

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

on

**25 March 2014 at 10.00 am**

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**PRESENT**

Percy Weatherall – Chairman  
Nick Wright – Closeburn Castle Fishing  
Mark Coombs – Buccleuch Estates Limited  
Wally Wright – Netting Representative  
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock  
David Kempself – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association  
Thomas Florey – Smiths Gore  
Peter Landale - Dalswinton  
Brian Fox – P.O.F.R.

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDANCE**

Roana Clark  
Peter Hutchison  
Dougie Smith  
Ed Baxter  
David Tait

**IN ATTENDANCE**

Roderick Styles – Clerk  
James Henderson – Fishery Director (FD)  
Deborah Parke – Nith Catchment Fishery Trust (FB)  
David McMichael – Senior Water Bailiff  
Shona Mitchell – Administration  
John Millar – Fishery Reporter

The Chairman welcomed those attending, introduced himself, opened the meeting and asked the Clerk to address the meeting.

The Clerk advised those present about the new legislation and procedures and the requirement to hold two annual meetings. The first of these is the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors convened for today. The second is the Annual Public Meeting, to be convened on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2014. These meetings replace the Annual General Meeting. The Clerk advised that he had written to all proprietors in good time to advise them of the date of this meeting and the Agenda contents and had requested their contact email address in order to make communications more effective and efficient, especially in emergency situations. The Clerk reported that in addition the date for this convened meeting had been published on the Board's website with more than the required notice having been given to anyone who wanted to attend.

The Clerk informed those present of the code of good governance, which requires a record of members of the public attending Board meetings be kept for Scottish Government compliance and asked that those who had not made themselves known to Shona Mitchell to do so now for the purposes of having a complete record of attendance. The Board meeting agendas and documentation will be publicised through the website: [www.river-nith.com](http://www.river-nith.com).

The Clerk referred to the Agenda for the meeting comprised in three agenda items (as follows)

**1. BOARD'S ACTIVITIES FOR PREVIOUS YEAR –** (reference the draft annual report)

The Clerk referred to the draft Annual Report, published on the website. It was not in final form because any issues that might be raised during this meeting that might occasion alterations to the draft Annual report would have to be taken account of.

The Clerk advised that in circulating notice of the Annual Proprietors Meeting he had also asked for advance written notice of any questions or issues that anyone might competently wish to raise in order for such questions and issues to be properly addressed and dealt with as fully as possible. The Clerk advised that no questions had been submitted and asked for any comments/questions/queries from those present regarding the draft Annual Report. None were raised.

**2. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS –** (reference the draft annual report)

The Clerk referred to the accounts and his notes thereon in the draft Annual Report, requesting any questions. No questions were raised. The Clerk asked for approval of the draft Annual Report and the Accounts. There was unanimous agreement of all present that the draft Annual Report and Annual Accounts be accepted and taken forward to the Annual Public Meeting.

**3. MANAGEMENT PLANS FOR THE FORTHCOMING YEAR AND THE NEAR FUTURE –**  
(reference the draft annual report and Fishery Management Plan)

The Clerk referred to the areas of work and planning of the Board's activities that were detailed in the draft Annual Report and advised of the time, effort and consultation process that had resulted in the production of the settled Fishery management Plan in winter 2013. He asked for any questions/comments on the publication.

Peter Landale stated that at the previous Board meeting it was agreed that reporting would be put in place on how the Fishery Management Plan prescriptions were accomplished/addressed. The Chairman agreed and stated that this would be incorporated within the regular reports of the Fishery Director and the Fishery Biologist to Board meetings.

Thomas Florey referred to the recent problems with flooding and asked if the Board had found SEPA's approach to flood banks and gravel abstraction had relaxed to accommodate works. FD responded by stating that SEPA are bound by the EU water framework directive, however due to the damage to thousands of homes across the country from recent flooding the people are demanding changes to be made in order to safeguard their homes. FD predicts SEPA looking upon removal of some areas of sediment build up, more favourably if properly conducted with correct licences etc. if it would potentially save homes. A discussion ensued regarding the management of the river courses.

The Clerk advised that a licence must be obtained from SEPA in order to do any works relating to a watercourse but that SEPA seemed to have relaxed the process by which these licences are obtained, rather than changing the rules/law that must be adhered to.

The Clerk asked for any further questions and there were none.

#### **4. A.O.B.**

Robbie Cowan informed all present that at The Nith Estuary Haaf Netters Association AGM the Chairman Ronald Clark and the Treasurer Tom Brown both resigned. They will be holding an extraordinary AGM to elect a new Chairman and Treasurer. Therefore the association is dormant at the moment.

The Clerk advised that he had received no confirmation from Ronnie Clark that he was retiring, but on the assumption that he was, there were three Board members that have retired from the Board these being Mr Tom Brown – Netting Representative (Lower Co-optees), Mr Ronald Clark – Drumburn (Lower Proprietors) and David Mathews – Blackwood Estate (Upper Co-optees).

The Clerk outlined the election/co-opting procedures for assuming new Board members and asked if there were any views or suggestions on replacing these Board members, pointing out that whoever was suggested would have to fulfil the equivalent status of the retired Board member and be chosen from among upper and lower river representation as appropriate.

It was suggested that Richard Gladwin (of Blackwood) be put forward for the upper co-optees position. The Clerk asked for any other nominations for this position. There were none. It was unanimously agreed that an invitation be put forward to Richard Gladwin of Blackwood for him to join the Board as an upper co-optee.

