

Notes

Action

1. Welcome, introductions & apologies

- Andrew Kerr welcomed the group, including new members Rob Barker and Gary Hillier of the UK Eel Fishermen's Association.
- Apologies received and those present are given in Appendix 1.

2. The UK Eel Fishermen's Association (UKEFA)

- Gary & Rob confirmed their agreement to SEG's objectives.
- They gave a brief overview of the UKEFA as follows:
 - UKEFA Represent about 65% of the Eel Fishermen in England & Wales (approx 60). Formed in 2010 to help form a voice with the EA. Many feel victimised due to regulations implemented by the EA.
 - The perceived conflict between Glass & Yellow & Silver eel fishermen does not exist.
 - Media reports – eg. of 95% decline in the Thames are very inaccurate
 - Members are due to carry out surveys in association with EA to help re-build trust between them
 - 119 Eel Fishermen in England & Wales. Only 86 used their licence last year. Many operate on a "subsistence" basis, very few operate on a commercial basis. Therefore feel we are sustainable.
 - Age profile is increasing: 50 – 84
- Circulate Newsletter to David Bunt who will circulate to SEG
- Biggest threat to eels is believed by UKEFA to be cormorants. The minister is looking into this. EA in Anglian Region has some data on the impact. The Group debated the pros and cons of culling, the relative impacts by different species, the political implications for SEG and the relative importance of different factors on the eel. Summary: SEG recognise a problem, along with many other issues, but don't currently believe it is a priority area for SEG. If/where cormorants are having a local impact, SEG could assist with developing an application for culling.

GH, DB

3. Update from Europe

EU Export Ban

- The EU export ban of 3 December 2010 is still holding, influenced in large part by SEG due to our broad representation
- French fishermen did not like this and lobbied their Govt hard in January. France Govt maintained the ban. This led to an unpleasant strike in some places.
- After the strike Govt tried to diffuse the situation by paying each boat 6000 euros per week not to fish for one or two weeks. Subsequently there was a self-imposed quota of 10 kgs per boat per week at an agreed market price and a significantly lower price if quota exceeded. When the national quota was reached for consumption and aquaculture in week 10, boats had the option of signing up to the official stoppage for an additional one or two weeks at the rate of 6000 Euros per boat.
- Market for aquaculture in Europe has largely been fulfilled (15-20 t). No quota left. Only quota remaining is for restocking. The total market for restocking is very difficult to determine. The actual amount supplied for restocking by the

middle of march could be about 4 – 6 tonnes. The amount of restocking market left would be a poor estimate. Restocking in France is now starting. 1.8 tonnes in the North of Charron and 800kg in the South. Rover bank price is 300 euros / kg, with 100 euros for the traders to collect and distribute the glass eels.

- Approx 30 tonnes caught to date in total – broadly similar to last year
- Industry feeling the pain of the ban, but most want it to continue. French are lobbying hard to open market to Asia again.
- Andrew is to write to Brussels: key points agreed by SEG as next 3 months are important: Ban has caused worst (highest mortality) fishing practices in France to be much reduced; CITES ban seems the best tool route towards a change in practice in the short term; there should be provision to enable excess stock to colonise underused habitat (ie. restocking); better that stock stays in Europe than exported to Asia for eating; cannot influence change in France without the ban. Summary: ban is good, but must co-ordinate to increase the “excess” for restocking; ban not a fix-all. Andrew and David to draft the letter

AK, DB

Copenhagen meeting:

- Ban supported, but would prefer an earlier announcement next season
- Considered the possibility of different CITES listings for different stages of the eel
- Concern that some rivers in NL toxic, and may need to close fisheries to protect human health. Would this help their target (releasing more eels) or harm it (as they may be more likely to die before spawning)?

4. Eel Management Plans Update

- Approx 100 eel passes installed by EA this year.
- Monitoring programmes improved (eg. with Eel Fishermen, as described above).
- About to complete a suite of manuals on best practise re: stocking, screening, passes etc. – soon available from EA website.
- A process for assessing & prioritising sites for risk & improvement being finalised (in excess of 45,000 sites)

