

**NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF**  
**BOARD MEETING**  
**HELD AT TARF VALLEY CONFERENCE ROOM,**  
**LOCKERBIE ROAD, DUMFRIES**  
**ON**  
**22 MARCH 2019 AT 10.30 AM**

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**PRESENT**

Percy Weatherall – Chairman  
Raymond Mundell – DGAA  
Thomas Florey – Angling Representative  
Richard Gladwin – Blackwood Estate  
Nick Wright – Closeburn Castle Fishings  
Anna Ferguson – Buccleuch Estates  
Jim Gregory – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association  
Tom Brown - Netting Representative  
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock Estate  
Wally Wright – Netting Representative  
John Charteris - Dumfries & Galloway Council  
Peter Hutchison – Douglas Hall Fisheries

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ATTENDANCE**

Geoff Walter  
Scott Kerr

**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**

David Kempself, Mike Machin & Peter Landale.

**2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS**

John Charteris advised that he is the Chairman of the Common Good Fund and now attends the Board as a representative of the Common Good Fund. It was not considered that this would be a declaration of financial interest that might impact upon his duties as a Board Member.

**3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 10 DECEMBER 2018 & 8 FEBRUARY 2019**

The Chairman rehearsed the circumstances giving rise to the meeting held on 8 February 2019 flowing on from a decision made at the Board Meeting of 10

December 2018 with regard to the rate in the pound to be assessed for the forthcoming year's Assessment and the request of Dumfries & Galloway Council to hold an Extraordinary Meeting to discuss matters.

The Minutes of both meetings were approved.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

None.

#### **5. RIVER REPORTS: NITH FISHERY MANAGEMENT PLAN QUARTERLY REPORT**

FD referred to the Quarterly Report circulated, spoke briefly to its terms and advised that a presentation to Board Members would follow. Peter Hutchison asked what the most critical aspects of work are. FD responded that he reacts to critical areas of work depending upon what arises on a day to day basis and the extent to which it will have an environmental impact upon the River System. Thomas Florey pointed out the exceptional income stream from Consultancy Income and asked if that income stream was likely to continue. FD responded that he expected to make £100,000 of Consultancy Income during 2019. The engineering projects of the various types that give rise to Consultancy Income throughout the Catchment are not thought to be changing very much by way of volume.

Richard Gladwin reported that discussion had taken place at the last meeting concerning future finance for the Board and how the Board should be thinking about making operations more commercial. In the future, Consultancy Income may drop off. The Board needs to consider whether or not it should go out of Catchment regarding the professional services that FD and FB can offer with a view to earning more funds.

There was full discussion on the ramifications of declining financial returns from Fisheries against the requirement to cost out environmental obligations under Fisheries Legislation. It was observed that the feeling at the meeting was that more pressure should be put on SG for financial assistance.

#### **6. PRESENTATION BY FISHERY DIRECTOR**

FD produced a power point photo slide presentation of erosion that had taken place on an upper tributary of the River System that had previously been the subject of a Habitat Enhancement Project. It could be seen from the photographic presentation that a fence previously excluding livestock from a corridor of riverbank had become undermined as a consequence of river erosion to the extent that the fence line was in part suspended in mid-air. FD requested authority from the Board to be able to reinstate the fencing, reporting that he had the support of the land owner in connection with relocation of the fence line. In response to questions, FD expanded more fully on the purpose behind Habitat Enhancement Project and the benefit the River System could gain from it. It was agreed that FD could carry on to reinstate the fence at a location to be agreed with the land owner.

FD produced a graphic demonstration of sea trout catch statistic returns since 1956 showing a downward trend. In FD's opinion this gave rise to the notion that sea trout within the system deserved as much protection as salmon. General discussion

ensued. It was observed that angling effort in general was diminishing and for sea trout, generally a night time activity in particular was falling away. A conclusion was reached that while everything should be done to protect sea trout as much as salmon, the graph was not necessarily indicative of falling sea trout presence within the river system given the lack of angling effort to identify whether or not they were present in any numbers.

## **7. OPEN DAY FOR SALMON FISHING**

FD reminded those present that it had been suggested that there be an open day for salmon fishing to try to encourage more anglers to the Catchment. It was proposed that Saturday 31 August 2019 be the date set to promote salmon fishing within the Catchment and FD would be asking for access from Proprietors on that date for the purposes of promoting salmon angling.

FD reported that in respect of one cormorant recently shot under SG approved control mechanism 50 sticklebacks and one trout had been present within the gut content. It was suspected that this cormorant had travelled from a nearby loch rather than having caught these within the River System.

FD reported with slide demonstration on the reinstatement of a burn at the Keir OCCS the ultimate introduction of fry to the reinstated burn.

## **8. 2019 SEA TROUT EVENT**

FD confirmed the forthcoming sea trout festival event.

## **9. PREDATOR LICENCE**

FD reported that he and FB continued to apply for a licence in co-operation with the project operated by SG for gut analysis contents of cormorants and goosanders. Jim Gregory asked if FD considered that the presence of grayling and their egg eating habits might have an impact upon salmon stocks. FD agreed that grayling were present but he did not think that there was a problem with the numbers of them present within the River System.

## **10. A.O.B**

Raymond Mundell raised the issue of Catch and Release figures amongst the netting interests dropping off from 2017 at 74% to 50% in 2018. Tom Brown raised the difficulty with getting accurate figures because of a lack of Returns of tags. FD advised that if only two Proprietors returned tags after the 2018 season notwithstanding SG's licensing and control of netting with reference to allocation of tags. FD referred to the haaf netting return figures and the issue of carcass tags, which in his opinion had almost become a "kill" tag rather than a conservation tag.

There was thereafter a general discussion about whether or not it is morally justifiable to kill salmon at this time. It was observed that the recording system for net caught salmon was virtually worthless.

Robbie Cowan advised that Caerlaverock do insist upon tag return. Last year only three returns were made. Haaf netters were all killing their two salmon and then stopping fishing which clearly had an impact upon the Catch Statistic Returns.

There being no other matters raised, the Chairman formally closed the meeting.