

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

on

20 MARCH 2017 AT 10.30 AM

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall – Chairman
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate
Nick Wright – Closeburn Castle Fishing
David Kempself – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association
Wally Wright – Netting Representative
Peter Hutchison – Netting Representative
Thomas Florey – Angling Representative
Nick Brown – Friars Carse
John Charteris - Dumfries & Galloway Council
Richard Gladwin – Blackwood Estate

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

Brian Fox
Tom Brown
Karl Savege
Mike Machin
Geoff Walter
Jim Gregory
Dorothy Ashworth
Steven Ashworth

IN ATTENDANCE

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

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

1. APOLOGIES

John Kingan, Derek Hextall, Anna Fergusson

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 11 DECEMBER 2017

Subject to correcting some minor typing errors, these were unanimously approved.

4. RIVER REPORTS: NITH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT

Reference was made to the written report.

FD advised that he was happy to expand on any topics, confirming much of the recent effort related to writing annual reports.

Peter Landale queried the current position with the barrier removal at Laggan Burn. FD confirmed that although there had been a change of staff at SEPA, the barrier removal remained on their list of priorities. Peter Hastings and Portrack Estate are happy for the removal to take place.

David Kempself asked if the person who dealt with the burn mouth was still working, at SEPA, as gravel had created a bar which may affect the flood banks. FD confirmed, yes. Discussion followed regarding various aspects of the problem. John Charteris confirmed that he was unaware of the issue from a Dumfries & Galloway Council perspective. David Kempself stated that flood banks are the responsibility of the Council.

The Chairman summarised, that in terms of the river reports it was business as usual. The Clerk confirmed (with attending members of the public in mind) that the reports were on the web.

The Chairman asked how consultancy was looking for the coming year. FD advised that he remains busy and confirmed that there was still plenty going on, giving rise to the requirement for consultancy with the Board. Although the coal industries were coming to an end, monitoring would continue for many years to check on things like water quality.

Peter Landale queried the stocking relating to mining. FD advised that there were approximately 80k fry in the hatchery at the moment, which equates to 10-12 adult fish. These figures fulfil planning agreements written 10yrs ago and should not affect genetics.

5. OPENING EVENT

FD advised that the fishing season opening event which took place on 26th Feb, as the 25th was a Sunday, was very successful. Approximately 76 people attended, there was a piper, whisky was used to toast the river and children were given the honour of the first cast. One of the children caught a kelt. There was coverage on Border TV, in local papers and the event was mentioned by formal minute in the Scottish Parliament.

The Chairman expressed thanks to Peter Landale for letting the event take place and apologised for not being able to attend in person.

FD advised David Kempself had delivered a great speech and confirmed that he had asked Mrs Landale, who attended the event, to pass on the Board's thanks to Peter Landale for hosting the event.

FD proposed the DGAA beat as the location for opening event next year. No objections were raised. David Kempzell advised that he would take this suggestion to the forthcoming DGAA meeting and revert back.

6. 2018 SEA TROUT EVENT

FD asked the members if they would like the event to be repeated. David Kempzell advised he felt it was a good thing as it provided good data for Sea Trout. The Chairman was also in support. Peter Landale offered to donate £100 to the angler who maintained the best angler records for the event.

Some discussion followed regarding general publicity and FD reported on the suggestion that there be a general statement on the Board's web site to encourage contact from anglers and to promote the river fishings and refer anglers onto proprietors for sale of fishing permits when enquiries were made direct.

Thomas Florey advised that the Trust was attending Lowther Fair in August to promote the river.

The Chairman suggested that it would be beneficial to add a Trust Report as an agenda topic for future Board meetings. It was agreed that this would be covered under A.O.C.B on this occasion.

7. ANGLER DIARIES

It was agreed that this was covered in the AGMQP earlier as part of the annual report discussion.

8. COUNTER UPDATE

FD confirmed that planning permission had been approved and a controlled activities regulations licence had been obtained from SEPA for the proposed Crawick Water counter. Aquantic Ltd had been approached in order to obtain costs for the supply of the counter device, however due to sudden death of the owner no update was likely to be available until June. 40 counters in Ireland are also affected by this as they cannot get spare parts at present.

FD proposed that since no build work would take place until June anyway, he suggested waiting to see what happens with Aquantic first.

In the meantime, FD advised that he had been approached by a company who sell sonar equipment for counting sea life, including sharks, as they would like to develop the device to count salmon. Richard Gladwin was available at the time so he joined the discussion. The company offered to install two units on free trial in the summer at Drumlanrig Bridge to see what might come of the results from them. It was recognised that some software development would be required. Buccleuch Bridge was discussed as a potential future location as it would catch all fish ascending the river system.

The Chairman highlighted that it was good not to have to spend money on infrastructure to try the sonar device. FD advised that the Tweed Board had installed a VAKI fish counter at Philiphaugh however they were still developing it. Similarly it

was supplied by a small company which may cause issues with servicing and parts repair and replacement in future. The Chairman proposed the Board would not press ahead with the Crawick Counter at the moment and this was accepted as a decision made for future review.

