

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

on

**12<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2014 at 9am**

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**PRESENT**

Percy Weatherall – Chairman  
Richard Gladwin - Blackwood  
Peter Hutchinson – Netting Representative  
Thomas Florey – Angling Representative  
Wally Wright – Netting Representative  
Peter Landale – Dalswinton  
Mark Coombs – Buccleuch Estates Limited  
David Kempself – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association  
Jim Gregory – Angling Representative  
John Kingan - Netting Representative  
Nick Brown – Friars Carse

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE**

Dougie Smith  
Andrew Hunter-Arundell

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Roderick Styles – Clerk  
James Henderson – Fishery Director (FD)  
Deborah Parke – Nith Catchment Fishery Trust (FB)  
David McMichael – Senior Water Bailiff (SWB)  
Shona Mitchell – PA/Secretary

**1. APOLOGIES**

Nick Wright  
Robbie Cowan  
Tom McAughtrie

**2. DECLARATION OF MEMBERS FINANCIAL INTEREST**

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

**3. APPROVAL OF BOARD MEETING MINUTES of 12<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2014**

The Chairman referred to the meeting minutes from the 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014 and asked all present if the minutes were a fair and accurate record of that meeting. The minutes were unanimously approved.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

FD referred to item 8 of the previous meeting minutes, Peter Landale, David Kempself and FD met to discuss the fishing event proposal. The main purpose of the event is to publicise

and promote the Nith. In the New Year proprietors will be written to with information of the event and to request support. The fishing event is proposed to give access to groups of four anglers from 6pm to 6am on different beats of the river to encourage anglers back onto the water, it is not a competition.

## **5. BUDGET**

The Clerk advised the meeting that the Budget would be considered in private at the end of the public meeting.

## **6. RIVER REPORTS:**

### **a) NITH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT NUMBER 3**

The Chairman asked all present if they have any comments to make regarding the quarterly report issued. FD highlighted the planning application that he has been asked to comment on as this particular application supersedes 19 previous planning approvals.

FB informed all present that the “Fishing for the Future Project” had completed its first year and summarised the successes thus far. FB stated the project’s first report will be published on the website shortly and offered her thanks to the Board and all involved with the project for all their support and assistance. The Chairman also thanked the Board on behalf of the Trust Directors for the short term bridging loan for the project, which has been reimbursed in full. FB is looking for funding to take the project forward as only one year of funding is left.

FB reported that the 5 year Invasives Project (INNS) has come to an end. Funding would have to be obtained to treat new stands of invasive plants as it was only possible to manage the stands treated in the last 5 years. Richard Gladwin asked how much funding would be required for the INNS project and the Fishing for the Future project. FD responded £20,000 to £30,000 a year for each project. FD informed all present that control of Japanese Knotweed (JK) and Giant Hogweed (GH) is under control and that there was now all the equipment and training of personnel necessary to maintain the work that has been accomplished previously. FD stated that the Board/Trust had been employed as agents to control a stand of invasive species by NHS at Sanquhar.

Peter Landale referred to the Exploitation section of the quarterly report and asked what the Board intended to do to address the crash in returning fish numbers. The Chairman asked if the crash was a result of the Board’s management within the Nith catchment. FD responded by stating that the Board has little influence on what happens to the fish in the marine environment and that the crash in numbers is uniform across Scotland’s river systems. However FD endeavours to take forward these issues to the national forum. FD referred to the management plan which enables the Board and its staff to manage the Nith catchment to the best of their resources/abilities to fulfil its statutory obligations. The Chairman stated that the health and volume of parr and smolts within the Nith catchment are healthy. Dougie Smith addressed the Board by disagreeing with this, stating that three to four years ago he would see a great density of young fish in the burns on the Dalswinton beat whereas now he does not. Dougie Smith attributed this to many factors, but he stated that slurry seeping into the burns and

killing off the fish was in his opinion the principal reason for decrease in numbers of juvenile fish in these burns. FD responded by explaining the exact science of electrofishing techniques that the Board and indeed the rest of Scotland use for surveying watercourses and recording densities of fish rather than recording what is seen walking/wading in the water course. FD stated further that he had previously taken Peter Landale electrofishing on Dalswinton beat. Peter Landale confirmed the findings of the surveys conducted on Dalswinton and that it seemed that the population of juvenile fish is healthy. A wide ranging discussion ensued as to the multiple pressures on fish stock and ways to improve data gathering in relation to number of rods on the river and number of fish caught as there is a decline in angling efforts. FD extended an invitation to Dougie Smith to conduct electrofishing surveys with Board staff.

