

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

on
3 JULY 2018 AT 10AM

The order of business established for the Meeting was:-

1. Tri-annual Elections (minuted in duplicate in Board Minutes of 03.07.18).
2. Annual Public Meeting (separately minuted).
3. Board Meeting.

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall (Chairman)
Robbie Cowan (Caerlaverock Estate)
Nick Wright (Closeburn Castle Fishings)
Wally Wright (Netting Representative)
Peter Hutchison (Haaf Netting Representative)
Thomas Florey (Angling Representative)
John Charteris (Dumfries & Galloway Council)
Raymond Mundle (Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association)

MEMBERS OF PUBLIC IN ATTENANCE

Geoff Walters

IN ATTENDANCE

Roderick Styles (Clerk)
James Henderson (FD)
Deborah Parke (FB) (Nith Catchment Fishery Trust)
David McMichael (Senior Water Bailiff)

APOLOGIES

Anna Fergusson (BEL)
Nick Brown (Friars Carse)
Tom Brown (Netting representative)
Karl Savege (Netting representative)
George Gourlay (Ellisland)
David Kempself (D&G AA)
Peter Landale

1. TRIENNIAL ELECTIONS.

The Clerk explained to the meeting the statutory requirement for Triennial Elections, the process for electing and co-opting representatives and the sequence in which such election and co-opting should take place. The election procedures were undertaken. The elected Members of the Board are:-

Upper Proprietors

Nick Brown (Friars Carse)
Anna Fergusson (BEL)
Peter Landale (Dalswinton)
Percy Weatherall (Cowhill)
David Kempself (DGAA)
Nick Wright (Closeburn Castle Fishings)

Lower Proprietors

Robbie Cowan (Caerlaverock)
John Charteris (Dumfries & Galloway Council)
Peter Hutchison (Douglas Hall Fishery)
Tom Brown (to be confirmed pending production of Mandate from Drumburn Estate)

Upper Co-optees

Thomas Florey (Angling Representative)
Raymond Mundle (Angling Representative)

Lower Co-optees

Wally Wright (Netting Representative)
Mike Mackin (Netting Representative)

Thereafter, elected and co-opted Board Members confirmed that they wish to have Percy Weatherall serve as Convenor/Chairman and he agreed to accept the position.

Thereafter, the Triennial Elections concluded.

2. BOARD MEETING

1. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

The Clerk advised the floor of the Meeting as to why the Declaration was sought. No one declared any financial interests competing with the interests of that individual as a Board Member.

2. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 20 March 2018

The Chairman and Clerk pointed out that due to a typographical error these Minutes were in fact entitled "3 July 2017" and that the date would be changed to reflect the true position.

3. MATTERS ARISING

FD confirmed that DGAA will host the 2019 Season Opening at Carnsalloch.

FD advised that investigations were ongoing concerning the obtaining of a smolt trap.

FD reported that consideration was ongoing in respect of the request by DGAA concerning their proposed lease of salmon fishings on the river Cairn.

4. RIVER REPORTS: NITH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT

FD referred to the printed Report produced for the Meeting.

FD reminded those present that the Fishery Management Plan (FMP) falls to be updated and renewed during the 2018 Season.

FD reminded those present that Simon Dryden had attended a previous Fishery Board Meeting in 2017. He had been specifically asked about the requirement of the Board to produce its own new FMP. Advice was given by Simon Dryden to the effect that this should not be done, with matters awaiting the final production of a SG approved template for the production of a future FMP.

FD reported that he had attended a meeting with SG recently to discuss the new FMP template, being prepared to put a very strenuous position on behalf of the Board in respect of an extra layer of bureaucracy that was going to be imposed by SG. SG has reported that it will want the FMP produced in digital format to follow a style applicable to the whole of Scotland. This was not necessarily going to work given that each Board's priorities may be different depending upon the area in which it operates. For example, the Nith Area had to deal with matters in relation to open cast coal mining. FD was reassured that the new Scottish Government FMP would not create more bureaucracy.

