

Notes

Action

1. Welcome, introductions & apologies

- Andrew Kerr welcomed the group. See attached list for attendance and apologies

2. Notes & matters arising from last meeting

- Proposed as a true record by Chris Leftwich, seconded by Miran Aprahamian
- Articles and Memorandum to be updated according to agreement at the last meeting DB

3. Board Membership

- Vin Fleming reminded us of his difficulty to appear as a Board member. Miran and Alan are both in similar positions as all are employees of Govt. Agencies
- Alistair Maltby suggested the Board should be separate from the SEG membership. eg one Board member per sector – proposed by the members of those sector groups
- Frank Bradley suggested that the Board should not include Govt members, and the people should be there in their own right, and trusted to make good decisions on behalf of SEG
- Governance Group to re-convene to re-visit this and include experience from the Rivers Trusts. The Board needs to retain its founding balance between Conservation NGO's, Eel Science, Policy Makers and the Commercial. AK, PK,
DB, AM

4. Updates & News

4.1 IUCN

- Alan Walker reported on the work progressing by Matt Gollock and Andrew Kerr with IUCN. A specialist anguillid sub-group is being set up to advise IUCN with the latest knowledge and science on the eel, to enable a full scientific review of their classification of the eel [across the world](#). IUCN recognised the value and urgency in bringing such expertise together.
- Peter Wood described how other organisations use risk-based assessments and would like IUCN to adopt a risk-based approach
- Alistair Maltby reminded us that ICES would have to be influenced too if a change in classification is to be universally recognised. ICES policy on the eel is that “Anthropogenic impacts should be reduced to as close as zero as possible until the stock is demonstrated to have recovered”.
- Summary: we welcome this review and work with IUCN, and we recognise that ICES are a very important review group who should also have the latest science to review
- Provide copies of ICES reports on the eel to Frank Bradley DB

4.2 Europe

- **Holland:** WWF Holland is taking Dupan to their advertising standards authority over the labelling of their eel products.

- Miran attended conference in Holland to share knowledge on monitoring and improvements in relation to the Water Framework Directive
- **France:** re-stocking in France has stumbled for the second time with the targets set in the recovery plan being missed by a large margin. Amongst the difficulties were the presence of a virus leading in one batch which resulted in the destruction of 3 million eels, and the continuing legal wrangles from their strong recreational fishing lobby group
- **Spain.** The 19 May launch stimulated Rodolfo Barrera who runs a large farm in Valencia (Alenciana de Acuicultura) to contact SEG for assessment against the Standard. A Spanish “SEG” group is starting to form with Professor Paco Espinos from Valencia University and Nacho Lacomba from the Valencia Environment Agency
- **UK:** Eel Conference in Spring 2012 in North of England
- **Ireland:** John Atkinson of the Co-Op visiting Lough Neagh on Tuesday 2nd August
- **Sweden:** Richard Fordham reported: due to export ban to China, able to stock 3 million eels to Scandinavia. 99% of eels stocked to Swedish waters die in hydropower turbines. Sees little progress by power companies to improve their turbines as very expensive – some pilot schemes only. Focussing on stocking of brackish waters so not subject to turbines, plus paying fishermen to “fish and save” to conserve eel. New schemes will provide more eel friendly turbines
- **Traffic:** Vicki Crook introduced the work of Traffic – contracted by some Govts. to investigate and report of the trade of wild animals. Vicki has provided helpful comments to improve the Eel Standard.
- **Living North Sea project.** Is focussing on mitigation (conservation) measures, to improve passage at barriers – a lot of work going on in North Western Europe.
- **Greece.** Contacts with Greece are established and they have expressed interest in the Sustainable Eel Standard
- **Italy.** Beginnings of an Italian group starting to form. Any Italian contacts – please provide to Andrew.
- **Russia:** has submitted an eel management plan, which EU is considering
- **Vin Fleming:** Control of Imports & Exports from EU continues and a resumption of trade is unlikely until there is evidence of a sustained population improvement in order for any country to be able to make “non detriment finding”. Currently debate between EU & ICES on what threshold levels should be applied.

All

4.3 Launch of 19 May

- Andrew thanked Fishmongers for hosting and largely funding the launch event
- Chris Leftwich reported on the launch. Please see the feedback attached to these minutes
- Summary: we have come a long way, but there remains plenty of work to do to get all stakeholders on side
- Work to do to get endorsement of the Eel Standard from various influential bodies
- Some catering companies now considering putting eel back on their menus
- Feedback from several – including Roger Castle, that it felt as if the Launch focussed on commercial glass eel fisheries and was less focussed on science and conservation and other fisheries
- Miran suggested the SEG website have more information on eel facts, figures, conservation etc. would help promote such messages

DB, AK

4.4 River Parrett

- Due to dialogue between the EA, local fishermen, the buyer and chaired by SEG, there has been local agreement on changes to fishing methods for Glass Eels on the Parrett
- As a result, this season there was a far higher compliance with fishing methods and a lot lower level of illegal fishing. 20 illegal nets were seized compared to 60 the previous year.