David Kempself suggested Roana Clark be elected to the Board, this was agreed. However Roana Clark responded by stating that her interest in joining the Board would need to be voted on at the next committee meeting of the Common Good Fishings on the 28<sup>th</sup> April. She undertook to inform the Board of the outcome.

It was suggested that Peter Hutchison (of Douglas Hall Fishing) be put forward for the Lower Proprietors position. The Clerk asked for any other nominations for this position. There were none. It was unanimously agreed to put and an invitation to Peter Hutchison to join the Board as a Lower Proprietor. He agreed to accept the position of Lower Proprietor.

FD reported that during the previous week he attended the ASFB/RAFTS AGM and the main topic of discussion was the Scottish Government's review of Boards and Trusts to be conducted by Andrew Thin and his management team. The review will be completed by September and could have serious repercussions for the future of Boards and Trusts.

FD outlined some of the implications of this review and reported that three models have been discussed. At present there are 41 Fishery Boards in Scotland, model one looked at reducing the number to 20 Fishery Boards, model two looked at reducing the number to 10 Fishery Boards and model three looked at reducing the number to 8 Fishery Boards in Scotland. This would equate to the loss of some Fishery Boards and amalgamations/takeover of others. FD will be engaging with Andrew Thin and his team in the next 5 months and will have the opportunity to discuss and interact with him and his management team.

ASFB are looking to protect the successful Fishery Boards so these skill sets are not lost or diluted when amalgamating with under achieving Boards. A discussion ensued as to the uncertain implications for the Boards and the Trusts. FD advised that he had been making sure that NDSFB and NCFT were fit for purpose and compliant to all targets set. FB had spoken to a member of the management team and the discussion was very positive, confirming that the Nith is held in high regard and that if the Nith was approached to do something it would be guaranteed to be done.

Thomas Florey voiced his concerns that wild fisheries is a huge subject to cover in 6 months and that the review can't possibly take everything into account sufficiently.

Peter Landale voiced his concern that this would be a distraction to the Nith Fishery Management Plan prescriptions and the time frame for them to be completed. FD agreed and asked all present what they would like him to focus his efforts on, the Nith prescriptions or the survival of the Fishery Boards and Trusts.

It was unanimously agreed that FD will continue to balance his workload and prioritise the review while keeping the Nith prescriptions in mind.

The Clerk advised that it is likely that the proprietor's right of property of salmon fishings will be undermined. While they will still retain the property rights it is likely that the management of the fishery will be changed by the outcome of the review to the effect that they will be managed as part of some form of national environmental management scheme and that local management as the Board currently understood it would be diminished or lost.

Roana Clark asked how the Board could put its point of view over to Andrew Thin and his management team. FD stated that Mr Thin has announced 18 venues across Scotland to meet and engage with Boards and Trusts. FD will be attending as many as possible locally and informed all present that ASFB strongly advise that no private meetings be sought with Mr Thin as he is committed to meeting his deadline and any such action would be poorly received and could possibly be damaging to our position. A discussion ensued as to the possible future Board catchment areas, funding, administration, staffing etc.

FD stated that the Fishery Boards have existed for 150 years and that he has been tasked by ASFB to open a dialog with the Scottish Netting Association to engage with netting representatives. The Nith have representatives of both upper and lower and angling and netting interests on the Board, however not all Boards do.

The Clerk informed all present that he will write to all proprietors that have not provided him with a contact email address to request a contact email address, in order to keep them apprised of any changes. Roana Clark informed all present that monthly bulletins are available on the Scottish Governments website for publications of interest. Roana Clark asked if Andrew Thin's review should be reported to the Common Good Committee to get support locally as local councillors are not aware of this review. FD agreed that it should be on the agenda for the Common Good Committee meeting.

FD reported that the Fish Nith meeting held at the Blackwood hatchery office was well attended and it seemed the river proprietors will get together to make Fish Nith successful. FD and David McMichael are part of the newly formed subcommittee for Fish Nith.

FD reported that DGAA have approached the Board and Trust concerning a project for stocking trout into the Cairn Water. In order to harness the wild stocks currently present in the Cairn Water, wild adult brown trout would be captured then incubated and released back into the Cairn Water. DGAA would like to use the Board's hatchery and staff to oversee the project. FD stated that brown trout are not part of the Board's working remit, however the biology between brown trout and sea trout are one of the same and this project could in fact benefit sea trout by assisting brown trout. The Board would be completely funded for the project by DGAA. FD reported that the proposal for the project is at an early stage and the Board would need to acquire a licence from the Scottish Government and other permissions before going ahead. David Kempzell reiterated DGAA's intentions for the project and stated that DGAA have contacted New Cumnock Angling Association as they have a successful hatchery operation. The Chairman agreed to take this item forward to the next Board meeting.

The Chairman informed all present the Trust AGM had taken place the previous evening at which it was announced that the Trust will be holding a fund raising event at the Easterbrook Hall on the 25<sup>th</sup> October with entertainment etc. to raise the profile of the river and raise money for the Trust.

The Chairman announced that The Clerk is celebrating his 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the Board this year and offered him thanks on behalf of the Board for his services to the Board and the river. The Chairman also announced that FD is celebrating his 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with the Board this year and thanked him on behalf of the Board for his dedication to the Board and the river. The Chairman reiterated the importance of having the Clerk and FD's valuable experience for the future uncertainty of Fishery Boards.

Roana Clark announced the next Stake Holders Meeting will be held on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2014 and extended an invitation to all present to attend. The Chairman stated that this would be circulated.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 11.01.