An incident involving bad discolouration following the last flood had occurred on the Nith. FD had attended with staff, tracing the issue to the Kier Mining Site. OCCS work is nearing conclusion. Kier intend to be off site at Greenburn within the next few months and as part of that process have been infilling all mines with a view to greening over with topsoil. The sudden storm had arrived and deposited a large amount of rain on exposed soil over a short period of time resulting in run off into the river system. SEPA had been in attendance. Their staff representative had indicated that he considered that this was an Act of God and that there would be no prosecution. Subsequent investigation of the river system appears to reveal that there has been no adverse effect on flora and fauna within the river system. Hargreaves apparently have three years left of operation on the House of Water OCCS.

The Chairman asked for questions on the Management Report.

Peter Hutchison asked of FD if he was accepting of the proposed style of template that was being evolved.

FD referred to his earlier comments on attending at the recent meeting with SG in connection with the matter. FD felt that the creation of the new style of template

for FMP would add an additional layer of bureaucracy onto a management system that was creaking with bureaucracy and in respect of which there was less and less funds for Fishery Boards available throughout Scotland.

FD pointed out that the Board has its own Management Plan that has evolved to do everything that might be possible to preserve, protect and attempt to improve the Fishery within the jurisdictions. On the face of it, it would appear that the various categories of requirements in the FMS Template were very similar to what was already provided for within the Board's own FMP, a Plan evolved and reviewed on a regular basis using best practise technique prepared by himself and FB, both educated and trained in identifying the areas for the system that would require improvement.

FD indicated that for Fishery Management Scotland (FMS) there may be issues with regard to financial pressures now and for the future, in that Boards are finding themselves under financial pressure in the face of diminishing runs of salmon, all which might have an impact upon management for the future.

SG apparently recognises that as part of FMP further education of young generation may be required.

FD reported that after the meeting there was a feeling of hope of what might be required to follow the Government approved template for an FMP would not be too bureaucratic.

Discussion took place in connection with the subject. The Chairman expressed the opinion that the Board will continue to do the best for the river system that it can, having regard to modern and informed management techniques.

5. FISH COUNTER

FD reported that his previous contact who manufactured and supplied fish counters had died. In the intervening period the company, Aquantics, had been sold, a new point of contact – Ron Shaw – former Technical Advisor to Aquantics, had taken over the management of the business.

As a consequence of contact with Ron Shaw, FD now had an estimate for the purchase and installation of the fish counter. Apparently, there are a limited number of them available and the product cannot be made available until mid-September, which is too late for installation during the course of this season. It would have been best if it could have been done this season given the prolonged period of dry weather. FD felt that it was now best, should the Board decided to go ahead with the installation of the fish counter, to schedule the work for Summer 2019.

The cost of the counter would be £40,110 and it was proposed that the counter be built in the Crawick Water.

Raymond Mundle suggested that it might be possible to do the concrete work this year.

FD advised that there was not enough time to do so.

The Chairman commented that in his opinion, it was undesirable to start laying concrete work now when the fish counter was not yet purchased. He felt that the Board could be made to look stupid if the concrete laying work was carried out and for whatever reason thereafter the fish pass became unavailable for installation.

FD asked if the Board would be prepared to consider proceeding with the operation and if so, would the Board be prepared to put a deposit on the counter so as to secure it for supply and installation in 2019.

The Chairman asked those present for support in connection with the idea of proceeding with the scheme and the placing of the deposit to secure the option.

The whole matter was discussed amongst all Board Members present.

The Board Members unanimously decided that with the information and cost now available and with that figure being within the budget provisionally allocated by Board Members previously (£50,000), the Board should proceed with the plan to install a fishery counter on the Crawick Water and in furtherance of that secure the counter to be supplied by the paying of a deposit if required.

FB advised of contact being made by a company called Tritech 8 who had developed the use of sonar technology to detect and count seals amongst other things. The company was apparently developing the software used in connection with a view to attempting to count fish. Previous software used was not of sufficient quality to be able to accurately measure fish movement.