4.5 Marine Conservation Society

- On 21 July Andrew, David and Andy Don met the Marine Conservation Society (MCS). Their website (www.mcsuk.org) and information is quite influential in advising the public what fish they regard as sustainable to eat. Eels are currently on their red list, primarily due to their IUCN listing
- The MCS are supportive of SEG's aims – they had previously perceived us as a commercial trade organisation. They wish to work with us to understand more about eel science, and to provide experience to improve the Eel Standard

DB

4.6 Eel Standard

- This is currently at Version 3. A substantial review will take place in the early autumn to incorporate a lot of views for improvement expressed recently, eg. from Vicki Crook at Traffic, Alan Walker and the Marine Conservation Society
- The issue of feed is to be addressed via the feed suppliers. Could consider IFO for information on feed

DB

DB, MG

4.7 Eel Management Plans

Miran reported on the EA led work:

- EA has set up Implementation Groups for each River Basin District (RBD) to progress each plan
- The focus has been on fish passes and monitoring to assist the 2012 assessments
- 2010 legislation is causing EA to identify and prioritise sites around the country requiring help with passage and / or screening. Approx 100 improvements in 2010; likely this level per year the next 2 years. A lot of structures are owned by the EA and these must be improved too
- EA to ensure Rivers Trusts involved in RBD Implementation Groups

MA

4.8 Eels in Schools

- Severn & Wye Smokery is sponsoring this project to help educate children about eels and the environment.
- A series of schools (15 this year) in the Gloucester & London areas have a small tank with 100 – 200 elvers, which the children are responsible for several weeks. The elvers are then re-stocked to local waters
- A further 60 – 70 wish to participate next year. Takes a lot of effort and technical support to maintain these tanks. Would need a lot more volunteers to sustain
- Has a potential massive educational benefit for SEG
- Severn & Wye are also committing to stock 3 eels for every 1 they sell

4.9 Llangorse Lake Restocking project

- UK Glass Eels & Severn & Wye Smokery are sponsoring the re-stocking of Llangorse Lake in Wales. Has a unique monitoring capability with a trap at its exit. 25,000 to be stocked in August and marked with strontium chloride to know which are stocked fish.
- Output can be compared with previous production when it was fished

commercially (a) as a trap and then (b) with fyke nets (anecdote suggest the lake was “fished out” by fyke nets).

- This is partnership project between Severn & Wye Smokery, UK Glass Eels, Countryside Council for Wales, Environment Agency Wales the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust and the Sustainable Eel Group

4.10 DG Mare & DG Environment September 2011

- Christos Theophilou will be hosting Andrew and others at a meeting to introduce SEG to the Commission in Brussels this September

4.11 World Fisheries Congress May 2012

- An important conference (<http://www.6thwfc2012.com/>). Alan Walker will be co-ordinating an eel session to share knowledge and potential solutions for different eel populations around the world.
- Potential for partners such as SEG and Living North Sea to be involved

5. **France policy document on “Good Practice in Glass Eel Fishing & Restocking”**

- Didier Moreau of WWF France gave a presentation to summarise this document, which is to promote and encourage good fishing practices in France. The approach that Didier outlined was very similar to SEG views on conservation and sustainable fishing
- It has helped to influence French fishermen that they must operate more responsibly
- The restocking programme (quotas) have not been fulfilled for the past 2 years. The recreational fishermen are a strong lobbying body against this programme. SEG may be able to help influence in France to enable success of the programme
- Agreed that SEG and this Group should confer to help consistency between the Good Practice Guide and the Sustainable Eel Standard. Didier commented that other stakeholders, as well as French fishermen, would have to be included in that process
- Alan Walker questioned whether there was sufficient public resource to finance a market for large scale restocking of Europe
- Andrew has committed to go to France to meet Didier and other members soonest and David to liaise on the standard

DB, DM

AK

DB

6. **Conservation Project Bid: “Achieving a European Sustainable Eel Fishery”**

- Alistair Maltby reported on progress.
- This is a major project bid (€4.5M) for the benefit of the eel, and could help fund a proportion of SEG’s business. Has required involvement with a series of organisations, including Defra contacts and the Marine Management Organisation
- Miran will circulate information on the project from the CD
- To proceed, requires an urgent commitment from a number of SEG players, including information on monitoring programmes from EA, Cefas etc, by 1 September to enable submission by 21 September, ie:
 - Stock assessment: EA & Cefas
 - EA Eel passage
 - ART Eel passage
 - Other conservation work
 - Restocking

MA, DB

MA, AW

MA, AD

AM

H Perkins

PW

- Eel Standard DB
- Marketing & promotion AK
- Education RC
- SEG development AK
- Anything else? All
- Alistair will circulate this information to relevant SEG members AM

7. Communications

- Velo Mitrovich has offered to assist SEG with Communications. He been involved with fish & the sea all his life, but is qualified in communications. Been editor for Fishing News International. Now freelance
- Believes that any organisation sending out Press Releases is wasting its time. Should focus on our **hub of relationships** – with conservation, education, commercial, etc. & aim to by-pass the media as much as possible. Also believes websites not as important as made out to be; though do need photos, documents, logo etc. to be able to download.
- Helpful to have a direction that the website and other communications can support
- Some comments on the logo – about how well the light colour reproduces when photocopied

8. Financial Report

- Peter Wood provided paper copies of the accounts, which will also be circulated PW, DB
- Currently running a deficit budget of approx £2000, so need to find a solution to enable our funding
- Levy funding / licensing logo a possible option, but could be in “competition” with Dupan
- Suggestion that funding is based on donations rather than a levy – we would be seen less as a trade association.
- Could we seek more from Govt agencies & NGOs. eg. savings made to EA – eg. on the Parrett. Possible significant grant from EA? EA is not a grant awarding body, though can contract organisations to complete discrete pieces of work
- Funding plan largely dependent on direction, which is dependent on “Action Plan”. Andrew, David & Peter to confer soon to progress. Richard & Alex from Europe to assist. Members would be more prepared to contribute if they are clearer on direction and therefore how they can support that. AK, DB, PW

9. Action Plan

- To be developed by a sub-group chaired by Andrew AK

10. Next meeting

- Andrew and David to confer and offer potential dates in about 3 months (October – November) DB
- Andrew to organise a European SEG meeting in Valencia in September / October AK

These notes, other documents and more available on our website.....