development Trust about bringing in new trustee. KW It has been hinted at with David Watson, Action KW to firm up. Pick that up again. Trustees' articles of association and drop of. Ron Boothroyd approach. SMK very nice guy. Happy to approach RB Action AW.	KW & AW	June 2019	Ongoing but Ron Boothroyd has accepted AW's invitation
6	Shin Habitat project	Hamish Muir Study recommends possible options; modelling, introducing gravel and more water. Action KW ask HM for more examples. Action RS broach with SSE and SEPA Action further up the tree. Priority has not allowed us to move forward on this. Will revisit when time allows. Applied to the SNH biodiversity challenge fund awaiting grant offer.	SR/KW	September 2019	Ongoing
7	Carron Radio Tracking	Require more tags & receivers. Remind river workers/anglers on the Carron not to take fish. Action KW project description.	KW	September 2019	ASAP
8	Schools Project	The Salmons Journey, lifecycle with Bonar Bridge School and teacher Lisa Mackenzie. Require funding for minibus to take kids to smolt sites.	SR	September 2019	May 2019

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		Action SR explore grant funding for minibus. The Trust will fund if not forthcoming. SR ran out of time on that, would be great for next year. Will be Covid dependant. SR to investigate RHET funding. 2022.			
9	Consultations Folder	JH to ensure link working.	JH	Sep 2020	Completed
10	Migdale Smolts	KW continue to work with Highland Council & Polly Burns of FMS.	KW	Sep 2020	ASAP
11	Fundraising	KW & SMK liaise in fund raising auction	KW/SMK	Sep 2020	Dec 2020

Point 3 - Netting project for tagging fish, catching juvenile fish in smaller nets combined with heritage aspects. Short of having fish counters the next best thing is to know the exploitation rate i.e. the percentage of fish we are catching. By tagging and then seeing what is recaptured we can potentially estimate abundance. It is a difficult thing to do but that is what they do on the Tweed, and they have better information than we do. The coble needs work, a project for next winter.

Point 5 - New trustees, David Watson is the director of the KSDT and is coming in to do a presentation for the board meeting tomorrow. AW asked KW to look at the term length for trustees. KW- Trustees can serve 6 years but that does not apply to chairman. The clock was set back to zero in 2018 by special resolution. **Action JH (10)** to produce a succession planning paper for review. AW- Would be grateful if anyone can suggest potential trustees. Ron Boothroyd was suggested as he helps on the upper Oykel and is widely respected in the local area. He was on the Board of KSDT and Croick Community Council. MBrd - Ron has left the community council. **Action AW (3)**- If all in agreement AW is happy to approach him. Agreed.

Point 6 and 10 - Shin Habitat Project and Aquaculture. KW- There have been changes of staff at UHI and we are speaking to them again about genetics work. There is a meeting next week with Marine Scotland (MS), Highland Council (HC) and Polly from FMS regarding aquaculture interactions. There is talk of a national programme being run by MS looking at introgression. RS- We are in a flux situation with Scottish Government leading up to the election. We are hopeful that the national introgression study will be put in place. We need to ensure that freshwater aquaculture gets prominence. KW- Applied to the Biodiversity Challenge Fund for work to go ahead on main stem of the Shin. Trust is not committed at this stage and trustees will need to approve the project, assuming we receive a grant offer.

Point 7 - Carron radio tracking. Project postponed from last year, Carron fished well so far this spring. Only one fish donated to date, unable to radio tag the salmon as it kept rejecting the tag. The fish was therefore let go in good condition.

Point 8 - Schools Project - SMK- Only just got the schools back up and running so not this year. AW - Did SR get in touch with RHET? SR - Had a look at their website, there is some stuff on training. **Action SR (6)** make a note to continue actioning that.