The firm are updating the software to make it more efficient and user friendly for trialling later in the year. Board Staff had agreed that trialling could take place on the River Nith. It is hoped that if the trialling proves itself to be successful then it could be a cheap and powerful tool for future fishery management. The trialling would not be at any expense to the Board meantime.

6. SEA TROUT EVENT

FD reported the event was being run again with co-operation of certain Proprietors. The event would finish this Friday, 6 July. A 10lb Sea Trout had been caught on Friars Carse the previous Friday. Again, there had been good feedback from those taking part. Four visiting anglers who fished on Buccleuch water had decided to buy season tickets.

The idea developed by the Nith appeared to be gaining popularity and both Fish Pal and River Annan are now engaged in Sea Trout events.

7. LOWTHER GAME FAIR UPDATE

FD reported that he was putting together a collage of film of various beats on the river system and would attend at the Lowther Game Fair to promote the river system and encourage public interests. The event would take place on 10th and 11th August with the Board then attending the Galloway Country Fair the following weekend.

8. SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ELECTROFISHING REPORT

FD reported that this Scheme was being rolled out by SG with funding being made available from it to every catchment with a view to ingathering electrofishing data from each catchment. SG had identified thirty sites that they wished to have electrofished within the Nith Catchment. SG would be paying £12,000 per annum and the idea was to develop the data gathering from the electrofishing over a period of nine years. The same electrofishing protocol would be used throughout Scotland so that the data could correlate and be referred to in respect of fishery management and future conservation status for each area and catchment.

FB reported upon the fish tagging scheme promoted by SG. She reminded those present that SG had commissioned the catching of salmon by commercial netters at Armadale. They had only managed to catch eighty one salmon. A fish of Nith origin (identified by previous genetic material supplied) had turned up within the Armadale nets on the north coast. The small number of fish caught could not really provide any data upon which to make any form of scientific conclusion.

9. ASSISTANCE TO RIVER DEE (KIRKCUDBRIGHT)

FD reported that he had been approached by proprietors of River Dee with a view to attempting to assist them in connection with identified poaching issues in that System. Board Staff had been issued with Warrant Cards to operate within the Dee Catchment, thus extending the jurisdiction of FD and his staff to Gatehouse of Fleet.

10. A.O.B

The Chairman advised of the Trust Meetings.

The Trust's Fishing for the Future Project continued and is to be recommended. The Trust is financially supported by the Board. It is having increasing difficulty with regard to funding issues and relies upon Board funding, together with some conservation income.

The Fishing for the Future Project is a way of bringing school children into contact with the river and its fish and running along beside it, there is the Nith Young

Anglers Club encouraging angling amongst the younger generation. The Board and the Trust continue to do good work on this subject.

FD reported that as a consequence of this project and with SG having recognised the requirement to incorporate education with in the future FMPs the Nith may be looked to as an example in respect of which other Fishery Boards may attend in the near future to see how the Scheme works.

FB advised that Tesco's are offering a support for community projects "Bags of Help" by the production of a counter at checkout for customers to have the choice of supporting of three options chosen by the placing counters in a suitable repository.

The Trust would be seeking the support of Tesco for this funding initiative during the course of late Summer and in the event that members of the public by majority chose the Trust Funding initiative then there may be £4,000 available from Tesco.

The Chairman expressed a feeling of encouragement on his part about the negative publicity that has surrounding fish farming operations recently. This matter was generally discussed amongst Board Members.

Peter Hutchison advised of a private equity company that was looking for funds to allow it to develop and promote a method of controlling Japanese Knotweed.

FD reported that Board Staff had during the course of this year had again carried out work on the Council controlled water for control of Giant Hogweed, previously paid for by the Council. They have declined to support the initiative this year despite the fact that the work has been carried out. FD asked John Charteris if he would be prepared to raise the issue with the Council.

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