

NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
MINUTES OF
BOARD MEETING
HELD AT BUCCLEUCH & QUEENSBERRY HOTEL, THORNHILL, DUMFRIESSHIRE
ON
25 OCTOBER 2024 AT 10 AM

PRESENT

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| 1. Percy Weatherall | (Chairman (Cowhill – Upper Proprietor)) |
| 2. David Kempself | (D&GAA– Upper Proprietor) |
| 3. Matthew Law | (Portrack– Upper Proprietor) |
| 4. Mike Keggans | (UNAC – Upper Proprietor) |
| 5. Richard Gladwin | (Blackwood) – Upper Proprietor) |
| 6. Anna Ferguson | (Upper Proprietor – BEL) |
| 7. Tom Florey | (Angling Representative) |
| 8. Raymond Mundle | (Angling Representative) |
| 9. Ronnie Clark | (Tenant Netsmen Representative) |

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None

IN ATTENDANCE

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

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

1. APOLOGIES

Nick Wright	(Closeburn Castle - Upper Proprietor)
James Hunter Paterson	(Barjarg - Upper Proprietor)
Peter Landale	(Dalswinton - Upper Proprietor)
Tom Brown	(Drumburn – Lower Proprietor)
Anna Austin	(Caerlaverock - Lower Proprietor)

2. DECLARATION OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

The Chairman asked Board members to intimate any financial interests that might impact upon or cut across a Board member's duties. No Board member declared any conflict of interest.

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 6 AUGUST 2024

The Chairman referred to the draft Minutes, confirming that they had been circulated among Board members and asked if there were any comments on them. Mike Keggans stated that he had attended the previous meeting, but was not noted on the Minutes as having been in attendance. It was agreed that the draft Minutes would be rectified to show his attendance.

The Chairman thereafter asked for approval of the draft Minutes, advising that in the absence of any further comment on them and silence of Board members, he considered that they were formally approved. No contrary view was expressed.

4. MATTERS ARISING

(a) Hatchery

FD advised that following on from the last meeting, a stocking licence had been applied for and issued by the Marine Directorate. In response to Peter Landale's comments at the previous meeting, FD advised that he had produced an outline plan for the stocking of the Euchan Water, which had been circulated to Board members. The subject was discussed and reference made to the previous meeting's Minutes. It was agreed that full consideration of the project would be given later in the meeting (Agenda Item 6(a)).

(b) Administrative Assistant

The Chairman referred to the discussions on this subject at the previous meeting, stating that with the amount of additional work that Board staff would be facing he felt that it was now necessary to employ a full-time administrative assistant to help both Board and Fishery Trust. David Kempell stated that at the last meeting, the hours of employment for an administrative assistant had been proposed at the equivalent of 1.5 working days. He stated that the new proposal would greatly increase the costs sustained by the Board, following on from the huge assessment issued in year 2024. After further discussion, it was agreed to consider this matter later in the Board meeting.

(c) SEPA Representation at Board meetings.

FD advised that following on from instructions received at the last Board meeting, he had contacted SEPA Dumfries to ask if a SEPA representative would be prepared to attend future Board meetings. He had been advised that a SEPA representative would attend, subject to a suitable Board meeting Agenda being approved by SEPA prior to the Board meeting taking place.

FD reported upon help given by members of the public in connection with the Brown Brothers pollution incident at Kirkconnell, which had subsequently been properly cleaned up because of his intervention.

The Chairman suggested that an invitation should be extended to Oliver Mundell to attend a future Board meeting.

5. FINANCE SUB-COMMITTEE (“FSC”)

The Chairman asked Richard Gladwin to speak on the subject. Richard Gladwin confirmed that the FSC comprising himself, Mike Keggans and Tom Florey had met on 10 September 2024 at the Hatchery Office, with the Clerk and FD in attendance. He reported that he felt that there needed to be more transparency on the draft budget and the process of fixing upon the sums required to raise assessments on and that this had been an issue at previous Board meetings. The FSC had discussed transparency of the process, how the budgeting process should look taking into account the huge levels of income generated and how to deal with the accumulation of money from consultancy income and the uses to which it could and should be put. He stated that the Clerk had produced a proposal paper to FSC and that this would be used as a basis to take forward the production of a paper for consideration by Board members. He stated that FSC would come back to the Board after the next meeting on how to use consultancy income and how to take matters forward.

FD produced a slide show presentation on projected future income for the Board and Trust for 2025 and spoke to the figures produced and the various continuing and future projects giving rise to income depicted in the presentation. Mike Keggans asked how much of what potential income that had been depicted in the presentation was committed to contract. FD advised that all of what had been depicted in the presentation is committed to and that in addition, FD had a good idea of what income will follow in the next three to four years. Mike Keggans stated that if not committed to contract then any hoped for income couldn't be taken into account in calculating budgets and Assessments.

6. QUARTERLY REPORT

FD referred to the circulated report and to the bus tour undertaken by some Board members on 25 September 2024. During the tour, electrofishing of the river and some tributaries had been demonstrated to Board members and had revealed an all cases other than the Euchar water good numbers of juvenile salmon and other fish, indicating the need to protect these tributaries.

FD reported upon the attendance of himself and FB at a conference on fish passes held in Chester, attended by delegates from worldwide countries. It had become clear to him during the conference that on a world wide scale the Board carried out a huge amount of fish pass work in the catchment to assist in the passage of fish. The benefits of this were demonstrated in the numbers of juvenile salmonids in sites upstream from fish passes that the Board had been consulted on and involved in prior to their construction in order to ensure that best practice had been used before and during construction of fish passes.