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5. Governance

- a. Reserve's Policy – Reserve's policy circulated was a combined policy with the Board, this was in error as they should have separate policies. KW will come back with a draft policy for the Trust. **Action KW (11)**

6. Directors Report was shared prior to meeting. Points raised by exception.

- a. All staff went onto flexible furlough for January and February which saved c. £12,000 for the board.
- b. Auction raised £9K, not in position to say whether we will have one this year. A lot of fishing lots carried over to 2022.
- c. Fishmongers' Company work desktop mapping. £1.5K received to pay for some of the map licensing and staff time. Might get a little more as SR skills helped the Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie. Stemmed from our involvement with the temperature monitoring network.
- d. Contribution from the trust to the board for staff time. Decided to lower from £18K to £12K as Board had not used the amount of time anticipated.
- e. Pearl Mussel (PM) encystment surveys at Dalchork. SNH are keen to know if the pearls are using trout instead of salmon.
- f. We are regularly having to deal with issues related to Craig Riabhach windfarm on the Tirry.
- g. We have raised an objection to the Meall Buidhe windfarm. As there is siting of turbines in areas of deep peat, there is a high risk of damage and run off. We were also not happy with what was placed in the environmental assessment, particularly in terms of pearl mussels.
- h. MB- I am chair of local community council and a recent wind farm development project was discussed. We asked the developer to give us an outline of their moor management plan. They would not be drawn on this and stated that it is something that would be put in place once planning is given. This is surely wrong and there should be clear habitat requirements prior to planning. It raises concerns that they are not required to conduct this prior to planning. KW– Agree with MB. One of the continual problems we have is with fish farm planning consents is that they need to monitor wild fish and it is not specified as to what that monitoring should be so it does not get done. On Meall Buidhe, SMK advised that it was due to go to planning again about month ago as they were trying to amend something with SEPA. Likely planning stalled. MBrd- It has been identified that the number of turbines is at their economic limit and that one of them has also been identified as being in deep peat. If that one is taken out of the equation, then this development would not happen. If they lose one more then it is finished.
- i. Carron Management plan, a draft has been produced and just needs polishing. It was held up because we were waiting on the results of the tree planting project that Sean was working on and we want to incorporate this into the plan. Carron is an ideal one to float to see what reaction we get when we have a Teams meeting with proprietors. **Action KW (5)** show AW plan first.

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- j. Using the example of Alladale in terms of tree planting, we are now effectively telling them they have planted in wrong place to help lower stream temperatures.
- k. SSE Transmission - when they get permission for windfarms etc. and they have to clear areas of forestry, very often they have a planning condition that they have to plant a certain number of trees in mitigation. We have put SSE in touch with Alladale as they have a history of carbon capture projects and being able to plant on a large scale. This is another potential avenue to get tree planting funded. They will be looking at least 30 hectares and if you can do that, they will pay the money for the tree planting. 30 hectares over 30 kilometres of river, however, is a different ball game.

7. Budgets and Finance

- a. 2020-2021 Budget
 - i. Line 83 income versus expenditure original budget forecast was for a loss of £12K and we are now showing a surplus of £4,328. Is likely to improve as still some monies to come in.
- b. 2021-2022 Budget
 - i. Kept contributions to Board down to £12K, if we get project monies in then that may well be increased by agreement.
 - ii. Removed contingencies, except a bit for science at £1K.
 - iii. SFCC subscriptions are now less; will make that amendment.
 - iv. There is money in for another Auction, £7K, which may not happen.
 - v. Predicting a £3k surplus but only if we brought in £7k from another auction.
 - vi. Hopeful we will get some funding for projects.
 - vii. Cash position is c£150K but £37K in restricted funds, £110k free cash. We need to give serious consideration to whether we should be spending that money to help in the tree planting process and to what levels.
 - viii. AW- Key that we hear on riparian planting funding.
 - ix. RDM- Restricted funds B/fwd. What is the policy? Are we not obliged to use that money? KW- In my view that is true, although some have been there for a long time. Something that I have spoken to AW about in the context of the reserves policy. **Action KW (11)**- to produce a formal Trust reserves policy to include restricted funds. RDM- we might as well spend it. Get some focus on spending that money. Then we will have a more realistic picture of what money we have got. Be seen to be spending the restricted money on things that need doing. Make sure we have a plan in place. RDM- Open new auction with information on how we spent the money raised last year to enhance our habitat. RS- We have identified the priority of riparian tree planting. Rather than use the money we have to plant here and then perhaps we should use this money to develop a full catchment scale plan that then becomes shovel ready. What we can do is use that with some ambition to raise what may be millions of pounds. Could use that to attract funders and to do that I believe we would need more resources i.e. more staff. SR could lead on it but needs somebody on the ground. Personally, I would like to see it done inhouse. Opportunity is there and I think it is bold, let us be at the front of the queue with all this. We have a very strong case that our catchment is so high priority according to MS's own data. Clearly this is going to

