

**NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING**  
**HELD AT FRIARS CARSE COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL,**  
**AULDGIRTH, DUMFRIES**

on

**12<sup>th</sup> September 2014 at 10.00 am**

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**PRESENT**

Percy Weatherall - Chairman  
Mark Coombs - Buccleuch Estates Limited  
Wally Wright - Netting Representative  
Robbie Cowan - Caerlaverock  
David Kempself - Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association  
Peter Landale - Dalswinton  
Danny Marshall - Upper Nithsdale Angling Association  
Richard Gladwin - Blackwood  
Peter Hutchinson - Netting Representative  
Thomas Florey - Smiths Gore

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDANCE**

nil

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Roderick Styles - Clerk  
James Henderson - Fishery Director (FD)  
David McMichael - Senior Water Bailiff (SWB)  
Shona Mitchell - Administration  
John Millar

**1. APOLOGIES**

Nick Wright - Closeburn Castle Fishing  
Nick Brown - Friars Carse  
Shona McFarlane - SEPA  
Roana Clark - Dumfries and Galloway Council  
Deborah Parke - Nith Catchment Fishery Trust (FB)  
John Kingan - North Corbelly

**2. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS FINANCIAL INTEREST**

The Clerk asked those present to declare any financial interest. No new declarations were made.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING 12<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2014 AND BOARD MEETING MINUTES FROM 12<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2014**

The Chairman referred to both of the meeting minutes from the 12<sup>th</sup> June and asked all present if the minutes were a fair and accurate record of the meetings. The minutes were unanimously approved.

#### 4. MATTERS ARISING

FD referred to Agenda item 7 - the Boards website - and asked all present if catch data and photographs can be included as previously done on the old website, as FD did not want to detract from the FishNith website. This was unanimously agreed.

FD updated the Board on D&G Angling Association project to capture brown trout brood stock. FD has applied for the appropriate licence, the traps have been constructed and landowner permission has been sought.

The Chairman informed all present that the planned River Nith Dinner Dance (25<sup>th</sup> October 2014), to raise funds for the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust has been cancelled. The Nith Catchment Fishery Trust had a meeting the previous evening and it was concluded that the event would run at a substantial loss and therefore should be cancelled. As 140 of the 300 tickets are booked with only 40 tickets paid for and as a large deposit for the hire of the Easterbrook Hall is due to be paid today it was decided to cancel the event. The Nith Catchment Fishery Trust will reimburse those who purchased tickets.

#### 5. RIVER REPORTS

The Chairman referred to the following highlighted reports and requested any comments.

- **Nith Fishery Management Plan Quarterly Report No. 2**

Peter Landale asked with reference to the quarterly report and the heading "Exploitation", if there was any way to get up to date fish catches through the year so the Board has an idea of what is happening on the river. FD responded by explaining the difficulty in obtaining this information as many proprietors and angling associations do not collate this information until the end of the season, however FD does keep up to date with the "word" on the river and monitors activity, reporting back to the Board as applicable.

FD distributed the Annual Health Check Electro fishing Results table showing the electro fishing results obtained for ten sites monitored in the Catchment and explained how the colour coding depicted in the table compared with the Scottish National average of declared results. He explained that some of the sites were more suitable for trout, hence the lack of salmon detected, and some were more suitable to salmon, giving rise to the lack of trout detected.

Peter Landale suggested that with the gathering of these results over time trends would develop and be detected. FD stated that over the years trends will build up from these sites, showing the science behind management decisions and explained the different methods and calculations used in Scotland.

Richard Gladwin asked what the numbers from the report meant. FD responded by explaining the different methodology used in the electro fishing process. Single pass or triple pass with the electrode could be used. A time process could also be used. FD preferred single pass and used this standard to keep consistency of results at the different sites.

Richard Gladwin asked what reference to "100m<sup>2</sup>" meant. FD replied that the methodology was to electrofish a site, calculate roughly the area electro fished and then extrapolate from there what population results would be for an area.

Low water presented ideal water conditions for electro fishing. Some absences of species populations could be explained easily. Main stem sites are difficult to get results from because of the width and volume of the water electro fished. Trout are more likely to inhabit certain specific areas. Other species are monitored. Lampreys are a key species to determine water health and conditions, but the Board's duties extend only to salmonids, hence the benefit of having the involvement of the Trust.

Danny Marshall drew attention to the differences in salmon populations between the Scaur and the Crawick. FD replied that the Scaur is a smaller tributary and therefore easier to get results from.

