

NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
MINUTES OF
BOARD MEETING
HELD AT FRIARS CARSE COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL,
AULDGIRTH, DUMFRIES
ON
21 SEPTEMBER 2018 AT 10 AM

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall – Chairman
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate
Wally Wright – Netting Representative
Thomas Florey – Angling Representative
Raymond Mundle
Tom Brown
Anna Fergusson
John Charteris - Dumfries & Galloway Council

IN ATTENDANCE

Roderick Styles – Clerk
James Henderson – Fishery Director (FD)
Deborah Parke – Nith Catchment Fishery Trust (FB)
Jim Gregory
Richard Gladwin

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

1. APOLOGIES

David Kempself, Peter Landale, Mike Mackin, Scott Kerr and Nick Wright.

2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

None declared.

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 3 JULY 2018

Peter Landale's apology for absence from the previous meeting is to be noted.
Thereafter, there was general approval of the Minutes.

Matters arising:-

4. CONFIRMATION OF BOARD MEMBERS

It was confirmed that there would be two co-optees in the form of Richard Gladwin and Jim Gregory, both Angling Representatives.

5. RIVER REPORTS

FD is engaged with Scottish Government's (SG) first year of projects involving every river catchment in Scotland in formulating conservation status throughout Scotland. SG want to get statistics on juvenile fish by electrofishing. Thirty sites from within the Catchment will be selected by computer for electrofishing survey and data gathering. These sites could be anywhere from a ditch to extremely remote areas. No thought appears to have been given as to whether or not the sites are likely to be capable of sustaining fish populations. Payments made by Government will be made at the rate of £12,000 per annum.

Windfarm proposals have been going through the Planning process in respect of which consultation and environmental assessment reports are required.

FD continues to work on fisheries enforcement which remains a high priority, although there has been very little illegal fishing obvious during the course of the season.

FD reported that every Fishery Management Plan for Scotland to be created with reference to the Government approved template when finally approved will provide for a section dedicated to fishery development for the public. A meeting to discuss this had been held at the Board's hatchery office among Fishery Boards from Southern Scotland including Tweed South west Scotland and Ayrshire rivers to look at how the River Nith Catchment implemented ideas on this development.

FD continued to check on Planning matters intimated by the Council so as to make representations on behalf of the Board's Fishery interest.

The Chairman reported on the Trust meeting held the previous evening. The matter of Signal Crayfish had been discussed. They are now in the headwaters of the River Dee which is located in very close proximity to the headwaters of the River Nith. However, very little can be done about the possible passage of Signal Crayfish over land between the two systems. It is approximately one mile between the two systems.

Peter Landale asked for a timeframe within which SG might approve their Fishery Management Plan template. FD replied that Simon Dryden reported one year ago that it would be imminent but the Board still awaits a final confirmation of its form.

John Charteris asked if it was possible to fish for and sell Crayfish. FD and the Chairman both stated no. SG feels that by suppressing trade in Crayfish there is control of the spread.

FD reported on the use of Signal Crayfish as bait in Loch Rutton. They are sizable and good to eat. If there is a commercial value to them then people will want to farm them. Professional management organisations can try to enforce control. Much work had been done on Loch Ken but to little successful effect. A consultant had been brought in from Ireland. Electrofishing had been considered but statistically only 95% of Crayfish would have been killed as would everything else in the river had

electrofishing equipment at the required voltage been used. SG is on record of having frozen Signal Crayfish for three months and having thawed them out whereupon they revived.

6. FISH COUNTER UPDATE

FD reminded those present of plans to build the counter. It had been impossible to make progress this year because of the death of the business owner supplying the counter. A new company has taken over. Five counters were left. The Board had agreed to reserve and pay a 25% deposit for the supply and installation of one in year 2019. Planning Permission and SEPA Controlled Activities Licence were in place. Land owner's permission had been obtained. Local people had been informed. FD had spoken with S. P. Energy Network. A free connection of electricity will be supplied, although the electricity bills have to be paid for. Contractors have supplied quotes which have been the subject of approval and they have been engaged.

Tom Brown asked about data transmission. FD replied that it was not possible to connect to the fish counter in the meantime. The counter would need visited to obtain the relevant data. Data may be supplied to Sanquhar Academy for continuing education projects. In the future it may be possible to connect to a 4g router for computer access to fish counter data.

It was hoped to proceed with commencement of installation of the fish counter in the second quarter of 2019 from around the third week in May onwards.

Tom Brown asked about the sponsorship. FD replied that Vat was an issue. He had contacted SG seeking exemption from Vat. That was yet to be confirmed. He also hoped to make it tax efficient by getting companies involved to absorb Vat. Tom Brown reminded those present of the availability of sponsorship funding from haaf netting association.

FD stated that the gross spend will be in the order of £50,000, so Vat avoidance would be useful and worthwhile. The Crawick had been chosen because of a sympathetic land owner. The Scaur Water may be looked at in the future. The River Cairn may be a future river for such a fish counter.

