

Nith Catchment Fishery Trust

Meeting No. 29

6pm, 4th July 2016

Fishery Office, Blackwood Estate

Present

Percy Weatherall – Chairman
Jim Henderson
David Kempself
Peter Hutchison
Brian Lord
Christine Carson
Stewart Cameron
Thomas Florey

In Attendance

Debbie Parke

1. Apologies

Raymond Mundell

The Chairman welcomed Christine Carson and Stewart Cameron to their first meeting as Trust Directors.

2. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the previous Directors meeting were taken as true and accurate.

3. Matters Arising

No matters arising.

4. Wild Fisheries Reform

Jim Henderson provided a brief update on the progress of the Wild Fishery Reform for the benefit of the new Directors. Key points included the amalgamation of existing Boards and Trusts into larger Fishery Management Organisations (FMO). FMO's would have a larger remit in terms of geographical area, would be responsible for all fish species and additional emphasis would be placed on Angling Promotion and Development. Scottish Government (SG) had stated that the Nith System on its own is not a viable FMO, therefore talks had opened up with neighbouring areas. There had been a meeting with GFT and Annan DSFB but GFT had later advised that they didn't want any involvement with Nith and it had been subsequently learned that GFT wanted to join with Ayrshire Rivers. Stemming from this there have been meetings between the Nith and the Annan to discuss potential of amalgamating into one FMO. This is considered to be the best scenarios, albeit an arranged marriage.

The Nith and the Annan have very similar catchments and the uniting of the four current organisations would be relatively straight forward given the similarity of the areas, staffing and management structures. Six representatives from each of the Nith and the Annan have met to discuss this further and Jim Henderson has been charged with putting together a budget for a Nith/Annan FMO.

The additional remits of an FMO would require additional funding as there is currently a deficit. Options were discussed including placing levies on anglers (rod licences) but it was felt that this would put additional stress on angling pressure which is already facing decline. Additional staff would also be required. SG is yet to put together a timetable and we are waiting to find out if it is included Scottish Governments Legislative programme for 2016/17 which will be published in September. The legal status of FMO's is still to be decided.

In the meantime, it was agreed that we carry on the best we can so that we have a good fall-back position – business as usual.

5. Quarterly Report

Debbie Parke referred to the Quarterly Report which had been circulated and spoke about some of the activities for the last quarter. The current conservation limits were discussed and DP informed the Directors that data had been provided to Marine Scotland Science to feed into the categorisation models for 2017's grading. This included using electrofishing data to refine maps of the watercourses in the Nith which salmon utilised. This refining would provide a more accurate wetted area for the modelling process and could help to bring us out of Category 3 as there were watercourses marked on the map shown to contain salmon but in reality those watercourses didn't even exist anymore. Additional data that we could input into the model and which we are currently looking into includes gaining further data on grilse error, sex ratios, weights, fecundity and catch effort. This will be taken this autumn for submission in 2018's conservation status.

6. Project updates

Invasive Non-Native Species – DP provided an update on the status of progress of the INNS project. The Trust has employed a member of staff to assist with this project. It had been hoped that we would be able to employ them on a permanent basis to assist with the Fishing for the Future project and the general work of the Trust/Board but funding was proving difficult so we could only offer a short contract. All of Giant hogweed had been treated and we were starting on Japanese knotweed control. Skunk cabbage had proved to be an issue with a large population being found on the upper Castlefairn Water. Various methods of treatment have been attempted but it was proving difficult. The most effective method appears to be spraying it with glyphosate at a dilution rate of 6l/hectare. No crayfish trapping has been conducted to date but will be conducted during the summer and reported on at the next meeting.

Fishing for the Future project – Unfortunately, funding for the Fishing for the Future project during 2016 has not been forthcoming but DP continues to work on funding applications to provide funds for 2016/7. Grant applications have to date been confirmed by the Holywood Trust, who would like to provide funding for two years, and Nithsdale Area Committee. However, this is not sufficient to

run the whole project and additional funds must be secured before we can proceed. DP continues to work with school groups for standalone sessions.

Nith Fish Counter project – The potential of installing a counter on the Nith was discussed and DP referred to the report which Scottish Government had commissioned which were indicating costs in the region of £600,000 to install a suitable counter at the bottom of the Nith and thereafter £60,000 per annum to maintain. These costs were far above those expected, particularly the maintenance costs, but it was agreed that JH and DP should look into existing counters i.e. in the Tyne and find out what was involved. It was suggested that a couple of smaller, less costly counters on the Nith may be just as effective. DP and JH to report back at next meeting.

7. A.O.B

No items were raised.

Actions resulting from Trust Meeting No. 28

Action points	Action by	Action completed
Report on counters in Nith	DP & JH	
Report on crayfish survey	DP	

Signed.....

Date.....

EPK Weatherall, Chair