- b) FD referred to the SEPA report issued. FD informed all present that he has reported a slurry incident to SEPA on Wednesday in the Upper Cairn and that action will be taken.
- c) No response was received from SNH in regards to the invitation to attend the Board Meeting and no written report was provided in SNH's absence.

#### **7. WILD FISHERY REVIEW**

FD advised that the Scottish Government are now considering the Wild Fishery Review Report and that they will be deciding which items/recommendations, if any, to action, beginning in Spring 2015. Aileen McLeod is now the Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform and she has announced proposals for a new law, that as of next year no one in Scotland will be allowed to kill a salmon before 1<sup>st</sup> April 2015.

A broad and wide ranging discussion ensued regarding the Wild Fishery Review and the planned consultation of it at the end of February.

#### **8. CONSERVATION LIMITS**

FD stated that the Scottish Government is tasked to improve fisheries information on all rivers in order that conservation limits may be used in the future to control exploitation. In order for the Scottish Government to make these decisions they are likely to construct fish counters on various rivers. FD estimated that each fish counter would cost about £300,000 and that the Scottish Government would not be able to afford to build a counter on each river. A discussion ensued as to possible funding sources to establish the Nith as a favourable location for a Solway fish counter. Wally Wright asked if the counter would count outgoing fish as well. FD responded it would and the fish counters now are more accurate as a consequence of technological advancements. FD also explained some of the technical details involved in hoping to achieve from a fish counter for an accurate count of fish numbers passing over the counter. FD stated that the only constant data set for fish moving into the river system was the stake net at Douglas Hall, however this is only one way data. It was agreed that there is a lack of data for scientific decisions to be made on conservation limits.

FD brought the Nith Catchment Voluntary Angling Code to the attention of those present and recommended that the code be modified in order to bring it up to date with what is

appropriate for the river now, as the code is no longer fit for purpose in certain areas of voluntary conservation measures. The Chairman asked for volunteers to contact FD for a subcommittee to be formed for the purpose of modifying the voluntary Nith Angling Code. David Kempzell and Peter Landale volunteered to form part of the subcommittee. A draft angling code will be produced and circulated. It is aimed to have the modified angling code ready to be included with the 2015 permits.

A further discussion ensued regarding the complicated issues of accurate data gathering and recording.

#### **9. FLOOD PREVENTION SCHEME**

FD reported that he had attended meetings regarding flood prevention schemes. A proposal to use the former Kier opencast mine as a flood retention pond was discussed. A short discussion ensued as to the practicalities of this proposal. The Chairman asked FD to report back to the Board at the next meeting.

**The public meeting closed at 10.35.**

#### **5. BUDGET**

The Clerk referred to the draft budget and his notes. A lengthy discussion ensued regarding increase in the Boards commercial fees, the requirement to maintain a sensible running budget and the rate to be charged to proprietors in order for the Board to fulfil its statutory obligations. The Board agreed to maintain the rate in the Pound at last year's rate, i.e. £1.22 in the £. In addition the Board agreed to rebate assessments to proprietors to the extent of £35,000 pro rata to individual assessments.

#### **10. AOB**

John Kingan referred to the newly announced nationwide beaver and wolf introduction. FD responded that the Board is represented on this matter through ASFB and that it is an ongoing management concern.

FD announced that the second international sea trout symposium would be held at Dundalk in October 2015 and that he had been asked to speak at the symposium.

Mark Coombs addressed the Board informing all present that this would be his last Board meeting as he was leaving BEL and had taken up a new job near Northampton. The Clerk thanked Mark Coombs for all his efforts on behalf of the Board and wished him well in his future venture.

John Kingan asked if Board meetings would now be set for Fridays as this is not a convenient day of the week. FD responded by stating that Board meetings will usually be held on Tuesdays.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 11.12.