

**NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
MINUTES OF
BOARD MEETING
HELD AT FRIARS CARSE COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL,
AULDGIRTH, DUMFRIES
on
3 July 2017 following the Annual Public Meeting**

Present

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

Members of the Public in Attendance

Tom Brown
Karl Savege

In Attendance

Roderick Styles – Clerk
James Henderson – Fishery Director
Deborah Parke – Nith Catchment Fishery Trust
David McMichael – Senior Water Bailiff
Julia Mitchell - Administrator

The Chairman convened the meeting and welcomed everybody in attendance.

The Chairman referred to the Agenda.

1. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

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

2. APOLOGIES

John Kingan, Nick Brown, Derek Hextall

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 3 JULY 2017

The Chairman asked for approval of the 3rd July 2017 meeting minutes, which was given unanimously.

4. Matters arising

Sea Trout Experience – FD said this year's Nith Sea Trout Experience had gone well having been well received and thanked the owners for the use of their beats. He asked the Board if they should host an end of event BBQ that had been useful in gaining feedback from participants previously, costing approximately £200. The Board agreed and Peter Landale offered the use of his hut.

Opening Ceremony - FD asked the Board if they would be supportive of a joint opening ceremony which would provide a vehicle to raise the profile of the river. The Board agreed, suggesting hosting on a rotational basis, between different beats. It would provide an opportunity to connect the river with the town when held in Dumfries, with the event generating more interest and a bigger impact. Mr Florey said Savills could potentially award a cup prize for the first fish caught (Action TCF). It was agreed to hold the first event at the Dalswinton Hut, 26th February 2018.

5. QUATERLY MANAGEMENT REPORT

FD updated the Board on NDSFB activities. It had been a busy time during the last quarter with work detailed in the quarterly report he highlighted some activities: the seizing of a gill net but with no prosecution, a lot of planning permission consultations, and issuing of log books.

6. FISH COUNTER

FD updated the Board on the progress of the Fish Counter Project. There are three sites identified on the Crawick, Scaur and Nith. Each site would provide different opportunities to capture data on the number and movement of salmon at different stages of their life cycle.

The Crawick site is owned by Buccleuch Estates. The Duke is supportive of the project as well as tenants in the surrounding area. Initial plans have been drawn up. The North Lowther Windfarm may be a potential funding opportunity.

The Scaur location is also owned by Buccleuch Estates and the Duke is also supportive of this site. Initial discussions have started with tenants in the area and initial plans have been drawn up. Keir Mining may provide a potential funding opportunity. There may be issues however due to ongoing separate SEPA flood mitigation scheme currently ongoing.

A Nith site is being considered downstream of Portrack Viaduct. This site was identified as having potential by the Irish consultants during their visit. Peter Landale is currently helping discussions with landowners. Simon Dryden from Scottish Government intimated £250,000 funding could be available to be used by the Nith and

Annan Boards, 2/3 being used by the Nith and 1/3 for the Annan for the building of fish counters. Other funding opportunities would be Leader grant funding as well as the use of consultancy funds. There is also a one off consultancy project for the Gas Pipeline Project requiring Fishery Director to work out of the catchment.

The Chairman suggested the Board should support, at this stage, funding applications for the three sites costing approximately £500 each which was agreed. It is expected planning could be granted by the end of the year and construction started next summer on one of the sites.

7. FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN TEMPLATE

FD said Scottish Government are now asking all Fishery Boards to have a Fishery Management Plan. The Nith has already developed and implemented a Fishery Management Plan independently and would be able to incorporate the Scottish Government template easily doing what is necessary to remain compliant with law. PL added it had almost been 5 years since the last Nith management plan had been developed and so this was an opportunity to incorporate appropriate changes to the plan.

