

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

on

23rd March 2017 following the Annual General Meeting of Qualified Proprietors

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall – Chairman
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate
Alan Nisbet – Buccleuch Estate
Nick Wright – Closeburn Castle Fishing
David Kempself – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association
Wally Wright – Netting Representative
Peter Hutchison – Netting Representative
Thomas Florey – Angling Representative

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

Simon Kelly
Brian Fox
John Davidson
Tom Brown
Karl Savege
Mike Machin

IN ATTENDANCE

Roderick Styles – Clerk
James Henderson – Fishery Director (FD)
Deborah Parke – Nith Catchment Fishery Trust (FB)
Davie McMichael – Senior Water Bailiff
Julia Mitchell - Administrator

The Chairman convened the meeting and welcomed everybody in attendance.

The Chairman referred to the Agenda.

1. APOLOGIES

John Kingan, Nick Brown, Derek Hextall

2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

There were no declarations of financial interests that gave rise to conflict of interest.

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 20 SEPTEMBER 2016

The Chairman asked for approval of the 20th December 2016 meeting and 18th January 2017 meeting minutes. During the 20th December 2016 meeting it was agreed to have a follow-up meeting on the 18th January 2017 to discuss in more detail the issue of reclassification of the river. Therefore, approval was sought for both meeting minutes which was given unanimously with required minor corrections duly noted.

4. RIVER REPORTS: NITH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN QUATERLY REPORT

JH updated the Board on NDSFB activities. It had been a busy time during the last quarter with work detailed in the quarterly report, main activities were Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR); Planning Applications; and Engineering projects.

5. UPDATE OF THE FRESHWATER FISHERIES REFORM

JH updated the Board on the WFR. The Board has worked on the WFR for four years and the implications for the Board as well as Scotland in general. The main focus of the WFR was the amalgamation of Boards and in February 2017 it was announced by Scottish Government that the amalgamation of Boards would now not go ahead with other areas of activity continuing these being: a new Fisheries Bill; implementation of a maximum landing size for pike; development of a statutory requirement for all fisheries management organisations to have a Fisheries Management Plan; and although there will not be a forced merger of boards voluntary mergers are acceptable and to facilitate this merged Boards now do not need the same rate in the £. In addition, (RAFTS) Rivers And Fisheries Trust Scotland, will cease to exist as from March 2017 primarily due to the lack of EU funding following Brexit plans. Instead a new umbrella organisation for all Fishery Boards and Trusts in Scotland has been formed Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) which will levy an income from Boards and Trusts. The role and function of FMS is still to be detailed.

6. COUNTER UPDATE

JH updated the Board on the progress of the Fish Counter Project. Land had been identified and provided by the Buccleuch Estate on the Crawick Water. Current estimation of costs was approximately £400 for planning application and £50K construction costs. There is a possibility of external funding or sponsorship which could be found to offset construction costs.

PL asked if LEADER funding had been considered DP responded that LEADER had intimated they would be happy to provide funding into the interpretation of counter activates but not the building and there may be EU funding available for construction costs.

It was agreed the counter would provide more accurate fish numbers as current electrofishing and sampling methods are less accurate providing only a snap shot of information. The location of the counter would be crucial with gradient and flow being most important. There was concern that the counter would not be effective in floodwater but acknowledged that the counting technique had improved through advanced computer software and cameras. It was agreed that this first project provided a great opportunity to learn the application of this technology with expertise being taken from similar projects in Ireland and could lead to further counter projects. It was decided at the current time having a counter at the Whitesands would not be economically or politically viable but would not be ruled out if future projects were considered.

The Board approved the progression of the project to planning application stage costing approximately £400 and in principle approved the project up to £50K but

asked for gross costs of project to be presented at the next meeting and potential external funding opportunities.

ACTION: Counter project planning application to be submitted. Gross costs of project to be investigated and presented at next Board meeting together with potential external funding opportunities. OWNER: JH

7. INVASIVES SPECIES

Funding for the invasive species programme has ended. The Board was keen for previously cleared areas to be maintained by trained staff but new areas would now incur a cost to clear.

8. CATCH REPORTS

It was decided by the Board that weekly media catch reports be discontinued as numbers are underreported which is damaging to the River but other media catch reports would be issued when there is a good week of activity recorded.

9. TAGGING

TB stated the Haaf netters were happy to administer tags in the estuary as it is law.

RC stated that on Caerlaverock Haaf nets they had reduced their ticket sales by a third with a maximum of two salmon to be taken, being managed through the use of the tags. It was also the wish of Lady Herries to support conservation efforts that the two fish killed be used for personal use and not for resale.

DK raised the concern that a similar tagging process should be required for rod fishing in an attempt to prevent the killing of more than two fish per person. The Board acknowledged there were similar programmes on other rivers and asked DK to provide a suitable model on how a scheme would be administered to, taking into account the difficulties in the enforcement of a scheme due to the lack of legislation and possible legalities in blanket coverage and therefore would possibly require each proprietor to adopt and apply the scheme. It was agreed further information would be needed by the Board from other rivers using similar schemes.

ACTION: Rod tagging model to be presented to Board on how this could be applied. OWNER DK

ACTION: Information on how this is used by other rivers to be investigated. OWNER JH

10. NITH/ANNAN GROUP

In view of the recent changes from Scottish Government on the subject of WFR regarding amalgamation of Boards it was decided NDSFB would remain a Board in its own right and not continue further dialogue concerning proposed merger with Annan DSFB for the purposes of forming a Fishery Management Organisation.

11. COMPLAINT TO NSDFB

The Chairman updated the Board that a complaint was received by the NDSFB which had been circulated to the Board. The complaint was following recent Board discussions on the catch and release practices supported by the Board. It was

acknowledged that there was a difference of opinions between some members and that the author had not meant it to be construed as a complaint.

12. WALTER CROZIER AND REPORT

JH updated the Board on the visit and resulting report from Walter Crozier. Although initially Annan Board were interested in having a joint report they decided not to proceed and so the report produced was for the River Nith only. The Board acknowledged the Crozier Report provided some very useful information and with it only just being circulated JH asked the Board to read the report at length whereby comments could then be fed back to him and discussed as the next meeting.

ACTION: discussion of Crozier Report at next Board meeting. OWNER: All

13. SEA TROUT EXPERIENCE 2017

The Board is very keen for the continuation of a Sea Trout Experience this year.

ACTION: Organise Sea Trout Experience and circulate dates. OWNER: JH

14. A.O.B

The Board agreed it would be beneficial if future opening ceremonies be coordinated. One River Nith ceremony would be organised facilitating better PR opportunities with the locations rotating.

ACTION: Coordinated opening ceremony. OWNER: JH

TB asked who had been consulted over the recent changes in conservation regulations which had resulted in recategorisation of the whole river as Category 2 Status for the 2017 season other than some lower river estuary netting fisheries which remained as Category 3 fisheries for the same season. The changes had resulted in the loss of two miles of fishing and in one case splitting a beat in half. JH responded in saying he had complained to Scottish Government regarding this at the time. TB stated the Haaf Netters Association will make a formal complaint about the changes to Scottish Government.

Meeting Action Points

Action points	Action by	Action completed
Counter project planning application to be submitted. Gross costs of project to be investigated and presented at next Board meeting together with potential external funding opportunities	JH	
Rod tagging model to be presented to Board on how this could be applied	DK	
Information on how this is used by other rivers to be investigated	JH	
Discussion of Crozier Report at next Board meeting	All	
Organised Sea Trout Experience and circulate dates	JH	
Coordinated opening ceremony	JH	

The meeting thereafter closed.