

NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

**MINUTES OF
BOARD MEETING
ON**

**30 MARCH 2021
CONVENED VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall – Chairman
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock Estate
Raymond Mundle – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association
Peter Hutchison – Douglas Hall Fisheries
Nick Wright - Closeburn Castle Fishings
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate
Tom Brown – Netting Representative
Tom Florey – Angling Representative
Freja Grant – Buccleuch Estate

IN ATTENDANCE

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

The Chairman welcomed all present.

1. APOLOGIES

None.

2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

The Chairman asked for declaration of any financial interests. There were none.

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 19 JANUARY 2021

The Chairman ask for approval of the Minutes of the meeting of 19 January 2021 and these were approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING

None.

5. RIVER REPORTS

The Chairman asked the FD to report.

FD referred to the Quarterly Report covering all work carried out over the quarter.

Damage had been sustained on the Lower Crawick Habitat Schemes. Fencing and a water gate needed repaired. FD recommended repairs. A tributary of the Crawick Water, the Wanlock Water had sustained damage and pictures were shown of the water gate damage at Corsebank. On Wanlock Water floods had ripped out a water gate. FD had intended to repair the Wanlock Scheme by fencing parts of the

riverbank and making tree boxes rather than replacing water gates. FD recommended that this procedure be adopted for both the Crawick and Wanlock Water to allow for trees to be planted and established. Tree boxes are the way to create best habitat under the circumstances. Funds will be needed up to a ceiling of £5,000.

Richard Gladwin asked how old the water gates were and FD responded approximately 8 – 9 years. Richard Gladwin asked if general deterioration had occurred or if they were one off flood events that had caused the damage. FD responded that repairs were carried out regularly, but that bank erosion was the problem and that in combination with more intense flooding events contributed to the damage. In FD's opinion, tree boxes were probably a better way of proceeding for the future.

Peter Landale expressed the view that the Crawick Water and some other tributaries are environmental deserts. Landowners' co-operation would be needed and hoped for better funding for improvements during the course of 2021. The Board really needed to be strong in connection with promoting habitat enhancement projects.

Peter Landale hoped for substantial sums of money from Scottish Government (SG) to have landowners and tenants become involved in promoting and preserving schemes.

FD responded that the problem weak spots are the water gates with damage being done causing sheep to get in.

Nick Wright asked who funded the project. FD responded that the Board had paid for one fence.

The Chairman commented on farming subsidies driven by environmental issues. Hopefully SG may support habitat improvement rather than money being ploughed into uneconomic sheep farming.

Approval of the expenditure up to £5,000 for repairs and damaged habitat schemes on the Crawick, Spango and Wanlock was given.

Peter Hutchison asked for progress on Avian Predator Analysis.

FD responded that the surveys on avian predator still continues with the licence running until the end of April 2021.

Peter Hutchison asked for Hatchery numbers.

FD responded that 65,000 salmon fry had been produced. The Board now needed a licence for the capture of brood stock and relocation of salmon fry for planting out. The Board had a licence to plant fry in the new Dalgig water course for the next four years. After that, there may be no licence issued as a consequence of Government Policies.

6. NITH CATCHMENT FISHERY TRUST

The Chairman reported on the Nith Catchment Fishery Trust meeting on 29 March. It had been a constructive meeting. The Smolt Tracking Project had been discussed.

Fishing for the Future & Nith Young Anglers Project had been discussed. The Scheme had received good support and will be handy to be able to introduce children to the work of the Board and Trust, Covid-19 permitting.

An update on the Fishery Management Plan and the Salmon Pressures Tool had previously been given.

Invasive and non-native species were discussed and the action taken to deal with them.

At the last Board Meeting it had been intimated that the Trust may have had to seek bridging finance from the Board because of a shortage of funding due to the requirement to finance new projects prior to grant aid being awarded. However, funds had been received from Dumfries & Galloway Council and so additional Board funding was not required from the Board at this time.

Peter Landale commented on the management policy of nutrient enrichment to promote growth of fry and smolts. Might this be something that the Board may think of doing on the basis that healthier smolts are bigger smolts? It had been discovered that dead salmon, deer and sheep in the water course created bigger smolts.

FD reported that he is aware of this work. FD and FB need more consistent information on smolts. FD expressed concern that it is found that smolts grow more quickly because of warmer conditions resulting in smolting of smaller smolts earlier in their life. FD is looking forward to gathering more information from the smolt tracking project.

