

# **TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD**

**Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at Cromwell park, Almondbank, on Tuesday, 9<sup>th</sup> January 2020.**

**Present:** David Brown (Co-optee)  
Simon Furniss (Upper Proprietor – Mandate for Burnbane)  
David Godfrey (Lower Proprietor – Mandate for Tay Salmon Fisheries Company)  
Steve Mannion (Co-optee)  
Iain McLaren (Convener and Upper Proprietor Mandate for Kinnaird Beat)  
Claire Mercer Nairne (Upper Proprietor)  
Jim Perrett (Vice Convener and Upper Proprietor Mandate for River Earn Improvement Association)  
Alastair Riddell (Upper Proprietor)

**In Attendance:** Inga MacGillivray – Clerk to the Board  
Dr. David Summers - Fisheries Director  
Nicki MacIntyre (SNH Representative)  
Callum McGregor (SEPA Representative)

Jim Lapsley

**Apologies:** Tom Monaghan (Co-optee)  
Cohn O’Dea (TGA rep)  
Councillor Andrew Parrott (Lower Proprietor Mandate for Perth & Kinross Council)  
Alec Stewart (Co-optee)  
Allister Wallace (Co-optee)

## **1. Welcome and Apologies**

The Convener welcomed all to the meeting, introducing CMcG as Brian Roxburgh’s replacement and JL who would be giving a stocking presentation. IMacG then read out the apologies.

## **2. Declaration of Interest**

There were no new declarations of interest

## **3. Minutes from Meeting held 29<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

The Minutes were then taken as being read, agreed unanimously and signed by the Convener.

## **4. Matters Arising**

### **Stuart Middlemass Presentation**

**ACTION: IMacG to email Stuart Middlemass with the view to having him attend February 2020 meeting.**

### **TDSFB Email Addresses**

**ACTION: DS to update staff email addresses w/c 13/01/2020**

### **Luncarty Weir**

**ACTION: DS to contact landowner regarding proposed work on Battleby Dam with the view to getting proposals into SEPA for their consideration.**

#### Water Abstraction – Ericht Fish Farm Intake Footage

DS explained that he had completed the filming work and analysis which had been forwarded to SEPA for comment, and that the final report would be issued to all parties ASAP. He noted that smolts did not appear to like being at the smolt screen or the bypass pipes.

DG suggested installing a smolt screen in a different place, but the Convener stated this would involve considerable cost. DS reminded the attendees that the Board held an advisory role only in this matter and that it was only SEPA that had power to compel action.

DG asked who owned the part of the river affected to which DS replied that nobody took ownership of the weir, and CMcG concurred this was problematic. DS explained he saw this as a first step and that we would continue to monitor and advise SEPA to improve the situation.

To move things forward, DS stated he would continue to film smolt behaviour and would extend filming to below the weir. DG asked if smolts could be trapped and trucked, to which DS replied that a minor modification in the by-wash weir would make a huge difference and would negate the need to trap and truck.

**ACTION: DS to continue to monitor the Ericht Fish Farm situation and report to Board.**

#### Water Abstraction – Lochay

IMacG explained that AS had sent an update to the situation.

**ACTION: IMacG to send out AS update and also C&R leaflets to ALL.**

#### Hatchery – Tanks

DS explained he had met Antje Branding at a recent conference and had raised the stocking policy issue, to which she had replied that there was to be some potential rethink on the policy and a consultation in the near future. The Convener mentioned the petition started by Bob White and IMacG handed it round. SM added that he had spoken to Murdo Fraser MSP regarding the subject. He asked that the petition be visible at Opening Day and there was a general feeling of consent for this action.

**ACTION: IMacG to ensure stocking petition is taken to Opening Day**

DS added that he had invited Antje Branding to come to the hatchery and had been fairly positively received but she was still rather busy, having only recently taken up her post.

SM asked about the Board's commitment to NASCO, to which DS replied that the Scottish Government is committed to it, currently via the EU.

