

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

**7 JUNE 2019 AT 10.30AM**

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**PRESENT**

Percy Weatherall – Chairman  
David Kempself – Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association  
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate  
Nick Wright – Closeburn Castle Fishings  
Raymond Mundel – Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association  
Richard Gladwin – Blackwood Estate  
Wally Wright – Netting Representative

**IN ATTENDANCE**

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

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present.

**1. APOLOGIES**

John Charteris – Dumfries & Galloway Council  
Anna Ferguson – Buccleuch Estates  
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock Estate  
Peter Hutchison – Douglas Hall Fisheries  
Tom Brown - Netting Representative

**2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS**

There were none.

**3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 22 MARCH 2019**

The Minutes were approved unanimously.

**4. PRESENTATION BY FISHERY DIRECTOR**

FD made reference to the previous meeting and the raising of the Habitat Enhancement Project on Crawick Water. It had become apparent that Board Members were perhaps not aware of the full nature and extent of the Board's activities and its involvement in habitat enhancement work.

FD then gave a PowerPoint presentation in respect of the past activities of the Board, giving a history of the Board's work from the 1980s and the substantial increase in work undertaken by the Board particularly with regard to anti-poaching activities, habitat enhancement work, hatchery work, opencast coal operations and the likes. In

the early 1980's, the abolition of sporting rates had resulted in the Board being able to raise additional finance for the management of the river system.

Bold decisions had been made under the Chairmanship of Peter Kennedy. Poaching had been the biggest problem. Photographic evidence of poaching incidents showing fish kills were exhibited. Poachers from the Nith System had been recognised as some of the worst in Britain.

There were also poaching issues in the Solway Firth. Assistance from Scottish Government had been given. Joint projects had then been undertaken on the Solway Firth with Environment Agency. In 1991, at the instigation of Peter Kennedy, a report was commissioned through West Galloway Fisheries Trust to review the Nith Fishery. Alistair Steven's report listed a number of limiting environmental factors in respect of the river system. As a consequence, the Nith Habitat Enhancement Committee had been formed to deal with the issues highlighted in the report.

A five year project of Habitat Enhancement Schemes in areas identified was undertaken.

Peter Kennedy had spoken with Ted Whitley of the Whitley Animal Protection Trust who granted in money to the project to the value of £50,000 per annum. A project booklet was produced of the degraded areas for improvement of habitat throughout the catchment and fund raising exercises were undertaken by the Board to assist with financing the project.

Reference was made to graph statistics in respect of the effects of the Habitat Enhancement and improvement works. In some cases as a result of the work undertaken and where there had been no presence of salmon, there is now a presence of them.

Predators were considered. The presence of Pike was identified. A paper had been written on the River Nith in respect of its Pike population which exists above the County boundary upstream to above New Cumnock. Gut contents of 174 Pike caught were analysed during the course of the project year.

Goosanders and Cormorants were dealt with by application for licence to Scottish Government.

Every single impassable barrier to migration of salmonids was identified within the river system and a methodology adopted to overcome them where appropriate. That work has largely been curtailed as a consequence of the advent of Controlled Activities Regulations (CAR).

The Board involved itself in connection with new road projects, particularly with regard to the construction of culverts which might have impacted upon water courses carrying migratory salmonids. Evidence was shown of culverts not constructed in a fashion suitable to permit the passage of migratory salmonids. The Board has made its presence felt with the Council and with contractors in respect of the future of these

works and examples were shown of suitably designed culverts capable of allowing the passage of migratory fish.

The ledge at the waterfall of Cluden Rocks had been removed to try to cut out foul hooking of fish. This could not be done now because of CAR.

FD summed up the efforts undertaken by the Board in connection with these and matters relating to energy renewables, coal mining river diversions and civil engineering projects undertaken on the river system with further reference to hatchery projects for compensatory stocking, education (of children) for the Fishing for the Future project, the requirement to liaise with Scottish Government and FMS on other matters relating to ongoing business of the Board.

## **5. RIVER REPORT**

FD made reference to the Quarterly Fishery Management Report.

Water quality – FD noted slurry coming across the A76 and had reported it to SEPA who appeared not to be interested in it.

At the conclusion of FDs report, the Chairman asked if there were any questions. The Clerk also asked by reinforcing the Chairman's position, emphasising that the Quarterly Management Report was of necessity a briefing report with information contained within it that should Board Members have questions on, they should be raised for more detailed answers.

Peter Landale asked for information on the Upper Nith restoration project. FD responded that so far as he was aware, work was ongoing on site now.

David Kempself asked when the project had commenced. FD referred to discussions relating to the commencement of the project in 2014 with minuted reference to it in both Board Minutes and Quarterly Management Reports from then onwards.