7. SMOLT TRACKING PROJECT

FD and FB have completed AST training on smolt handling and tagging. There had been a team meeting yesterday to discuss taking forward the project. FD had a meeting arranged with Mark Bilsby of AST during the course of this week. The smolt trap would be assembled today. Smolt trapping licence would be active from 6 April 2021.

Peter Landale advised further on funding. AST got together funding from Marine Scotland and the salmon farming industry. It was to be hoped that the whisky industry and oil industry might contribute. There would have to be a commitment to providing funding.

Peter Landale observed that FD's production of funding through consultancy work allows the Nith to be involved in the smolt tagging project. The funding model is likely to change in the future. It may be that funding is granted to FMS which may then be

distributed to Boards as is appropriate. It was as well that the Nith Board is in a position to be able to deal with such projects.

Peter Landale commented on the SEPA Restoration Project for Upper Nith. Funding had come from the top i.e., the wrong way round. FD agreed.

The Chairman stated that it would take time, as much as three months, to get the smolt tracking data.

FD reported that the receivers needed to be recovered in order to download the data of smolts passing the receivers. There will be no live feed data but at the end of the smolt run the data will be available when the receivers are recovered.

8. GLENMUCKLOCH PUMP STORAGE HYDRO SCHEME

FD reported on the scheme intended to be built within the former coal mine at Glenmuckloch.

A one hundred and twenty year scheme was proposed but the equipment had a forty year lifespan. The equipment would have to be renewed three times. It would be an exciting project and FD was looking forward to working with BEL and the Environmental Consultants.

Freja Grant was asked to provide an update on the scheme for the next meeting.

FD reported that the Board's interest was in respect of the water that would be needed. The scheme needed to take water from the River Nith to purge the system. FD was interested in this, both before and after the scheme.

Peter Hutchison asked for an environmental impact assessment report to be carried out to provide base line information in order to allow for regular monitoring over the years to come.

FD referred to previous schemes with the coal mining projects and twenty year schemes. FD always tried to get these schemes to be incorporated into Planning Consent Conditions.

9. SOUTH KYLE WIND FARM

FD had been commissioned to do monitoring work in the area last October. When on site he had been disgusted with what he had seen. SEPA had not been involved or been checking. Senior company officials got in contact, anxious to cooperate with the Board as regards the environmental impacts of the scheme and best practice to adopt in this regard. There will now be increased monitoring of the site paid for by the developer. The site has now been cleaned up.

10. UPPER NITH RESTORATION PROJECT

The Chairman referred to the Scheme for replacement flood banks and habitat improvement. The Chairman had attended with FD on site at Phase 2 Termination in February 2021. The Chairman reminded everybody that Phase 2 had run into trouble

due to delay. New banks had been left exposed and subject to possible erosion. It was not clear how the finished scheme would look.

The Chairman had approached the Project Manager, Luke Cummins of Tweed Forum. Apparently, fencing and tree planting will be undertaken as part of the Scheme.

FD reported that the site had flooded and equipment had been lost to the Nith. Phase 2 had been badly managed.

The Chairman reported on delivering a verbal message for the future parts of the Scheme and for it not to start before the beginning of June and to finish by the end of September.

Peter Landale asked for the budget on fencing and planting so that these key elements of expenditure could be reserved.

It was agreed that a request be made to Luke Cummins to find out what is to be spent on planting and fencing.

Peter Landale stated that the Board would have to continue to monitor such projects in the future.

11. AOB

FD reported that sea trout had been seen at the bottom of the River.

The Chairman reports on better Salmon Catch Statistics for the previous season.

Thomas Florey asked given the presence of Covid, if there had been any up taking in fishing numbers. Blackwood Syndicate Members would be happy to show starter anglers on the River with tuition.

David Kempself advised that there had been no increase in the uptake of visitor numbers on DGAA water.

FD reported on previous sea trout and salmon events. It was decided that this would not proceed this year due to health and safety issues because of the Pandemic.

Peter Landale referred to booklet "Salmon in Hot Water". He asked that it be circulated whenever possible and it had been hoped that an update could be published every year.

It was agreed that the next meeting would take place on Wednesday, 30 June 2021.

The Clerk pointed out that the Annual Public Meeting and Triannual Elections of the Board would take place at that time.

The meeting thereafter closed.