

NITH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING

HELD AT

BUCCLEUCH & QUEENSBERRY HOTEL, THORNHILL, DUMFRIESSHIRE
ON

23 OCTOBER 2025 AT 10 AM

PRESENT

- | | |
|--------------------------|--|
| 1. Percy Weatherall | (Chairman (Cowhill – Upper Proprietor) |
| 2. David Kempself | (D&GAA– Upper Proprietor) |
| 3. Tom Brown | (Drumburn– Lower Proprietor) |
| 4. Tom Florey | (Angling Representative) |
| 5. Raymond Mundle | (Angling Representative) |
| 6. Mike Keggans | (UNAA – Upper Proprietor) |
| 7. Nick Wright | (Closeburn Castle - Upper Proprietor) |
| 8. James Hunter-Paterson | (Barjarg– Upper Proprietor) |
| 9. Freja Grant | (Buccleuch – Upper Proprietor) |

MEMBERS OF PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None

IN ATTENDANCE

| | |
|-----------------|--|
| Roderick Styles | (Clerk) |
| James Henderson | (Fishery Director (FD)) |
| Deborah Parke | (Fishery Biologist (FB) - Nith Catchment Fishery Trust (NCFT)) |

MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ATTENDANCE

None

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed all present.

Apologies were received from:-

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Peter Landale | (Dalswinton– Upper Proprietor) |
| Matthew Law | (Portrack– Upper Proprietor) |
| Anna Austin | (Caerlaverock Estate – Lower Proprietor) |
| Anna Fergusson | (BEL – Upper Proprietor) |
| Ronnie Clark | (Tenant Netsman) |

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. None were declared.

3. BOARD MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 7 AUGUST 2025

The Chairman asked for comments or objections to the terms of the Minutes of the previous Board meeting, already circulated, stating that if none were received then they would be taken as approved. There being no comments thereon, these Minutes were taken as approved.

4. MATTERS ARISING

(a) South of Scotland Enterprise Meeting (SOSE)

FD reported on the meeting organised by Anna Austin, with he, Anna Austin and Peter Landale in attendance with Professor Griggs and Jayne Ashley of SOSE. FD reported that SOSE had been dealing with landscape scale projects, including nature restoration. It had been reported to Professor Griggs what the Board's activities were, including the nature and catchment restoration projects for climate change mitigation that had been and were in the course of being undertaken. SOSE are the closest link to available joint funding initiatives. It had been felt that it was important to draw SOSE's attention to what the Board does and that the Board is available to carry out projects throughout the catchment.

Mike Keggans stated that SOSE have granted in £4million to the Biosphere and that the Biosphere are now employing permanent staff to carry forward implementation of the Biosphere's aims.

The Chairman advised that NCFT will submit an application to the Nature Restoration Fund, at the beginning of November 2025, to take forward a project to undertake a development phase focusing on the Crawick catchment, with the potential to roll out over the whole of the Nith catchment in the future. A freelance Project Manager would be engaged to coordinate the development project. The development phase will identify the different funding sources available to deliver the restoration on the Crawick catchment. Part of the funding to deliver will hopefully come from NatureScot to permit this to happen.

FD reported in further explanation of the Chairman's comments that after the meeting with Professor Griggs, Peter Landale had advised him that the Trust needed to lodge an "expression of interest" with NatureScot, which had been prepared and submitted. It had been reported that the proposals in the expression of interest had been liked and that the Trust had been invited to submit a bid for funding for £100,000 to NatureScot. If the application is successful, the development phase will be worked up over the course of a year in order to try to produce a master plan for nature restoration over the whole of the Crawick catchment. The Trust will manage the project during the first year, but time to be devoted to it would be the matter that would need careful consideration, given the extent to which the Nith Management Team are committed to current work projects, hence the consideration of the requirement to take on a suitably qualified freelance consultant to see through the first phase of the project. After discussion, the Chairman advised that the matter would be kept under review, pending a determination on the success or failure of the application to NatureScot.

(b) Governance Documents

The Clerk reminded Board members that at the Board meeting on 7 August the matters of HR, Governance and insurance policies necessary for the Board to function had been raised by Peter Landale. As a consequence, the Board's policies and insurance documents had been gathered together and sent along with a briefing note to all Board members, asking them for observations and comments. Only Anna Austin had replied, asking if there was a risk assessment for daily working conditions and commenting on the apparent lack of Directors and Officers insurance cover. The Clerk reported that the Board had a comprehensive health and safety at work risk assessment folder covering what was considered necessary for all aspects of identified work carried out by Board staff, updated regularly to cover new situations and that it was felt that the necessary policies were in place. The matter of the availability of Directors and Officers insurance cover was raised with the Board's insurance brokers and two quotes for cover had been obtained. The extent to which the Board might need such cover was discussed and after discussion, the Board

resolved to seek Directors and Officers insurance cover to the value of the lower of the two quotes received from the insurance broker.

