

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

on
18 January 2017 at 10am

Present

Percy Weatherall (Chairman)
Jim Gregory
Wally Wright
Richard Gladwin
David Kempself
Danny Marshall
Nick Brown
Alan Nesbit

In Attendance

Roderick Styles (Clerk)
Jim Henderson (FD)
Debbie Park (FB)
David McMichael

Apologies

John Kingan
Nick Wright
Peter Landale
Robbie Cowan
Peter Hutchison
Thomas Florey

Members of Public in Attendance

Tom Brown	W. Chisholm
Mike Machin	Jim McDonald
Karl Savage	Jim Kennan
John Davidson	Finlay Thompson
Stuart Cameron	John Binns
Alan Blyth	Tam Hill
Jamie Copland	
Roy Muir	
Raymond Mundle	
Gordon McGregor	
Charles Wilson	

1. THE CHAIRMAN'S INTRODUCTION

The Chairman addressed the meeting by advising that this was a continuation of the consideration of matters relating to the award of Category 2 Status for the river system insofar as it related to Fishery Conservation Policy.

The Chairman welcomed everyone attending.

The Clerk pointed out that with so many people in attendance it would have been useful if attendees had followed the protocol detailed on the Fishery Board Website which was to contact the Clerk to advise of attendance so that suitable seating arrangements could be made.

2. WFR UPDATE

FD addressed the meeting – the River has been classified as Category 2 for Season 2017 primarily on the basis of a five year rolling average of Catch Statistic Returns. With reference to these Catch Statistic Returns it is likely that given the drop off of one year's Catch Statistics next year that the average would be such that the River would have slipped back to Category 3 Status in 2018.

The Chairman reported that from the last meeting the general feeling among Board Members had been that there should be 100% catch and release. He advised the meeting that in his view it would be sensible to continue with that policy.

Danny Marshall reported that whilst he had offered 100% catch and release personally at the previous meeting he had then gone to a meeting of his members of the Upper Nithsdale Angling Club and they had reported to him that they wanted the right to kill one fish per member per week. The meeting had been chaired by Alan Nesbit of Buccleuch Estates Limited.

Alan Nesbit stated that whilst that he had chaired the meeting, he was not stating that BEL endorsed the meeting view on proposed catch and kill.

David Kempself of Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association stated that he represented his members. He wanted to propose one or two salmon per season per rod could be killed. The Angling Association was losing money and membership every year.

Wally Wright spoke on behalf of the Haaf Netters. He advised that his members wanted the right to be able to catch and kill two to three fish per member per season. The Fishery is not run on a commercial basis now but is more in the nature of being a culture and heritage fishery.

Robbie Cowan's email to the Board was read out by the Clerk.

David Kempself pointed out that up until December 2015 an angler was allowed to take two fish per season. Any way to get continuation of Category 2 Status is to get increase of rod

effort on the river. If rods are to leave because of restrictions in the way that they can fish and on the taking of fish, then it is extremely unlikely that the categorisation can ever be reviewed successfully.

Richard Gladwin stated that if the Board is to conserve fish then the ultimate position is to stop fishing for them. Given the Board is however, about providing a better fishing river then it needs to encourage more angling. Given Scottish Government have changed the categorisation for the Fishery, then a policy should be adopted which allows for fish to be taken. There should be a recommendation that a fixed number of fish can be taken in a season so that there is control of a conservation policy. Otherwise, there is no point in having a Category 2 Status River. We either have Category 1 or Category 3 and simply forget Category 2.

Danny Marshall pointed out that the Ayrshire Rivers Trust's rivers are Category 2 and the consequence of this is that Upper Nithsdale Angling Club members will leave the club and fish the Ayrshire rivers if they are not entitled to take fish. He reiterated that he was looking for one fish per week per member and that his members had already made the decision that they would be going to kill fish this season.

David Kempself advised that D&GAA need to earn income to pay the Board's Assessments. Whilst rods were on the river last year, fishing effort was well down. Until sound science is used in connection with the quantification of adult fish within the river, then relying upon rod and net catches is flawed.

The Chairman and the Clerk pointed out that the Board needs to formulate a Conservation Policy to comply with fishery management duties. The Board can only recommend what the policy will be.

It was noted that it is mandatory to return all fish on a catch and release basis to 1st April. It was noted that the river system operates a discretionary catch and release basis to 1st June.

The Board needed to recommend a conservation policy to anglers and the recommendation was that there should be 100% catch and release, but taking into account the fact that this was incapable of being enforced by the Board, it was agreed that a Minute should express the fact that wherever possible no more than two fish per season be taken with a view to attempting to achieve at least an 80% catch and release policy for the whole of the river system for 2017.

The Clerk prepared a draft of a Minute that might deal with the situation and read it to the floor of the meeting. It was generally unanimously approved and accepted. It was agreed that the Minute be extended and exhibited on the Board's website forthwith.

The meeting thereafter closed.