David Kempzell spoke about having been electro fishing on the Crawick Water last year with Board and Trust staff and being amazed at the numbers of adult salmon present.

Peter Hutchison suggested creating zones within the river system for comparison to provide more like for like comparison in respect of different areas.

FD advised that wider riffle water conditions gives rise to more possibility for stunned fish to escape from the survey. The important thing was to continue the monitoring to establish long term trends. Once these are established areas can be worked upon to create improvement in habitat and other conditions.

- **SEPA Report**

The SEPA report was distributed for perusal. The Chairman invited any questions/comments. None were received.

- **SNH Report**

No report or communications have been received from SNH.

## **6. CURRENT STATE OF THE RIVER**

FD commented upon reports from all over Scotland on the poor fishing season. There are fish in the river. There are plenty Herling. Sea trout catches had been better this season. Rain should bring fish into the system. There are fish present in the lower system waiting for rain. The fish return statistics are suffering as a result of lack of fishing effort.

Danny Marshall agreed. Younger people are not interested.

Peter Landale advised of poor fishing on the Spey this season. Numbers of fish caught are well down. Pressure had to be maintained to preserve the fragile fish stocks.

FD agreed but pointed out that lack of angling effort meant that there was a lack of information on fish presence.

Peter Landale asked if the numbers of signal crayfish trapped has increased from last year. FD responded by stating that there has been no increase in numbers trapped or migration in the area they are found. The signal crayfish are found in Lochrutton and 600m below the loch and nowhere else. FD explained the difficulties in managing the population of signal crayfish and the impossibility of eradicating the population.

Richard Gladwin asked if signal crayfish were trapped in the loch. FD replied by stating that they are trapped in the loch but only bigger males are captured as they like to eat each other, which could be to the detriment of their control as removal of Alfa males may increase the population. Limited trapping and monitoring is conducted to see if the crayfish move downstream. If this was found to be the case then there would be implications for the fish farm located downstream.

FD had attended a meeting with Paul Wheelhouse at Galloway. Signal crayfish and strategies for their control were discussed.

## **7. FRESHWATER FISHERIES REVIEW**

FD reported on the River Directors meeting with Andrew Thin and confirms that Mr Thin's report would be submitted on time. FD updated the Board on the review thus far. A lengthy discussion ensued as to what may or may not come to fruition as a result of Mr Thin's report. It was agreed that when the review is published FD will inform the Board and distribute any information.

## **8. FISHING EVENT PROPOSAL**

FD proposed a fun event to promote the fishing beats on the river to encourage anglers back onto the water. FD suggested creating a league of 4 anglers per team to travel from one beat to another on say a Friday night for three months, it would be 100% catch and release, with a cup for the winners - no prizes would be won. The purpose would be to get more angling involvement and publicity for the river system. FD hoped that if it was thought that the idea was worth pursuing Beat owners would provide a beat free of charge for each leg of the competition.

FD advised the Board of a discussion with Paul Wheelhouse who may have funding available for the regeneration of Dumfries & Galloway which would assist in this event. A subgroup was formed for the event comprising of FD, Peter Landale, David Kempzell and John Millar. Thomas Florey informed the Board that Smiths Gore is funding new fishers on the river, with access to gillies etc. The previous Casting for Recovery project was also discussed.

## **9. A.O.B**

FD advised the Board that Richard Gladwin will be installing a biomass boiler at Blackwood Estate and has offered to pay for hot water being plumbed into the hatchery office, if the Board will pay for central heating to be installed to the office. Richard Gladwin has offered the Board radiators for this purpose. FD advised that the lease for the hatchery office building has been agreed on the same advantageous terms as previously granted. Richard Gladwin stated that he believes in the Board and it is beneficial for him to have the Board at Blackwood. It was unanimously agreed that central heating would be installed in the hatchery office. The Chairman voiced the Boards gratitude at Richard Gladwin's offer and instructed FD to go ahead keeping costs to a minimum.

FD informed the Board of the "Lost at Sea" film. It highlights the problems at sea and he suggested hiring the Burns Centre for the Board to view the film.

FD advised that Scottish Government would be announcing compulsory catch and release of salmon until 1<sup>st</sup> April. This was well short of the recommended time frame promoted by the Board for the Nith system.

David Kempzell voiced his concerns with regards to the netting station on the Cairn Water. FD responded by explaining the measures previously put in place to prevent illegal fishing around the station.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.27