

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Hatchery, Almondbank on Tuesday 2nd June 2015.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
Simon Furniss
David Godfrey
Claire Mercer Nairne
Alastair Riddell
Steve Mannion
John Apthorp
John Wood

In Attendance: Dr. David Summers – Fisheries Director
Inga McGown - Clerk
Nicky MacIntyre

Apologies: Jack Coburn
Eric Starke
Brian Roxburgh
Iain McLaren
David Brown
Mike Brown

2 members of the public were also present

Declaration of Interests:

There were no new declarations of interests.

Minutes of Board Meeting of 14th April 2015:

The Minutes were taken as read, approved unanimously and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Horseshoe Weir:

DS explained that he had spoken to Ian Fullerton regarding this issue, as the weir had been getting steadily worse. IF had agreed to look at the weir and would liaise with DS once he had ascertained the extent of the damage. It was understood that Kestral (the company managing the hydro) is now responsible for the operation and maintenance of the lade.

ACTION: DS to liaise with Ian Fullerton with a view to repairing over the summer.

Website:

There was a general discussion surrounding the Board website and the fact it would benefit from some regular updating. DS pointed out that it was very time consuming to update the website on a weekly basis, and that there was nobody on the payroll with the time to commit to the task. Furthermore, contracting the work out would cost far more than we pay Bob White at present.

SM suggested we needed to clarify what we want from the website, which will then determine the work required. CMN offered her assistance on web design and set up.

ACTION: DS and CMN to liaise regarding the website with a view to updating it and providing links.

Fishpal:

The Chairman and DS gave a brief history of our involvement with Fishpal, stating that we first agreed to pay around £22k, which has now been reduced to just over £6k. Eventually, this will go down to a zero contribution over time.

ACTION: The Chairman/JW to have a discussion surrounding Fishpal payments, and the Chairman to then discuss with Fishpal with the view to reducing payments to zero.

Carcass Tagging:

To be discussed later in the meeting.

Review of Board Priorities:

To be discussed later in the meeting.

Stormont Angling Club:

ACTION: DB to ascertain the position regarding the cost and size of beat before reporting back to the Board

Financial Report:

Cash Account to 26th May 2015:

As at 26th May 2015, the Accounts are showing an increase of £165,539, as the Assessment payments take effect. The overall bank balance stands at a healthy £461,061, of which £150,000 is being invested to generate further income.

Income

Over 70% of the Assessments have now been paid, and a reminder letter will be sent out in the next couple of months. There is still £10,470.50 awaiting collection from 2014 assessments, and another reminder has been sent.

JA enquired as to who the main non payers were, and IMcG supplied the necessary information.

As stated last meeting, there is additional income of £3,300, being consultancy work carried out for SSE.

We are actively looking to rent out our old office building, and have had a couple of enquiries, which we are pursuing.

Expenditure

There is a potential £10k saving on salaries, due to our Operations Manager departing, which has not been included in the latest forecast, as we are currently awaiting the findings of the Board priorities subcommittee, which will determine salary costs.

We have still not received a rent invoice for £64k to end of 2014 from the Government, but have made a provision in the Statutory Accounts, and will do so for 2015 cost (£18.5k).

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £11,988, of which £9,998 is salary related.

Overall, the forecast is showing a slight deficit of £945 against budget, with the increased consultancy income being more than cancelled out by the increased training budget.

Health & Safety Report:

DS stated that there had been no health and safety issues reported since the last Board meeting.

Wild Fisheries Review Update:

DS explained the situation, stating that Scottish Ministers had now issued their response to the Wild Fisheries Review document produced last year by Andrew Thin, and were consulting on a number of points raised. However, not much had changed from Andrew Thin's report, except for two main areas, the first being that Thin had suggested a law against "reckless fishing", but the Government had deemed this too difficult to enforce. The second area was where Thin had suggested the Protection Orders be streamlined, whereas the Government would like to see the Protection Order system ended.

DS went on to explain that a central Government unit would be in charge of the levy, which would be collected by Government. The Fisheries Boards as they are now would cease to exist under the new system, being replaced by Fisheries Management Organisations (FMOs). These would cover all species and would possibly have charitable status. The FMOs would be tested to see that they were suitable for purpose before receiving funding.

Funding would see a marked change, as the central Government unit would provide funding only for core activities. If our FMO core activities agreed with the Government's, then funding would be a non-issue. However, should our objectives differ from the central unit, the levy would require to be increased so as to fund our objectives.

DS went on to explain the type of things the Government may want to see, and had previously circulated the Marine Scotland report on juvenile electrofishing surveys, which he thought may give a useful insight into the kind of work required. Certainly, the FMO may be required to carry out more survey work and, that being the case, we would need to change the emphasis on where our funds are spent.