8. WALTER CROZIER REPORT

The Chairman informed the Board the report cost £2000. FB said in summary Walter Crozier has looked to see where the Nith sits within the Scottish Government modelling process. Walter Crozier had previously been involved with the Bush report and had applied this expertise here. He highlighted areas to improve modelling such as fish counters in the catchment and age structure especially a scale database both of which were already started. He commented on how data from other rivers would fit into the Scottish Government model with it taking 15-20 years to get the modelling done. But for the Nith he looked to see how to fit into the Marine Scotland model as best we can. The Chairman stated that it may be appropriate to approach Walter Crozier, in the future, to address the effectiveness of what the Nith is doing. Peter Landale suggested it would be useful to have a joined up approach with other Solway Rivers to give a bigger picture. Peter Hutchison added the Celtic Sea Trout Project endeavoured to do this previously. Peter Landale added the Atlantic Salmon Trust may provide leadership in bringing River Boards together. The Walter Crozier report providing a starting point for other Boards and Fisheries Management Scotland.

9. CARCASS TAGS

JH said estuarial fisheries can take two salmon each due to the Nith's Category 2 status and as these fish are commercially caught they need to be tagged. 85 tags had been issued to Nith Netsmen.

10. RAINBOW TROUT RIVER CAIRN

FD reported there have been no rainbow trout in the Cairn this year following problems last year.

11. CATCH RETURNS INVESTIGATION

JH said last year the Nith was a Category 3 river and so no fish were taken. The Scottish Government however, published returns of five fish killed in Upper Nithsdale. On investigation, this was found to be a false return and so no further action was taken.

12. OUTFLOW POINT RIVER NITH CONSULTATION WITH SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT (OFFICAL COMPLAINT)

JH said he has been working with the Haaf netters and Simon Dryden following the Haaf netters official complaint to Scottish Government following changes in boundaries. FD had provided grid references, which would provide a sensible resolution which Scottish Government are currently considering.

13. FLOY TAGGING NITH ESTUARY

FD informed the Board of a Floy Tagging project, planned for next summer, which will involve fish being tagged in the estuary to identify where in the river they migrate to. Planning and preparations this summer will be refresher training of staff, trail netting and identification of suitable sites.

14. SIMON DRYDEN ATTENDANCE AT SEPTEMBER BOARD MEETING

FD asked the Board if Simon Dryden, from the Scottish Government, could attend the September Board meeting as it would provide an opportunity for him to learn more about the Nith. The Chairman said they were happy for him to be invited.

15. SCAUR FOOT OWNERSHIP ISSUES

FD raised a title ownership issue of a beat managed by the former Mid Nithsdale Angling Association as the group was now in abeyance. Policing of this beat would be difficult and title ownership needed to be resolved. Alan Nisbet said Buccleuch Estates position was that a solution was needed and suggested Mid Nithsdale Angling Association could reform to assist. It was stated that Brian Lord had attended solicitor meetings to try and resolve this. The Chairman said FD and the Clerk will provide practical support. The Clerk added people would be arrested if they were found to be fishing illegally.

16. MS TAGGING ARMADALE

FD informed the Board of a national Marine Scotland project that the Nith was taking part in. The project involves the tagging of approximately 750 salmon, by commercial fishermen, up in Armadale. Once released fish will then be recorded entering rivers throughout Scotland by the placement of listening devices at the mouth of major rivers.

17. AOCB

Crayfish – the Chairman asked if crayfish were still a problem. FB said they were still maintaining control measures with crayfish being found in one location, at Lochfoot, moving downstream 200 metres annually and that we were not aware of them at other sites.

Nith Young Anglers – FB thanked all of those who had helped and supported the Nith Young Anglers Programme. The Programme is very successful with 20 children attending each event as well as a large reserve list. There was also a good conversion rate with children now going fishing regularly. FD said the Trust had been offered the use of Blackwood pond next to the Board office and hatchery. This would provide coarse fishing which is best for children learning to fish. The pond needs some maintenance which would cost £2,600, and so funding is sought from the Board. This was agreed.

Funding of Trust Staff Overtime – FD asked the Board to support the payment of Trust staff when working overtime on commercial projects. Current arrangements meant due to the core funding, provided by the Board, overtime was not being paid to Trust staff. The Chairman said that there was agreement in principle.

Meeting Action Points

Action points	Action by	Action completed
Fish counter project sites planning permissions to be submitted	FD	
Speak to Atlantic Salmon Trust for opportunities to bring Solway River Boards together	Peter Landale	
Invite Simon Dryden to September Board Meeting	FD	

The meeting thereafter closed.