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take years, it is a decade's worth of work at the very least. RDM- Wholeheartedly agree with RS strategy. When you are trying to convert a plan into action you need a really good presentation. One of the ways that we might energise our plan is to produce a booklet. For example, if Fishmongers' come back and say they have identified 6 large corporations that want to buy carbon credits, they will want a pitch/presentation as to what they are getting. If we have this oven ready, it may take a few thousand pounds, but we will have a document that allows us to get to the front of the queue. RS- The whole Riverwoods approach it is about firing this process up. Highest risk, highest priorities and we are one of the most active boards and trusts. The only way forward is to get cracking with a shovel ready project. Reasonably confident that we are going to see a whole series of policies that will intertwine, and all this will start to come together. It is how we strategize that, and we have a great leader in Sean, but he will need the support to turn that into a sales pitch that is not just a flashy brochure - we must have the supporting project behind it. Let us go for it. MB- Agree wholeheartedly. We have choices that we employ someone with the capabilities to work with Sean, or we go out and use professional people like John Clegg or Fountains Forestry or some other forestry company that is already working in the area. We need to decide what money to allocate to the project development and decide whether we advertise or outsource. AW- Rather than taking on an extra salary I would rather outsource, if it is a consultant, employed for a certain amount of time and for a certain budget. RDM- Why not we feed this back to the JMG to come up with a strategy proposal on how we take this forward. Ask Keith and Sean to come up with ideas and we can bounce it around the JMG and come back to our next meeting with a firm set of proposals about how we develop this. AW agreed. **Action KW & SR (12)**

- x. AW- Should we go ahead with an auction this year? RDM- If we have the time to turn it away from fishing into other activities then it would be good to maintain the momentum. MBrd- prepared to put in auction lot for golf. JG- In favour to continue auction on an annual basis and is an attractive thing if it does not stick to fishing. MB- Should continue an annual basis. AW- Last year we left it late. If we start earlier, we can reach more people. Agreed to go ahead. **Action SR (13)** and advise on timetable.

8. Heritage project - discussed in open actions.

9. AST Smolt tracking; including potential Cassley project.

Smolt tracking on the Cassley, this relates to potential smolt passage at Duchally. Really want to know if they get past the dam, receivers in above and below the dam. Box trap is already above the dam ready to go in. Bailiffs will keep an eye on it and if smolts are caught we will go up and tag. Temporary staff for April will look more after the Shin side and acoustic tagging. Keith and one other will look after the Oykel and Cassley. As much as we can, we will keep the teams separate. Tirry and Fiag traps are in but not operating yet. The Merkland trap is operating, no smolts yet.

10. APEM Sediment fingerprinting

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SR- Had final report come through and did not deviate much from the draft report. Sources of sediment were categorised by land use. Unsurprisingly, forestry was predominant. Interestingly, most of the sediment in the lower Shin appears to be coming from just below the dam and there is a small burn in that area. Interpretation is difficult. The fine sediment and silt might be coming through both dams and indeed there has been a lot of forestry being cleared in the Tirry catchment. We cannot prove this conclusively as APEM did not sample above the dam. Report is on the website under 'completed project' pages. If we do get a big siltation event in the future, we are now primed with the methodology.