5. QUARTERLY REPORT and RIVER UPDATE

FD referred to the Quarterly Report document circulated prior to the meeting. He reported that he and the management team had largely finished field survey work arising from consultancy for the year and he was now writing up the reports for the various contractors.

FD reported that workload had increased. The management staff were involved in the Whitesands flood prevention project on the river in Dumfries. E fishing surveys had shown the presence of lampreys, eels and signal crayfish. There had been detected the presence of signal crayfish as far up the river as the site of the old Carnation factory, although they had not yet been detected in the river Cairn. In discussion, it was felt likely that beavers would make an appearance within the river system, by legal or illegal introduction.

Mike Keggans raised the subject of the proposed Glensalloch wind farm project, which if it went ahead would be located between the Crawick and Mennock waters, both being valuable salmon spawning tributaries. Mike Keggans asked what the Board's position was on the proposed project.

FD replied that in order to proceed, the Glensalloch project would need planning permission in two stages, one for the windfarm site and one for grid connection. It was likely that the grid connection would be directed towards Mennock.

Mike Keggans stated that he recognised that the proposal was likely to get permissions and that the site would be located on the eastern side of the catchment. FD replied that if permissions were granted then there would be full monitoring to be undertaken and benefit for the fishery will be sought to offset any potential adverse impact of the development project.

FD reported on the forthcoming commencement of a restoration project on the Scaur water. FD continues to progress habitat plans for the Mennock water and Laggan burn for the potential to get biodiversity net gain and community engagement and thereafter an approach would be made to SPEN for funding. The Chairman stated that it would be useful to produce an A4 sheet outlining all habitat works.

6. CODE OF GOVERNANCE FOR DSFBS AND THEIR MEMBERS

The Chairman referred to the draft code recently produced by FMS. It was discussed. The Clerk advised that all of the items on the check list within the draft document were being complied with, with the Chairman stating that he was happy to sign all approved Board minutes. No other comments were forthcoming from Board members on the draft document.

7. EUCHAN WATER PROJECT- MIKE KEGGANS PAPER-KELLO WATER

The Chairman advised that a paper had been circulated for consideration at this meeting. Mike Keggans referred to his paper, previous discussions and the commencement of the Echan water project. He stated that in his view there was another potential site in the form of the Kello water as being a tributary that could be worked on using hatchery resources that were available. Mike Keggans stated that he recognised that Peter Landale was opposed to the use of hatchery operations and that upon circulation of his paper prior to this meeting, Peter Landale had contacted him to express forcefully his continued opposition to hatchery operations. Mike Keggans stated that nevertheless, he was asking that the proposed stocking of the Kello water as detailed in his paper should receive the Board's support and agreement. Raymond Mundle spoke in support of the paper.

FD stated that he agreed that resources were available at the hatchery to action the project, however, it had proved to be very difficult to get Marine Scotland permission in respect of the Euchar water stocking project, which although in effect a five year project, required application for permission to take brood stock for the project on an annual basis. The Kello water had a series of natural obstacles along its length. Salmon were present in the lower reaches, but not in the upper reaches. Brown/sea trout were present throughout the length of the Kello water. In addition, there would have to be acceptable justification made for where the donor brood stock could be sourced without harmfully depleting the brood stock from their source tributary. The subject was discussed at length, after which the Board agreed that the Kello stocking project is to be assessed subject to there being shown to be good to excellent fry to parr conversion data results on the Euchar water as established in surveys to be carried out around August 2026. If established, this would initiate the subject of application for a stocking licence for the Kello water to be submitted to Marine Scotland following on from the Board's August 2026 meeting. It was agreed that given the low numbers of broodstock in the river generally, that half the quantity of fry that is currently produced for the Euchar project would be designated to the Kello Water, if the appropriate licence for stocking the Kello Water was obtained. For the avoidance of doubt, the entire hatchery production for the Euchar Water is 60,000 eggs.

