

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Birnam Institute, Station Road, Birnam on Tuesday, 8th December 2015.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
Simon Furniss
David Godfrey
Claire Mercer Nairne
Gavin Clark
Alastair Munro
David Brown
Mike Brown
Steve Mannion
Iain McLaren
Alastair Riddell
John Wood

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

Apologies: Eric Starke
Brian Roxburgh
John Apthorp

Declaration of Interests:

There were no new declaration of interests.

Minutes of Board Meeting of 20th October 2015:

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

Matters Arising:

Horseshoe Weir:

DS explained that the situation was no further forward regarding this. DG stated that in his view the work would cost around £7,000, although this could of course change once the full extent of the damage had been ascertained.

ACTION: DS/IMcG to gain two further quotes for the necessary works.
ACTION: DG to provide written quote for the works.

Website:

CMN and DS had met and agreed a structure for the website, and there was now content to be input.

ACTION: CMN to ensure DS/IMcG have access to enter content.

Parabolic Filter:

ACTION: DS/SK to put on sale prior to next meeting.

Health & Safety Report:

DS stated that he had instructed a Health & Safety audit company to commence a review of the Board's Health & Safety policy.

The Chairman then announced to the Board that the Operations Manager position had now been filled by Mike Brown, who was due to start in February 2016, and his role would include biologist, hatchery and bailiffing duties.

Financial Report:

Cash Account to 20th November 2015:

As at 20th November 2015, the Cash Account was showing an increase of £59,577. The overall bank balance stands at a healthy £377,895.

Income

Over 88% of the Assessments have now been paid, with the remainder being chased.

We are now close to securing a tenant for our unused building and it is hoped they will move in sometime in the new year. As it stands, they will pay £8,500 rent with an additional £2k for road maintenance per annum. This has yet to be formally agreed but the proposed new tenants have agreed verbally and are keen to move.

Expenditure

There is a potential saving of £7,500 on salaries, arising from our Operations Manager departing earlier in the year, and the delay in finding a suitable replacement.

Staff training has now ceased for the year, and therefore actual and forecast remain the same at £4,550.

There looks to be a saving of around £5k on vehicles budget, mainly because our vehicles are now relatively new and require little maintenance.

As reported last time, 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 £25,028, of which £19,108 is salary related.

Although as stated last time, our capital forecast is up due to the purchase of the new pickup, we have now finished paying for the three vehicles we purchased three years ago.

Overall, the forecast is showing a slight surplus of £4,633 against budget.

Health & Safety Report:

DS stated that no accidents had been reported under RIDDOR since the last Board meeting.

As mentioned under Matters Arising, since three years had passed since the last review, Greens of Haddington had been appointed to carry out a review of the Board's H & S policy.

ACTION: DS/IMcG to liaise with Greens of Haddington.

Wild Fisheries Review:

DS explained to the Board that he, the Chairman and JW had attended the ASFB AGM a few weeks previously and that Andrew Henderson and Alan Wells had given a presentation regarding the WFR. (Andrew Henderson had taken over as team leader to the Government WFR team in July, but was now about to leave the department.) The subject of redistribution of finance had arisen, and it now appears that the Government understands that there is no spare money to carry out any redistribution. They still hope to put out a consultation on a draft Bill in February 2016, but it would seem this is more likely to be more of a general consultation rather than going into specifics.

“Kill Licence”:

DS explained the situation with the Eden and the Earn in the Tay district. Marine Scotland had classified these two rivers as “category 3” which meant that from 2016 Marine Scotland proposed that “conservation plans” would have to be produced for them and would have to have mandatory catch and release for the full season. The Tay itself and its tributaries were in category 1 and this meant there need be no change to the present conservation policy. IMacL asked when the Government were likely to make a final decision on this, to which DS replied that, since Catch & Release is now compulsory to the end of March, the required Scottish Statutory Instrument might in theory not need to be laid in the Scottish Parliament until after the start of the 2016 season in January.

DS explained that the methods used to arrive at these categories works against lowland rivers with back end runs, such as the Eden and the Earn. The benchmark egg deposition level to which they are compared is partly based on inherently more productive upland rivers such as the North Esk. These rivers might rarely ever reach the inappropriate target therefore. Droughts in recent years had also impacted on catches in those two rivers in recent years and the method used in the model to try to accommodate for this was again perhaps not appropriate for smaller rivers with an absence of spring and summer salmon runs. Also, if catches are not reported correctly, then this compounds the problem.

A response to a Government consultation had been sent in. This was supportive of the overall approach to conservation being taken and especially the change of heart regarding carcass tagging for angler caught fish. However, it stressed that we had major concerns over the categorisation methodology and that the results published for the Earn and Eden might in fact be wrong. Implementation should be delayed until the methodology was refined.

He went on to say that there was very considerable concern amongst Earn and Eden interests over these proposals and that the River Earn Improvement Association had put in a lot of effort to raise awareness of the situation and had indeed arranged meetings with Liz Smith MSP and Roseanna Cunningham MSP (who had also invited officials from Marine Scotland along to the meeting). He particularly wished to highlight the efforts of the Association's secretary Tom Monaghan in this regard.

Garry Update:

DS updated the Board by saying that according to the EU Water Framework Directive, water should be restored to the Garry by the end of this month, but this is clearly not going to happen.

JW enquired whether the Government would be penalised for failing to deliver, and is there a case for us taking this further with the EU.

DS replied that he was aware that discussions were taking place between the various interested parties to try to make progress. This included ongoing discussion between himself and SSE to see if a mutually agreeable plan could be formulated. SEPA were due to publish the second Scotland River Basin Management Plan under the Water Framework Directive on 22nd December 2015. This would determine SEPA's priorities going forward and was awaited. SM suggested lobbying local MSPs in order to get our point across regarding the seeming lack of progress and CMN suggested using media publicity to highlight the issue.

ACTION: DS/Chairman to prepare briefing to be communicated to local politicians to highlight lack of progress with the Garry.

AOB:

Future Meeting Dates:

IMcG asked what the dates for 2016 were.

ACTION: IMcG to agree dates with Chairman and DS before circulating to Board

Staff Wage Increases:

IMcG asked whether the Board could agree on the staff wage increase for the forthcoming year – JW had suggested a rise in line with the Agricultural Staff increase

ACTION: The Chairman to get back to IMcG with figure.

No Other Business was brought up and the Chairman closed the meeting, requesting that DS, IMcG and Mike Brown leave the room so the Board could conduct a private meeting.