Peter Hutchison stated that he would like to see exit counting of smolts in the Autumn, undertaken using smolt traps. FD replied that smolt counting would be important but that the costs involved would be significant that would arise in purchasing, siting and for manpower in checking smolt traps, e.g. A 5' smolt trap would cost approximately £29,000 and an 8' smolt trap would cost £36k inclusive of VAT, plus £1.5K delivery in both cases. Occasionally second hand traps are advertised; if one becomes available FD would like authority to purchase one. The data gathered from it would be useful. There would be significant manpower resources required in order to empty the traps once per day for a period of approximately 2-3 months.

The Chairman stated he was keen for FD and FB to investigate possible options and had no objections in principle.

9. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT FUNDING

FD reported that 10 days previously, the Scottish Government had announced £700k funding was available for the freshwater fish sector to deal with salmon management. FD had asked as to how the funds would be used and had been told that £200k is available to allow amalgamations of Salmon Fishery Boards. Of the remaining £500k SG will be funding Boards and Trust to gather electrofishing data from 30 randomly selected sites per catchment area. The data will then be used as input into SG's conservation model. All Boards are included, however, it equates to a small amount available for each Board. The Chairman asked FD to ensure the Nith got their fair share of funds. FD confirmed Simon Dryden is aware the Nith are keen to assist in the project.

10. CREE PROPSAL

FD advised that the he had been approached by the Chairman of the River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board to see if we would be interested in taking on the electrofishing and biological aspects pertaining to the River Cree. This subject had been discussed at the NCFT Directors meeting the previous evening. Discussion ensued, however, it was agreed such a move would dilute the financial health and efforts of the Nith Board. FD confirmed he has good working relations with neighbouring Fishery Boards and would continue to support them on an ad hoc basis, where possible.

John Charteris advised he was aware that the Cree had been using a drone to inspect the river. Discussion followed. FD confirmed there were no plans for a drone at present. The Chairman suggested that a drone could be good to obtain footage for the website and suggested the Board be open to considering technologies for the future.

11. A.O.B

The Chairman advised that he had attended the NCFT AGM the previous evening where the annual report and finances were discussed. Two Directors had stood down (Peter Hutchison and Brian Lord) after 3 years' service. Faye McCormick, a secondary teacher from St Joseph's College, who has been working with the Fishing for the Future project, was elected as a new director. The regular Trust meeting followed. Updates were provided on the Fishing for the Future Project, Nith Young Anglers Club, the development of Blackwood pond and the Counter project. The Cree proposal was discussed with similar views expressed. The Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) was discussed with reference to recent media reports regarding Oxfam and the inappropriate behaviour of some of its employees. All paperwork and safeguarding policies for the Trust are in order. The Trust reports are available online if anyone wishes to view them.

Peter Hutchison asked if there were any changes to Wild Fisheries Reform proposed by SG and was FMS involved. FD replied that the majority of the reform plans have been shelved at present. Whilst some parts would have been good, some of the governance has a significant effect on small organisations e.g. the admin associated with obtaining a licence to shoot goosanders, which can take a week of effort.

Brian Fox asked if there was an update on non-native species. FD confirmed that some spraying work had been completed at Friars Carse on a pay as you go basis. Crayfish have moved approximately 100m downstream in the Cargen Water. FB confirmed it was impossible to prevent movement where Lochrutton/Lochfoot burns drained into Cargen Water. Brian Fox advised that Pink Salmon have been found in the Humber. FB confirmed there are none in the Nith so far. Some discussion followed re fish farm escapes and their impact on genetics.

David Kempzell asked about the application of the new fishery assessment on Fishery Board rates. The Clerk confirmed that as had been discussed at previous Board meetings, the old levies would be used until the appeals process was completed, which was likely to be early summer. He further advised that it is not a legal requirement for a five year assessment of fisheries to be carried out by the Assessor or the new assessments applied. Following completion of the appeals process, the revised levies would be applied from the start of next season i.e. 2019.

David Kempzell reported that DGAA were currently looking at the lease for the Cairn which included Cluden Rocks. The current view was that the lease was too expensive. In the past DGAA have held the lease for conservation reasons, would the Board consider whether the assessment could be adjusted? The Clerk responded, saying that Arbigland is an example of a location where this happens, however, the key difference is that no fishing is undertaken. David Kempzell stated that DGAA could not afford the lease if no fishing was undertaken and asked if the Board would consider taking the lease on. The Chairman confirmed the Board would investigate.

Peter Landale advised that at the forthcoming FMS conference the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) plan to launch the 'Missing Salmon' project which will try to ascertain

where in a salmon's life cycle mortality occurs. It will be largely based on acoustic tracking and will use an acoustic buoy network to track the fish out of the Moray Firth. It is hoped the project will be crowdfunded and be implemented in 2020.

FD asked whether the Board wished sweatshirts to continue to be issued to reward anglers who returned salmon. FB advised the sweatshirts cost approx. £20 and were previously ordered in batches. Decision was made not to reward anglers for returning salmon by issuing sweatshirts.

The meeting thereafter closed.

Actions resulting from Board Meeting 20/3/2018

Action points	Action by	Action completed
David Kempself to confirm if DGAA are happy to host 2019 opening event.	DK	
FD and FB to investigated possible options for purchasing smolt traps.	FD/FB	
Board investigate lease arrangements on the Cairn.	FD	