

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

14 January 2020 at 10.00AM

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall – Chairman
Richard Gladwin
David Kempself – Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate
Raymond Mundel – Dumfries and Galloway Angling Association
Wally Wright – Netting Representative
Peter Hutchison – Douglas Hall Fishery
Anna Ferguson – Buccleuch Estate
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock Estate
Tom Brown – Drumburn Estate
Mike Machin – Netting Representative

IN ATTENDANCE

Roderick Styles – Clerk
James Henderson – Fishery Director (FD)

The Chairman opened the meeting by welcoming all present. He then reported on the meeting that had been scheduled to take place on 12 December, aborted because it was inquorate. The Chairman asked that all Board members attempt to attend scheduled meetings in future

1. APOLOGIES

Nick Wright – Closeburn Castle Fishings

2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

There were none.

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 26 September 2019

The Chairman sought approval which was given unanimously.

4. MATTERS ARISING

FD reminded those present that he had been asked to look at the management of the river system with Board and Trust. FD had received option appraisal papers from Alan Wells of FMS which had given examples of how other Boards and Trusts interact to manage river systems. It is apparent from these papers that styles of management have evolved dependent upon what suits catchment areas. FMS report that funding of the operation of Boards and Trusts in future is likely to be unsustainable by present methods. There may have to be central government funding made available, possibly directed to Trusts. The perceived wisdom is that it would be unwise to dispense with the trust and its charitable status meantime.

The Chairman suggested that the status quo should be maintained meantime. This was unanimously agreed to.

FD referred to the previous report prepared by him in connection with the future economics of running the Board and the agreement of Board members to follow Option 1, which was now being actioned.

5. River Reports

FD referred to the report circulated, being the fourth quarterly report within the whole report for the year. It had been a busy quarter. He was trying to get proposed consultancy development reports completed for issue and settlement before the financial year end.

Hatchery work was ongoing, following catching up of brood stock.

Richard Gladwin asked about point 11 on the report – freshwater mussels. FD responded that he and FB had attended a course on training and licensing for fresh water pearl mussels. They are a good indicator of the health of a river system. It was reported that there were swan and duck mussels in the Lochar Water.

FD reported on the North Lowther grid connection and meetings with SPEN. He had made contact with SPEN so as to make them aware of the requirement to approach the Board if the proposed wind farm gets planning consent.

Peter Landale raised item 14 of the report – Hatchery Licensing. FD reported on his contact with Alison Curtis for brood stock licence for 2020. Licence requirements were under review by SG again. There is a wish to prevent DSFBs from opening new hatcheries.

Peter Landale stated that hatchery operations should be taken with caution. FD responded that the only places where stocking take place are in new water courses created as a result of OCCS operations.

The Chairman reported on the December Trust meeting. The Fishing for the Future project is proceeding. It is now in seven schools, supported by outside funding, although more funding was wanted. There had been organised litter clearing on the river involving children and their parents.

6. Budget

Richard Gladwin pointed out that consultancy income was down. The Clerk and FD reported that the previous year's income had been exceptionally high. FD reported that there were two types of consultancy work undertaken, being statutory work required for the Board to do its duty to preserve the river system from damage and work arising from misadventure, causing potential damage to the river system. Irish Gas had made a mistake, which had to be investigated for its potential damage to the system and resulting compensatory payment. FD felt that it was important to establish separate categories of income received, consultancy income and environmental benefit income. He suggested that in respect of income received, a

percentage be allocated to consultancy and the remainder be ear marked for environmental benefit use in a suitable investment account, so as to ensure that not all income generated be utilised to subsidise payment of assessments. This suggestion was viewed sympathetically.

The Chairman brought into focus the remainder of the budget. It was observed that consultancy income was down, but fluctuations had to be expected from year to year.

After full consideration of the budget. it was unanimously decided to utilise £105,000 for assessment refund and to keep the rate in the pound fixed for the forthcoming year at £1.57 in the £.

7. West Coast Salmon Tracking Project – video display.

The Missing Salmon Project had produced an information video, which was shown. FD provided update. The project was looking to expand its remit onto the west coast of Scotland. The Moray Firth would be moving into the second year of the three year project. It had been discovered so far that there was much higher predation on salmonids in river than at sea. The survival rate of smolts in the river Shin was much better than the river Spey. It was felt crucial that the project should be brought to the west coast.

FD had met with the Atlantic Salmon Trust. The Nith is a key river for monitoring. Smolts from the Nith system will be tagged. A meeting had taken place with Glasgow University's Colin Adams and sites had been looked at for smolt trapping. A site at the top of the Blackwood beat had been identified and beat owner Richard Gladwin had agreed to the proposed siting of a smolt trap there, with permission having been given by the opposite bank owner at Barburgh Mill. Listening devices will be placed downstream, possibly in Dumfries, both above and below the Caul. FD will be meeting with Council officials in the following week to discuss the proposal. This if permitted should allow the Board to determine smolt release success. There will be acoustic listening devices located at various points up the west coast to determine migratory routes taken by smolts. The information collected will allow the Board to determine future management strategy to attempt to combat losses of smolts.

SG is involved in the Avian Predator Project.

More electrofishing is projected to take place.

All of these steps will provide more information for research.

SG funding had come forward. The Board will be paid for the time spent in dealing with the project, expected to take seven days per week for many weeks checking smolt traps twice a day. It cost £270 per tag and one hundred fish were expected to be tagged.

An acoustic array will be deployed between Ireland and Islay.

SG would fund the project to the extent of £757,000. The Aquaculture Industry may be funding part of the project.

There will be much more investigation of a directional nature rather than mortality based for the north coast.

Because of migration direction it is better to have the smolt trap at Blackwood, because it is in the lower reaches of the river system.

8. 2020 Season Opening Event

FD had reached agreement with Buccleuch Estates Ltd for their hosting of the event, scheduled for 25 February 2020.

Peter Landale suggested that the NASCO briefing should be made available.

9. Avian Predation Research Project.

FD suggested that the biological analyst who examines the bird samples sent to him should be invited to give a talk to the Board on his methodology and analysis.

10. Fishery Management Plan Template

FD reported that Marine Scotland wanted to develop a Pressures Tool to assist in connection with formulating fishery management plans that were relevant to each catchment for future management plans.

11. AOB

Catch Returns: There had been more caught than in 2018.

2018 – 520 salmon and grilse.

2019 – 581 salmon and grilse without returns completed yet.

2018 – 471 sea trout

2019 835 sea trout and more returns were expected.

In respect of the frequency and accuracy of catch returns, some were dire.

SEPA is considering the next version of river basin/river management planning, but to complete it they want the Board's electrofishing data. It was felt that there is a conflicting argument. How can the Board expect SEPA to help the Board if they don't have the data, but SEPA is a toothless dog, not interested in prosecuting pollution crimes. If the Board gives the data to SEPA then it becomes public data. FD suggested a compromise to the effect that if an adverse pollution development should take place indicative of damage to the river system then the Board gives to SEPA data relevant to the area.

Next meeting for AMQP and Board meeting – Friday 24 April at 10 am.

The meeting closed.