The Chairman asked who needed to respond to the response consultation - anglers, the Board or the ASFB? DS replied all three, and that the views would be required soon as the deadline is the 7th August.

There followed a short discussion surrounding our proposed response, and the following action points were noted.

ACTION: DS to formulate and circulate a response by the end of June and circulate to the Board.

ACTION: ALL to review the response and pass comments back to DS by end July. (Please note, a meeting may be called if required as the response date is 7th August and next Board meeting occurs on 11th August)

SM asked whether the WFR included still water fisheries such as Lake of Mentieth, to which DS replied that Andrew Thin had been asked the same question on commencement of the WFR and Andrew Thin had not known whether they were included or not. DS went on to say that the consultation stated that wild fisheries referred to all freshwater fisheries including stillwater fisheries, therefore he assumed that it must.

Carcass Tagging Update:

DS explained that the subcommittee set up at the last meeting and including himself, CMN, SF and IMaCL had met and were agreed that the carcass tagging proposal was unworkable in its present form. The subcommittee had circulated their response to this effect to the Board, and after review, had sent to the Government.

Basically, as DS explained, the proposed system was unworkable and would almost certainly give rise to a disincentive to anglers and club fishing. He went on to say that in actual fact the Government already has powers at their disposal to prevent the killing of salmon, and that carcass tagging was unnecessary in the view of the Board.

In actual fact, one main issue behind this whole process is that Scotland does not have a formal system for ascertaining whether or not there is a problem with salmon stocks. Work on establishing such a system is distinct from what you do if a problem is identified. Licensing and quotas is one method of tackling problems but so is the fact that the Government already has laws at its disposal whereby it can control the killing of salmon, with

reducing season length and reducing netting effort being examples it has used in the recent past.

DS went on to say that the proposed method of distributing tags to proprietors may be unworkable in many cases, particularly those with non-ghillied beats. He suggested the Irish system may work better, with tags distributed to anglers and not proprietors. However, the consultation is now closed and DS has not heard any update on the matter.

JA enquired when the deadline for implementation would likely be, to which DS replied that the proposal would have to be put through very soon if there was any hope of it coming into force next year.

Review of Board priorities:

DS informed the Board that the subcommittee comprising himself, AR, JW and IMcL had met twice and scrutinised the list of priorities. A summary of their recommendations had been circulated prior to the meeting, and indeed the main issue appeared to be lack of human resource. The subcommittee had come to the view that the departure of the Operations Manager had given rise to an opportunity to revisit the workload.

DS went on to state that the subcommittee proposed replacing the Operation Manager's role with a Biologist/Head Bailiff role, which has worked very well for smaller boards in Northern Scotland. This would mean that studies and electrofishing work, which in the past had been difficult to timetable, could be coordinated by the new employee. He also informed the Board that the current bailiff roles could be expanded into a more multipurpose role, rather than purely policing and enforcing, something which the bailiffs had all assured him they would be in agreement with.

In line with this, DS stated that the bailiffs should perhaps adopt a different job title, perhaps "fisheries officers", and that they would be more involved in projects, giving the Board more flexibility and a greater capacity to fulfil its objectives.

AR had produced a job description which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

The question about employing somebody new in such a changing and uncertain climate came up, but the consensus was that the Board should perhaps highlight the situation, although it was up to the individual to take the decision.

All agreed the new Operations Manager post and expansion of bailiffing duties were sensible outcomes to meet the Board's priorities.

ACTION: DS to meet with bailiffs and Hatchery Manager to inform them of the changes and gather response.

ACTION: DS/IMcG to finalise job description, and advertise.

The Chairman wondered whether the smolt tagging project could then go ahead, to which DS replied it could if we got the right candidate, and he could certainly start putting the ball in motion immediately.

ACTION: DS to see Marine Scotland and start moving the project forward.

DS then delivered his Director's report, which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

AOB:

SM complimented DS on all his hard work, a sentiment which was shared by the other Board members.

Parabolic Filter:

SF asked whether the parabolic filter which had been purchased by the TGA could be utilised in the hatchery, to which DS replied he would ask the Hatchery Manager.

ACTION: DS to ask Hatchery Manager whether the filter could be utilised.

TGA funding:

SF informed the Board that the TGA had donated £5k from their successful calendar sales towards funding the purchase of bailiff equipment including night sights, trailcams and video equipment.

Bailiff Update:

IMcG informed the Board that after a recent team meeting, the bailiffs had voiced that they would like the Board to know more about their workload. The Board agreed to this.

ACTION: DS to include bailiff update in his Director's report.

No Other Business was brought up and the Chairman closed the meeting.