

NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
MINUTES OF
BOARD MEETING
HELD ON
18 OCTOBER 2022
AT FRIARS CARSE COUNTRY HOUSE HOTEL

PRESENT

Percy Weatherall – Cowhill (Chairman)
David Kempself – Dumfries & Galloway Angling Association
Peter Landale – Dalswinton Estate
Raymond Mundle - Angler
Freja Grant – BEL
Richard Gladwin – Blackwood Estate
Robbie Cowan – Caerlaverock Estate
Peter Hutchison – Lower Proprietor Netsman
Kevin Corder - Nith Catchment Fishery Trust

IN ATTENDANCE

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

It was agreed that the order of business shown on the Agenda would be adjusted to permit the showing of the “River Woods Film” first.

After the showing of the film, FD addressed the meeting on its content and the perceived benefits that could be gained out of habitat enhancement work, which it is to be hoped might be developed and encouraged throughout Scotland. Scottish Government (SG) and NatureScot is sending signs of supporting such schemes.

FD reported that he would like to expand the habitat enhancement element of works within the Catchment. NatureScot may have funding that may be available and application should be made to them once the position becomes clearer.

The Clerk reminded Members present and for the benefit of those who had not been Members at the time, summarised that the Board had undertaken a six year programme of habitat enhancement works with the benefit of matched funding from the Whitley Animal Protection Trust approximately twenty five to thirty years ago when substantial areas of the Catchment had been the subject of habitat enhancement works to create enclosed corridors of tree planting and protected environment immediately adjacent to water courses.

FD advised that he and FB had identified and worked on the promotion for grant funding purposes of three water courses selected for a scheme of habitat enhancement work. Application forms had been completed for submission as to the viability of these schemes for the hoped for availability of grant funding in relation to them. These proposed projects were for the Laggan Burn, the Pennyland Burn and the Crawick Water.

In respect of Laggan Burn, the detailed design stage had been reached under the banner of natural flood mitigation dealing with meandering and taking out obstacle culverts.

Pennyland Burn had been heavily modified in the past and it was hoped that the banks could be re-profiled to create a meandering profile for the Burn and to carry out planting and introduce woody structures to the water.

In respect of the Crawick Water, it was hoped to place woody structures within the Burn and to carry out green engineering to prevent erosion.

FB reported that the ability to be able to plant and erect riparian fencing was limited under the fund.

It was reported that there is a different funding opportunity available to create large scale planting.

Further reports and landowner agreement would be required.

If there is to be a successful outcome to applying for funding the application will have to come through the Trust.

The costs for the work should be covered to the extent of 90% grant funding, with the Board and Trust having to contribute the balance of funding from their resources or from match funding from another source.

The Trust would apply for the grant and engage the Board staff to carry out the relevant work.

Richard Gladwin asked if these were projects that the Fishery Director, Fishery Biologist and the Board would like to undertake.

Peter Landale responded that there was no present funding initiative from SG therefore, he was keen to see progress made in this regard. It was exactly the direction that the Board should be going in with regard to its future management of the river system.

Peter Landale reported in his capacity as the Board's representative on FMS of contact being made with NatureScot and Scottish Government and the forthcoming meetings with these organisations being imminent. It was to be hoped that Habitat enhancement projects would be supported and funded. It is to be hoped that FMS can appoint a Project Officer to provide a point of reference to all Fishery Boards in connection with providing guidance in seeking applications for possible future funding from NatureScot and SG.

In response to a question from the Clerk on the delayed ability to be able to implement a SG provided template for a new Fishery Management Plan, Peter Landale stated that in his opinion the Board should make its own way forward on conservation and future management for fisheries through and with NatureScot meantime.

Discussion took place on many aspects of the perilous condition of salmon numbers in the river system and throughout Scotland, the various directions in which matters might be taken to try to improve things in future, how fishery management should adapt to try to meet the challenges of management of the river system and what might be done by way of business planning and investigating funding initiatives to assist in future fishery management.

Discussion took place on manpower availability for the Board and Trust. It was recognised that both FD and FB were working to full capacity in respect of the Board's current workload, with their involvement in consultancy work in respect of future engineering projects that could potentially affect the catchment taking up a very large part of staff time. Staffing requirements would have to be considered carefully in respect of future administrative and field work that

may become necessary if the Board is to prepare itself for and be ready to take advantage of future funding initiatives for habitat restoration and improvement.

It was agreed that it be minuted that general far reaching and widespread discussion took place on the future direction of Fishery Board Management, the availability of funding for habitat enhancement and similar types of projects and that the Board should continue to investigate future projects and related future funding initiatives.

It was agreed that Peter Landale would continue to inform the Board of developments in connection with the contact with NatureScot and SG so that the Board could be alert to the possibility of developing new habitat and environment improvement schemes to take advantage of the possible availability of hoped for new funding initiatives.

The Board then agreed to revert to the Agenda of the Meeting.

1. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

None were declared.

2. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 8 JULY 2022

These were unanimously approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were none raised.

4. RIVER WOODS FILM

Already seen and commented upon.

5. FUTURE MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

Discussed at length earlier in the meeting.

6. NATURESCOT GRANT FUNDING APPLICATIONS

Discussed earlier in detail in the meeting.

7. BOARD EXPENDITURE

Agreed that this formed part of the general discussions that had taken place earlier in the meeting.

8. AOB

Raymond Mundle pointed to the fact that the River Cairn for a large part of its length was well shaded and covered river and yet numbers of fish caught were still reducing.

Robbie Cowan intimated of his involvement on a biodiversity scheme on behalf of Caerlaverock Estate for fund management and conservation. He was involved in taking the project forward. In his opinion, the Board was heading in the right direction with regard to the projects that it wanted to undertake and the direction in which it wanted to go in co-operation with NatureScot and SG.

Kevin Corder referred to seeking funding from wind farms. FB responded that funding from wind farms was mostly channelled through community councils and that it was difficult for outside organisation to acquire any of that funding.

The Meeting thereafter closed.

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