

## **Written submission from Galloway Fisheries Trust**

The Galloway Fisheries Trust (GFT) was established in 1989 by four local District Salmon Fishery Boards (DSFBs) with the aim of employing a fishery biologist to investigate the impacts on local fisheries caused by the conifer afforestation of much of Galloway's uplands. The GFT is now a registered Scottish charity which aims to 'restore and maintain aquatic biodiversity, particularly native fish, in Galloway by means of practical, responsible and sustainable approaches to land, water and fishery management, based on sound science and best practice, for the benefit of the community as a whole'. Presently GFT employ 3 biologists, a project manager and an administrator. In recent years GFT's turnover has been in the region of £300,000 annually. In Galloway GFT works across 6 main river catchments and works closely with each of the six DSFBs. This working relationship has delivered good fishery management for many years.

Recognising that change from the existing structures is more than likely, the GFT has actively engaged with the Wild Fisheries Review from its onset through submission of written responses to the monthly bulletins and meetings with Andrew Thin and Scottish Government officials.

GFT work programmes already cover many aspects of the suggested roles of a FMO as outlined in the WFR, including:

- Undertaking evidence based fisheries management
- Inputting into primary, secondary and higher education programmes
- Training and working with volunteers
- Completing water quality, habitat, fish monitoring and scientific work
- Input to relevant planning and licencing processes
- Delivering a range of water quality and habitat enhancement projects (including control of invasive non-native species, peat land restoration, barrier removal, liming and habitat enhancement)
- Providing expert advice and information to other stakeholder and interest groups and individuals
- Promotion of sustainable angling, both salmonid and non-salmonid
- Including and recognising the importance of all fish species in the above

With regard to the recommendations of the Wild Fisheries Review, GFT has some specific comments. If major changes to fishery management structures do take place then it is important that the present strengths of the existing structures are preserved and, if possible, enhanced.

GFT comments:

- The working relationship between the FMO's and the Central Unit will be critical. The WFR strongly supports any new system to be based on a 'decentralised and locally empowered model'. The present Trusts/DSFBs enjoy good levels of local 'on the ground' support and it is our view that there is a significant risk of a loss of this local support and buy-in if FMOs were seen as Government controlled organisations - particularly if they became focussed only on the delivery of national priorities over local issues and concerns.
- FMOs should ensure they continue to deliver practical enhancement projects on the ground, which is a recognised strength of the present Trust network. There is a perceived risk that FMO's could become largely focussed on national monitoring / research activities.
- The geographical coverage of FMO's needs to be carefully considered. The geographic footprints covered by the present Trusts have developed through natural evolution over many years and could be a good starting point. The boundaries within which the Trusts currently operate have usually evolved after consideration of issues such as local participation, achieving economies of scale and common threats. Making an FMO too geographically large could severely curtail local participation in their running and reduce feelings of local ownership.
- Funding is a main concern. Presently GFT raises around £300,000 annually to cover its core operating costs. Approximately 10% of this is provided by the DSFB membership raised through their levy system, thus 90% of fisheries management work undertaken by GFT is not funded by the DSFB levy. This is a similar model for many west coast Fisheries and Rivers Trusts. GFT, along with many other Trusts, raises additional monies through securing grants, undertaking contract work and donations / fundraising events. Although this funding model has been successful over the last decade it is becoming increasingly strained, especially since the WFR was announced. There are particular concerns regarding the funding of fisheries management in the short term whilst new management structures are being considered, e.g. the Dulverton Trust recently turned down a £27,000 grant application from the GFT stating that the WFR meant that the long term viability of Trusts may be doubtful in their current form. It is considered likely that FMO's will be seen as less attractive to many grant bodies and for local fund raising events if they are perceived as Government or quasi-Government bodies; notwithstanding the fact that the work programmes undertaken may, in fact be very similar. Furthermore, if charitable status was lost for FMOs then several funding avenues would also be lost. If in the future there is to be a greater reliance on levies collected from fisheries as a means of core-funding then it will be essential to undertake redistribution of funds raised from areas of greatest revenue (typically the east coast) to areas where revenue is lower (typically the west coast). Inevitably, the present funding model of salmon fishery levies remaining in their own Districts encourages a shortage of funding for areas where fisheries are performing poorly, even though these are the areas where funding would be most beneficial.

- If FMOs are going to put into place ambitious long term programmes of strategically successful fishery management (which would appear, quite understandably, to be a desire of Government, given, *inter alia*, it's international commitments) then it should be a priority to ensure they have a greater security of funding than Trusts presently have in order to deliver the required outcomes at a national and international level. If core funding could be provided to FMOs from the central unit to ensure that adequate levels of staff are employed to deliver effective fisheries management, then this provides the greatest chance of success. It would quite catastrophic if the best intentions of the WFR simply cannot be delivered, no matter how much enthusiasm is invested.

Sent on behalf of Galloway Fisheries Trust Management Committee

23<sup>rd</sup> February 2015