

Report 2

Nith District Salmon Fishery Board meeting on 12th February 2013

By John Miller

This report follows the meeting of the Board on Tuesday 12th February 2013.

The new Senior Bailiff is settling in well. There has been an approach from someone offering his services as a bailiff on a voluntary basis. This is being pursued.

The Board is considering the purchase of stealth cameras to assist in catching poachers. Information about these cameras and their intended use will be put out on the Board's website. These cameras should help to establish whether there is poaching taking place and where it is taking place.

Weather and water conditions have interrupted surveys into the ingress of signal crayfish. Cargenglen Fish Farm is co-operating with the Board's Fishery Director. The Fish Farm is just below where crayfish have been found and it is very much in the interests of the Fish Farm to be involved in any surveys there.

There is no doubt that crayfish will eventually end up in our river system. They exist in other river systems where there are migratory fish. They do not put an end to the fishing but the Board appreciates that it has to do all it can to manage their numbers.

Fish tagging is highly likely to be introduced, probably by 2014 at the earliest. The Scottish Government appears to be in favour of tagging. Our Fishery Director states that he will be consulted by the Scottish Government concerning the guidance notes on tagging which will be issued in due course.

The Annual General Meeting of the Board will be held on 12th March 2013.

There was a Nith Catchment Fishery Management Plan for the period 2008-2012. The Fishery Director is currently working on an extension of this for the next 5 years to 2018. It is hoped that consultation with interested parties will have taken place and the new Plan produced by about the end of 2013. All fisheries will have sight of the draft Plan and the opportunity to comment.

The Clerk advised that the Board is meeting with representatives of the Angling Associations on 21st February. Written questions have been received from the Associations and written answers have been prepared and will be sent to the Associations before the meeting along with an article "What is a Fishery Board?"

A licence has been obtained from Scottish Natural Heritage entitling the Fishery Director or his staff to shoot 8 goosanders and 2 cormorants.

The subject of catch and release was discussed at some length. The current average for catch and release throughout Scotland is 70%. On our water it is 40%. The Board would like to see steps being taken to increase our percentage to closer to the Scottish average. Certain of our fisheries have already imposed a ban on killing fish either at certain times of the year or a complete ban. It is appreciated that in the case of the Associations fishing the rivers in our system it is difficult to improve the release statistics if in fact the total catch for an Association amounts to less than one fish per member per annum. However, we should all remember that killing a fish does nothing for conservation of the species and conservation is something that all anglers should at all times during the fishing season have firmly in mind.

Any steps to improve the release percentage have to be voluntarily introduced by each fishery. It is hoped that every fishery will do what it reasonably can. The Trust Biologist states that if the release percentage were increased from 40% to 70% this should result in an increase of eggs spawned of some three million. This fact on its own should encourage fishers to release more fish. The Clerk pointed out that a blanket ban on killing fish would require legislation and is not within the power of any Fishery Board.

The Fishery Director recommended that the Board should be represented at an upcoming conference in Sheffield to consider the impact on migratory fish of the piling and electro-magnetism involved in off shore wind farms.

The Celtic Sea Trout project is in its final stages. All samples are in and a four page document is being produced in due course for the advice and guidance of anglers.