5. Conservation Projects & Funding

- Conservation sub-group of SEG has been looking at best projects in England & Wales to assess where best to spend money for habitat improvement for eel. Due to report on 1 April to EA who have contracted the work.
- Alistair Maltby requires a reasonable estimate of the economic value of the respective glass and eel fisheries in the UK to assist with the application for funding. Info to be provided by Peter, Peter, Gary, Miran and Alan to Brian, and Brian to Alistair
- Bids being made to the European Fisheries Fund (EFF) for funding – eg. for the launch of the Sustainable Eel Standard; Alternative Eel Markets (given the ban)
- Defra will be advising on whether to make a series of small bids or a large pan-UK bid (which is likely to be very complex)
- Currently a £20M shortfall in the England budget, though across Europe there are excess (unbid) funds. Total £111M in UK budget for Fund (EFF).
- £3M currently being spent on eel passes between SEG and EA applications

AW, MA,
PW, PN,
GH, BK,
AM

6. Sustainable Eel Standard

- David Bunt, Sustainable Eel Standard sub-group Chair discussed the progress made with developing the Standard since December, particularly in the light of recent practical experience in piloting it by Jo Gascoigne.
- The Group discussed the challenges and progress made by the sub-group
- The sub-group would take the comments from the meeting and make appropriate changes to the Standard at the earliest opportunity, probably with a

teleconference next week

7. Minutes of last meeting

- The minutes of the previous meeting were accepted as a true record. There were no outstanding matters not discussed at today's meeting.

8. Any other business

- There was no other business

9. Annual General Meeting

- Chairman's Report. Annual Review was provided at last meeting. Have divided work into 4: 1. Conservation. 2. The Standard 3. Extending SEG in to Europe 4. Raising Money. This week AK went to Scotland and met RAFTS (Andrew Wallace) and 2 Scottish Rivers Trusts (Galloway and Ayrshire). AK's objective was to gain more Scottish interest in the Eel. Europe: no leadership emerging, so AK continues to spend time and cost on travel and influencing Europe. Great success by Peter Neusinger and the EA in Bridgwater to enable a legal fishery there – a big change in mood there. Peter Wood has had a huge impact in France in influencing a sustainable trawling method. England & Wales habitat prioritisation plan. Risk of UK members of ICES members to be isolated from others in Europe? Reported no. Also risk of ZSL's relationship via MG. Possibility to include Mediterranean countries? Financial viability a risk.
- Financial Report. Will be publishing end of year accounts on web site soon. Invoicing of contributing members soon. Potential sources of income were discussed. Agreed a SEG Finance sub-group needed to focus on this. Budget also needed. PW, AM
PW
- Articles and Memorandum. Agreed – subject to amending the number of Board Members to a maximum of 14. DB
- Appointment of Board Members. With some amendments (see attached), this was agreed en bloc. DB

10. Next meeting

May need a special meeting in approx 4 – 6 weeks. DB & AK to discuss.

DB, AK

Appendix 1. Attendance List and apologies for absence

Present:	Andrew Kerr	(AK)	Independent (Management Consultant)	(Chair)
	David Bunt	(DB)	Institute of Fisheries Management	(Secretary)
	Brian Knights	(BK)	Independent (Fisheries Scientist)	
	Matthew Gollock	(MG)	Eel Conservation Group / Zoological Society London	
	Peter Wood	(PW)	UK Glass Eels	
	Alistair Maltby	(AM)	Association of Rivers Trusts	
	Peter Neusinger	(PN)	Eeline Aquatrading	
	Andrew Morgan	(AM)	Fishmongers Company	
	Chris Leftwich	(CL)	Fishmongers Company	
	Alan Walker	(AW)	Cefas	
	Miran Aprahamian	(MA)	Environment Agency	
	Garry Hillier	(GH)	Eel Fishermens Association UK	
	Robin Barker	(RB)	Eel Fishermens Association UK	
	Morten Lauritzen	(ML)	Jupiter Eel	

In attendance: Lynn Pickerell
(part meeting)

Apologies:	Vin Fleming	(VF)	Joint Nature Conservation Committee	
	Julian Jones	(JJ)	Radnor Wildlife Trust	
	Ayesha Taylor	(AT)	Environment Agency	
	Tom Fort	(TF)	Author	
	Paul Knight	(PK)	Salmon & Trout Association	
	Richard Fordham	(RF)	Scandinavian Silver Eel (Sweden)	
	Roger Castle	(RC)	Eel Fisherman	
	Maldwin Drummond	(MD)	Fishmongers Company	
	Nick Droy	(ND)	RSPB	
	Joost Blom	(JB)	Biomar	
	Jon van Dooren	(JvD)	Trouw Nutrition	
	Heidi Stone	(HS)	Environment Agency	