Nick Wright asked about OCCS working at Greenburn and Garleffan and the diversion of the water from Nith Catchment to River Ayr. FD responded that this was a complex issue which gave rise to concern. Nick Wright mentioned the presence of two large planting schemes that were being undertaken. FD acknowledged this but expressed concern also about the notion of processed sewerage being used for landfill within OCCS. This had been an issue at Upper Beoch when there had been a nutrient flush for approximately one year in the form of a slurry like spillage in an impoverished part of the Catchment. The Board had been consulted about this and FD insists that he will be involved in continuing to monitor water quality in the surrounding areas. Planted trees provided over cover and habitat for plant and insect life.

Nick Wright asked about the Habitat restoration stream in the Crawick undertaken some time ago. FD responded about the scheme in the Upper Crawick and the liability for fencing which would last for 10 years. The fencing had been undertaken to

provide protection for tree planting to provide canopy cover for water courses. The project had worked in areas where the soil was in good condition but not where soil was poor.

Nick Wright asked about the trees in the Upper Crawick. Planting had worked in the lower part but the upper part was difficult because of the soil quality.

FD stated that Robert Gladstone from Capenoch had requested that repairs be undertaken to the habitat scheme on the Shinnel. FD reported that the trees inside the scheme were established and beyond damage from grazing agricultural stock. DK stated that no further investment should be made to this scheme.

FD responded that work is ongoing starting approximately 2 weeks ago with steel water gate posts having been erected. The problem was that public access could result in wooden water gate posts and the gates themselves being used as fuel for barbecues.

## **6. PETER LANDALE'S REPORT – AST**

Peter Landale spoke with reference to a PowerPoint presentation about the Missing Salmon Project and the Likely Suspects Framework.

Part of the Project's theory was to break areas occupied by salmon down into individual "domains". There is no collated information to give to Scottish Government concerning head waters, main stem, estuary, coastal zone and open ocean. The idea is to collect and collate information for the purposes of using a complicated computer model. The first phase is to identify percentage mortalities in the various domains and why mortality is happening. Once identified, then research is to be undertaken to try to establish management solutions. On the River Dee 150 smolts had been tagged. 25% had been lost in main stem. 27% had been lost in Aberdeen Harbour as a consequence of dredging operations being undertaken at the height of the smolt migration run. In 2017 the dredger had broken down. No smolts were lost within the harbour. It takes approximately 45 minutes for smolts to escape from the harbour area of the river system to open sea. In 2018 mortality again rose to approximately 25% of the run.

In 2019, AST had gone to Marine Scotland who had agreed to stop dredging work for a six week period during the smolt run.

Tracking would be undertaken at sea. In the Moray Firth 25%-30% of all UK salmon come into and out of The Firth. Sea monitoring is being undertaken by acoustic ray. Scotland has the lowest salmon aquaculture regulations. Sea Trout monitoring would be next. The initial results from the monitoring suggests that some fish may be migrating south.

Utilising the suspect's framework the effort would be to try to find out what is happening in these seven rivers. 800 smolts from Moray Firth rivers had been caught and tagged under Government supervision. They had passed through a fish pass with receiver and got detected. While some migration had tended to be in a southerly

direction, there is concern that the fish may reverse course and swim up past the Norwegian Coast so the potential for impact upon them by fish farm operations might be encountered.

The possible suspects framework should be taken into the river. It is necessary to find out results of where mortality is taking place in the river in order to improve matters within the Catchment. The outcome of this will allow for catchment management plans that are fit for purpose and connected to the problems identified.

Peter Landale stated that he would like to try to make a difference for salmon in the Nith Catchment and for that a smolt trap is necessary. Then it might be possible to engage in a tracking project in the Solway. It is hoped that this might be funded by some funds received from aquaculture and renewable industry. It was noted that in 2011 Robin Rigg was constructed and catches in the Nith started dropping off at the same time.

David Kempself would support such a project if there was external funding for it. It was observed that fish counters and smolt traps were equally important. FD stated that in his experience smolt traps would cost approximately £34,000 to purchase and install.

## **7. SGPBP**

FD reported that the Nith along with other river systems had been asked by Scottish Government to provide supplies of avian predators for stomach contents analysis. David Carsse is the man who analyses the samples are taken. His ability to be able to analyse stomach contents is well known. He has offered to come to give the Board a talk or open the meeting up to allow anglers to attend as well.

## **8. A.O.B**

The Clerk asked for authority to write to Proprietors who had not been paying their rates in the form of a 7 day demand letter then court action. The Board agreed.

FD mentioned that the sea trout night fishing project would be going ahead.

The Chairman reported on the Trust meeting and on the educational fishing for the future project. Invasive species were being dealt with. Japanese Knotweed would be dealt with if the proprietors were prepared to pay for this service.

The Chairman raised the matter of funding for the forthcoming December meeting and FD reported that he is working on expenditure ledger for the Board and the Trust to see where economies can be made.

Thereafter the meeting closed.