8. NITH CATCHMENT FISHERY TRUST UPDATE

The Chairman provided an update on the Trust's meeting held the previous evening. The Fishing for the Future project is going well this year and may be expanded in future if available funding to support it can be increased. The habitat restoration work on Crawick and Mennoch waters had been discussed. The application for Nature Restoration funding and the Whitesands Flood Prevention scheme had been discussed. The Chairman stated that he considered that the funding lever from Board to Trust should be looked at with a view to increasing the Board funding to the Trust, as the level of Board support had remained the same for a number of years.

9. WEBSITE

FD stated that he felt that there was a need to update and revamp the appearance of the website. James Hunter-Paterson estimated that it should cost around £5,000 to achieve this. The Board agreed to have the website updated with a maximum spend of £5,000.

10. STAFF

FD reported that the administrative assistant recently employed by the Board had quit, citing difficulties in reconciling time spent at work with her family life. It was agreed that he should seek a new member of staff.

11. AECOM

FD reported to the Board about this subject. AECOM are a worldwide environmental consultancy. FD had along with FB discovered two people using electrofishing equipment in the Linn Burn tributary. FD and FB had watched the survey being carried out. In FD's opinion, the survey work had been carried out very poorly. One of the two individuals had bent down to pick up a live anode that had been snagged on the bottom of the tributary, which could have resulted in injury. The two individuals had come out of the water stating that there were no fish present as a result of the survey work that they had carried out. FD had produced his warrant card, identified himself and FB and had asked for sight of an electrofishing licence. No paper copy was produced, although eventually an online copy had been exhibited through the mobile phone of one of the two individuals. FD questioned the two individuals and established that both were carrying out the electrofishing work on behalf of AECOM, one had limited experience of the use of the equipment and no SFCC qualifications and the other was an engineering student with no experience of electrofishing. It was FD's opinion that the survey had been carried out improperly by a lack of qualified staff, with no intimation to either Board or Fishery Trust of the intention to carry out the electrofishing survey, which was a necessary legal requirement. Previous electrofishing survey work carried out by the Nith management team had

established the presence of salmon, sea trout and other species of fish. The matter had been raised by FD with AECOM and he had spoken to AECOM's Head of Freshwater department. FD had produced a report and sent it to Marine Directorate and FMS. He had within the last few days received a letter from East Ayrshire Planning Department to ask if he was satisfied with the results of the electrofishing survey carried out by AECOM's team and he advised that he had replied by letter to the effect that on the Board's behalf he was not. FD stated that he awaited developments. There was support expressed for the actions that FD had taken in light of what had happened.

12. AOCB

FD reported that the Board's Toyota vehicle is approaching three years old next year and it has been practice over the last few years to renew the vehicle after the elapse of three years. If the Board agreed that the vehicle renewal practice should continue then FD would have to order the new vehicle very soon as there is an estimated six-month timeframe between order and delivery. It was unanimously agreed to replace the vehicle.

FD stated that a kitchen had been fitted as per the approval in January's Board meeting.

FD reported that the security system at the hatchery office and building had been upgraded, given the amount and value of the equipment owned by the Board.

It was noted that Richard Gladwin had stated to FD in recent months that he would be resigning his Board member position on the Board. The Clerk stated the Board could consider a replacement upper proprietor Board member to fill the position left by Richard Gladwin and if any Board member was aware of such a proprietor who might fill the position. The Clerk stated that it was unfortunate that Richard Gladwin was leaving, given his membership of the finance sub-committee. It would have been very helpful for him to have been available to deal with analysis of the Board's financial year and annual budget for 2026 as his presentation in both in January 2025 had been very helpful to Board members. The Clerk stated that it would be useful to have a suitable Board member replacement onto the finance sub-committee, so that work could start on the Board's financial year end, projected expenditure for 2026 and proposed rate in the Pound recommendations to take to Board members at the next meeting. Mike Keggans stated that there were matters raised by the finance sub-committee that remained outstanding and not yet settled at Board level. An example of this was authorised expenditure levels for FD, for approval by either finance sub-committee or the full Board. The Chairman stated that while some discretion on expenditure could be expected for FD, it was better for the Board to make decisions on expenditure on a request basis. There was no further need for the finance sub-committee. After discussion, it was decided that The Board's financial year end performance and draft budget could be considered at the January 2026 Board meeting.

The Clerk was instructed to write to Richard Gladwin to ask that he confirm in writing that he had resigned from the Board.

Tom Brown reported on the planning application for an upgrade of a sewage treatment system in Glencaple which discharges straight into the river.

The meeting closed.

Signed.....

Date.....

EPK Weatherall, Chairman