11. Carron radio tracking project -Discussed earlier in open actions.

12. Potential Oykel tree planting

KW- The advantage of undertaking planting on the Upper Oykel is that by going through this process with a willing landowner we will learn from it.

13. Biodiversity challenge fund – Dalchork tree planting – discussed in open actions.

14. Biodiversity challenge application – River Shin habitat

Waiting to hear from SNH on whether we will get funding. SMK- A lot of construction work going on up there, road works etc. KW- Has been on site quite a lot with an environmental clerk of works, Eamon Flood. He has been consulting regularly and is asking for our agreement on most sensitive works. Silt measures look robust. Already dismissed a contractor who was not complying. MBrd- Did a walk through and project will be going on until November. There are tons of aggregate for the road, and it was asked what would happen once the line was in. Advised that will be removed at landowners request otherwise roads will be left in situ. Garvary windfarm has gone through scoping.

15. AOCB

a. Date of the next meetings are Thursday 17th June and Thursday 26th September.

Meeting closed at: 17.10.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 17th June 2021

Open & *New Actions* C/Fwd.

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		more regional approach. <i>Parked due to Covid.</i>			
2	HERITAGE NETTING PROJECT	SR advised that Development Trust is keen to be partners in the project and take an active role. SR visited the Ness to observe the netting and tagging. SR suspects that for our purposes it will be a combination of sweep netting and the old style. <i>Parked due to COVID. Coble needs work, bailiffs winter work. 2022 project.</i>	SR	April 2019	Ongoing
3	Governance - New Trustees	Action KW to speak to the development trust about bringing in new trustee. KW It has been hinted at with David Watson, Action KW to firm up. Pick that up again. Trustees' articles of association and drop of. <i>Ron Boothroyd to be approached. Action AW</i>	AW	March 2021	Ron Boothroyd accepted and JH is completing paperwork.
4	Shin Habitat project	Hamish Muir Study recommends possible options; modelling, introducing gravel and more water. <i>Action KW ask HM for more examples. Action RS broach with SSE and SEPA Action further up the tree. Awaiting result of BCF application.</i>	RS/KW	September 2019	Ongoing
5	Carron Radio Tracking – Carron Management Plan	Require more tags & receivers. Remind river workers/anglers on the Carron not to take fish. Action KW project description. <i>KW to provide Carron management plan for review by AW. Arrange proprietors meeting.</i>	KW	September 2019 March 2021	ASAP
6	Schools Project	The Salmons Journey, lifecycle with Bonar Bridge School and teacher Lisa Mackenzie. Require funding for minibus to take kids to smolt sites. Action SR explore grant	SR	September 2019	May 2019

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		funding for minibus. The Trust will fund if not forthcoming. <i>Schools project postponed to 2022</i>			
7	Migdale Smolt	KW continue to work with Highland Council & Polly Burns of FMS.	KW	Sep 2020	ASAP
8	Climate Change Presentation	<i>SR to circulate copy of presentation to the Trust.</i>	SR	March 2021	ASAP
9	Norwegian Presentation	<i>MB to provide to KW and JH to circulate.</i>	MB	March 2021	ASAP
10	Trustee Succession Planning	<i>JH to produce succession planning document for review.</i>	JH	March 2021	ASAP
11	Reserves Policy	<i>KW to produce draft reserves policy to include restricted funds to JMG.</i>	KW	March 2021	By next JMG meeting
12	Tree Planting Strategy	<i>KW & SR to come back to JMG with proposals and ideas.</i>	KW/SR	March 2021	By next JMG meeting
13	Auction 2021	<i>SR to advise on timetable of actions.</i>	SR	March 2021	June 2021