#### TDSFB Potential Projects for 2020

IMacG stated she had only received a couple of project suggestions from Board members for 2020.

**ACTION: IMacG to encourage Board members to submit project ideas.**

DG stated we needed a statement of how projects were going to be achieved and how financed, to which DS replied the Annual Report gave a summary of how projects were achieved, but he would do this.

### **3. Minutes from Finance Sub Committee meeting held 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019**

The Convener pointed out that IMacG and DS had still not received their copy of the Finance Sub Committee report from the FSC, to which AR replied he would speak to the Convener in private about the matter.

**ACTION: The Convener/AR to resolve issue of report to go to IMacG & DS.**

The Convener stated that he personally thought the Minutes recorded by AR were rather “rose tinted” as the meeting had been difficult, with strong views from both sides and asked for the views of others. SM disagreed with this view. The Convener stated he was not criticising the Minutes, but merely voicing his opinion.

The Convener stated he thought the exercise had been worthwhile but asked that IMacG make recommendations regarding financial possibilities.

**ACTION: IMacG to put forward ideas regarding saving costs/generating income.**

AR asked how the financial review should be taken forward, and the Convener replied that the Board should take the positives from the report.

SM stated that the report had documented a certain point in time and had originally set out to find reductions in cost, but had found that the operation was well run and slimmed down so there were very few cost savings to be made.

The Convener stated that certain members of the Board felt they did not know what DS did, and that DS had now documented his work and circulated. SM thought it was important to engage with the Tay Rivers Trust.

The Minutes from both the Finance Sub Group and the Board meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> December 2019 were both agreed and signed by the Convener.

#### **5. Financial Summary and road/TRT potential purchase of site update**

IMacG gave an update on the road purchase by TRT as well as a brief financial summary.

There were various questions from the floor and IMacG/the Convener explained that the whole site was to be bought by the TRT and they would be the TDSFB’s new landlord. They confirmed the TDSFB had sought guidance from consultants regarding the roadworks. The lease between the TDSFB and TRT would be run past the Board.

IMacG asked who would pay for the 2020 smolt tagging project – cost of £7,500. DG suggested crowd funding. DS suggested the need to engage with the TRT and work out the roles of the organisations. A glossy annual report could then be produced for perhaps TRT which could be used as a funding tool.

**ACTION: DS/IMacG to ask Marine Scotland for funds for smolt tags**

**ACTION: IMacG to ask TRT/TGA for smolt tag funding once MS replies**

**ACTION: IMacG/CMN/DG/IMacL to form budget committee and report at next meeting**

**ACTION: IMacG to forward draft budget and potential cost savings/income generators to budget committee.**

#### **6. Marine Scotland Stocking Policy and Hatchery Update**

DS explained that due to the recent Marine Scotland policy, the Board’s activities had been curtailed, as MS stated that only restoration or mitigation stocking would be possible, and from the Board’s perspective the Garry was the only area which qualified within the Tay SAC area. DS had appealed the decision but had not been successful. He had also spoken to Antje Branding who had stated there would be some review of the policy. DS had invited Antje to visit the Tay Catchment but got the impression she was very busy and this may not be the highest on her list of priorities.

SF mentioned that the Ness board had met with the Scottish Parliament, and DS replied that he had given a presentation at that very meeting and that the Ness had been represented in the audience.

The convener stated that the policy had a lasting effect on hatchery operations and that the Board should decide what to do with the tanks purchased last year. ALL agreed the tanks should be transported to the hatchery ready for plumbing in.

**ACTION: IMacG to arrange for tanks to be delivered to the hatchery from Inverurie.**

AR asked where we sat currently with broodstock and eggs, to which DS replied that MS issue the licence for broodstock collection and the Board was the legal body responsible for authorising stocking in the district. The Board is required to produce a Habitats Regulations Appraisal as part of their stocking responsibility within the Tay SAC. Last year a Marine Scotland representative had said he hoped boards would follow the policy otherwise along the line, at some point, the Scottish Government could remove boards' powers over stocking.