Anna Ferguson asked how much time was spent by Board staff on the raising of awareness of fisheries matters with children. FD provided information in his reply and referred to the requirement for cooperation of landowners and fishery owners for access to land and fisheries for the attending children.

FD provided information on water quality sampling analysis of watercourses likely to be affected by development work. 17 samples had been taken for commercial

operations requirements and additional survey work for the benefit of the Board had been carried out.

The Chairman asked for any further questions and comments on the Quarterly Report. There were none.

Euchan Water

FD made reference to his circulated paper on the subject, the stocking licence permission received from the Marine Directorate and asked for confirmation from the Board that the Salmon Restoration Project on Euchan Water should proceed. FD advised that the cost of trapping brood stock, attending to hatchery operations and planting out fry would not be too onerous and time consuming because they would be carried out at the same time as existing hatchery operations. There would be expense and time involved in future monitoring of the Euchan Water, but the Board is in any event contracted to carry out this survey work through consultancy projects for the next ten years, so costs and time would be absorbed as a result. The time and effort for Board staff to carry out smolt trapping work would be considerable. Discussions among Board members followed on the costs of resources and time that would have to be spent on the project, should it proceed. These discussions indicated a general view that there was no point in having smolt trapping carried out having regard to the huge amount of staff time and expense involved over a full seven week period of the smolt run, in that annual monitoring for the presence of juvenile fish in a watercourse largely devoid of salmonids would be sufficient to determine if there was potential success arising from the project. Given the Minute on the subject from the August 2024 Board meeting and having obtained the necessary licence, the Board approved the taking forward of the Salmon Restoration Project on Euchan Water, with future consideration to be given on the scope of annual review and assessment of any future success of the project.

SPEN UIOLI (use it or lose it)

FD reported on the funding being provided by subject with reference to his slide presentation. SPEN had committed to the Board funding for (a) the Carco habitat creation project at £130,000 (b) the Laggan Scheme at £7,800 and (c) the Mennock Water scheme at £7,900. Tom Florey asked how much of this grant aid would come back to the Board. FD advised that all of the Board's costs and projected time spent had been costed and formed part of the Purchase Orders for each project. Materials and additional labour would be locally sourced, wherever possible. The projects were discussed and considered carefully.

Nith Catchment Tour

FD referred again to the slide show presentation and asked for comments. Raymond Mundle said that all present on the tour were shocked at the sheer numbers of juvenile fish at the various monitored sites.

7. AOB

The Chairman referred again to the subject of the Administrative Assistant for FD and FB. He stated that he agreed that the previous discussion at the August Board meeting related to employment of an assistant on a part time basis, but given the amount of work currently being undertaken and coming on with future projects as costed by FD in his presentation he felt that a full time assistant is required. Tom Florey stated that in order to get a quality employee for the post, it would be advisable to seek a full time assistant with the incentive of future career prospects.

The Chairman asked for Board approval for the employment of an administrative assistant to serve both Board and Trust. The Clerk asked for Board members to indicate their approval, for the purposes of recording of the Minutes of the meeting and this was given on what appeared to be a unanimous basis, no Board member expressing contrary views on or disagreement with the Chairman's request for approval.

The Clerk advised that he needed clarification on what had been achieved at the FSC meeting because there would have to be clarity of approach, given that the Board usually dealt with the approval of the draft budget and the level of the next financial year's Assessments at each year's January meeting. After discussion Board members agreed that the FSC should meet again to clarify what was needed to take matters forward with a view to establishing the basis of agreeing the as yet to be produced draft budget and the basis of Assessments for the new year.

FD advised that Alan Wells of FMS was seeking a meeting with FD regarding how the Board financed itself beyond the gathering of annual Assessments

FD advised of contact from Anthony Steel regarding the Aquagen's salmon egg plant production at Guillyhill fish farm, Dumfries and Selcoth Fishery, Annan. FD had prior to the August Board meeting made arrangements to meet with the manager of the Guillyhill fish farm on the proposed Scottish Government approved use of the premises for ova production. Peter Landale had raised the matter direct with FD after the conclusion of the August 2024 Board meeting, recommending that Helen Feenan of FMS attend the Guillyhill meeting with FD and this had been arranged. On the morning of the scheduled meeting, Anthony Steel of Kirkwood Fishings, Annan had contacted FD to speak about Aquagen, their involvement with Selcoth Fisheries and Guillyhill Fish Farm, demanding the FD call him back about the outcome of the meeting. The meeting had taken place and FD stated that he was satisfied that the necessary biosecurity measures were in place for the protection of the catchment. The ova were to be produced for sale to fish farms throughout Scotland and would not be retained for development into fry or parr. Helen Feenan had not made any adverse comments about the site visit and what had been discussed at the meeting. Anthony Steel had thereafter made contact with FD, demanding from FD information on the meeting for the purposes of producing an article that Anthony Steel was intending to have published in the press. Robust discussions had ensued. FD had refused to supply Anthony Steel with information on the basis that the meeting had been held for the purposes of advising Nith Board members in the conduct of Nith Board business.

It was agreed that the next Board meeting would take place on 16 January 2025.

The Chairman asked for any comments on any other business.

The meeting thereafter closed.

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