Richard Gladwin asked who had bought the company, Aquantics. FD replied that Aquantics was a husband and wife team. The husband had died but that there was also a technical advisor who had developed the counter. He had bought into the company and had ultimately taken over the company with his daughter. There was therefore continuity of involvement for those who had been involved with the company.

John Charteris asked if the counter would differentiate between fish ascending and those descending. FD confirmed that this would be the case.

Peter Landale asked for work to create correlation between the Crawick data and other parts of the Catchment. FD responded that it may be necessary to involve specialist analysts to create a model for the whole river system. The benefit of having

data from other counters would greatly enhance the analysis. The results would open up other areas of investigation and developing from that might be smolt trapping statistics.

7. MISSING SALMON PROJECT

Peter Landale addressed the Board Meeting on the aims of the Project and provided all present with a promotional booklet. The primary motivation was to identify key reasons for mortality, prioritise consideration of these causes of mortality and create and implement plans to reverse the trend. Similar work had been done with cod. There are “domains” in each part of the system. It would be necessary to do research and be specific about the reasons for mortality in each domain then co-ordinate results for all rivers.

The Moray Firth is responsible for 35% of wild salmon visiting Scotland. A tagging project had commenced in Moray Firth. Eight rivers were tagging 1000 smolts. Acoustic Buoys had been located in rivers and the Moray Firth to record data relating to the migration of these smolts.

It may be possible to use Acoustic tracking with a line of buoys from the Solway Firth to the South end of the Island of Islay to be put in place sometime after 2020/21. Peter Landale reported that he was keen to see the benefit of these tracking buoys placed in the Solway and in the rivers to further monitor salmon movement.

Peter Landale referred specifically to the booklet in his presentation. The aim of the project was to try to identify and attempt to try to stop the downward trend of adult salmon returning to their natal rivers. It was ultimately hoped that with engathered information there would be formulated a national and international plan to try to stop the downward trend of salmon numbers. Various organisations were working on salmon conservation but they were independent of each other. There was a move afoot to persuade all such organisations to support the Missing Salmon Project. In the hope that an Acoustic Tracking Project may be available for the Solway in year 2020, it was hoped that awareness could be created for the purposes of arranging for funding the project. It was likely to cost around £500,000 for the deployment of buoys and analysis of the data but exact figures are unknown. Corporate sponsorship may be required. Tags are £250 per fish as tagged by specialists. The Dee Catchment tagging and monitoring project had costed £300,000 to take the project forward this year. The Scheme has been adopted by ICES and NASCO and all of the North Atlantic countries will hopefully adopt it.

2019/20 will be the International Year of the Salmon.

8. GAME FAIR UPDATE

FD and FB had attended the Lowther and Galloway Game Fairs. The purposes in attending Lowther had been to try to sell fishings in the Catchment. Staff had spoken with visitors and documentation promoting fishings had been provided. There had been some interest but it was very difficult to gauge how much had developed and whether or not it had been successful in promoting take up of angling in the river system.

The Chairman raised the question of whether or not attendance of the Board, particularly at Lowther, should be taken up next year and thought that on balance there should with a better prepared brief with more support from proprietors as to attendance and organisation of the events, with a view to reviewing thereafter as to whether or not it was worth continuing to attend these events.

As regards Drumlanrig Fair, again the profile of the Board had been raised and this helps with contact with land owners in the catchment. Border Lines and Scott Kerr from Buccleuch Estates Limited had been present. It was generally thought that the in-house organisation by the Estate was much better than when organised by external events organisers in previous years.

9. NITH CATCHMENT FISHERY TRUST

FB reported on the ten annual sites identified for annual health checks via electrofishing result.

2018 had been a dry year, pushing fish into small areas of water.

Five/six years of data were available and there appears to be steady improvement in the presence of numbers of salmonids.

As regards the Young Angler's Initiative development, there was much appreciation extended for the support of fishery owners who had made their fisheries available for this purpose. In addition, the scheme was attracting more interest from anglers who wanted to help with the development of angling for the young.

As regards the Fishery Trust finance, it is in order. The deficit had been overcome by reason of consultancy funding. Thanks were extended to Tesco for donations. £2,000 had been made available for the Support Local Venture Scheme.

10. A.O.B

FD reports on FMS having elections for its Management Board. Peter Landale would like to attend FMS meetings and sought Board Member's endorsement for his being their representative on the FMS Management Board. FD had previously sat on the Board for twelve years.

The Board is supposed to be representative of the sections of fisheries throughout Scotland.

Peter Landale would be representing the Board's interests at FMS advancing the Missing Salmon Project.

John Charteris supported the position and it was agreed tacitly for Peter Landale to be made available for election to FMS.

FD reported that EA had asked for assistance with Bailiff training for Scotland as regards the River Esk.

The meeting thereafter closed.