AR then asked if Lyon could be stocked, to which DS replied this would be impossible under the new policy as the Lyon was neither mitigation nor restoration stocking.

There was some discussion surrounding the need for Boards to be responsible when stocking the pros and cons of stocking different life stages. DS cited a monitored case on the Spey where the number of smolts ultimately produced by stocking parr was controlled by the available habitat. The Convener pointed out that in Icelandic rivers where smolts are stocked they have virtually no habitat to rear wild fish, but evidence indicated this would not work nearly as well in Scotland. He cited the time he was involved in a smolt ranching exercise in Scotland which was exceedingly costly with very limited results. DS cited the case of smolt ranching on the Lochy which had been stopped recently.

### **7. H & S Report**

DS reported no reportable incidents or near misses since the last Board meeting.

### **8. Update on 2019 Projects and Review of Priorities 2020**

This had previously been covered.

**ACTION: IMacG to email ALL for their 2020 priorities. ALL to respond to email.**

### **9. Dates for 2020 Meetings**

The following dates were agreed:

Tues, 11<sup>th</sup> February 2020 10am Hatchery

Wednesday, 18<sup>th</sup> March Open Meeting at Birnam Centre 7pm

Tues, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2020 10am Hatchery

Tues, 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020 10am Hatchery

Tues, 27<sup>th</sup> October 2020 10am Hatchery

Tues, 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 9:30am Birnam Centre followed by AGM 11am

As an aside, SM asked if the convener would sign a letter to Bill Robbins of the Finance sub committee

**ACTION: SM to draft thankyou letter to Bill Robbins for the convener to sign**

### **10. Stocking Presentation by Jimmy Lapsley**

JL stated he believed smolt stocking worked and cited the case of the Dee which he believed had been devoid of fish until smolt stocking was introduced. The Convener stated that smolts had never been released on the Dee as far as he was aware but here had been two hatcheries in existence at one point. DS stated that the Mid Dee Group closed down their parr rearing hatchery due to excessive parr mortality and this had been the subject of a detailed report at the time. He concluded that the number of fish in the Dee had nothing to do with smolt stocking.

JL then cited the case of the Braan which he believed had been successful and the Convener stated there had been work which had proven spring fish could be created in areas where salmon don't normally return. JL asked why smolts could not be stocked, to which the convener replied that this would not be allowed as the Braan had a waterfall and SNH policy prohibited stocking above natural barriers.

**ACTION: The Convener/DS to send Braan proposal to JL for information**

JL stated he thought the Board were a little unwilling to stock out smolts, to which DS replied that a lot of work regarding stocking had been done and indeed smolts had been stocked in the past but it had been proven to be uneconomical. There was also the added problem of the Scottish Government not favouring the stocking of smolts. The Convener displayed his frustration with the constraints being placed on the Board regarding hatchery production and SNH policy.

(SM & AR left the meeting)

JL stated that the Fishponds project could be viable and there was money to achieve it. There was some discussion surrounding various smolt ranching projects, none of which had ended up doing well. There followed another discussion surrounding fish migration patterns with DS stating he was interested in the Ness where fish appeared to be spawning in December, which must have come in no later than August. He wondered if fish were coming in earlier than before. CMN commented that the kelts she saw were now very red when they used to be silver.

JL asked if Government policy changed to allow smolt stocking would the Board support the project. DS and the convener replied they could see no reason why not but would not be able to fund. DG asked why JL would use Fishponds when the hatchery would be a far better alternative. He had looked at the figures and it would be a six figure sum to set up and about £100k pa to keep running – he questioned its worth.

## **11. AOB**

### **Pollution**

SF asked CMcG what was being done about the pollution in the Garry and Shochie burn, to which CMcG replied the investigation was ongoing and was complicated but there had been a previous prosecution.

### **Opening Day**

CMN reminded the Board about opening day at Meikleour on 15<sup>th</sup> January 2020.

There were no further items, and the Convener thanked the Board for attending, and closed the meeting at 1pm.