

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board Offices, Cromwellpark, Almondbank, on Tuesday, 17th October 2017.

Present: William Jack (Chairman – attended partially)
Iain McLaren
Claire Mercer Nairne
David Brown
Simon Furniss
Geoff Coates
John Wood
Alastair Riddell
Steve Mannion
David Godfrey
Bob Band (P&K Council rep.)
Cohn O’Dea (TGA rep)
Nicki MacIntyre (SNH)

In Attendance: Inga McGown - Clerk
Dr. David Summers – Fisheries Director
1 member of the public

Apologies: Brian Roxburgh

Declaration of Interests:

There were no new declaration of interests.

ACTION: IMcG to email declaration form to all Board members who have not already renewed their details.

Chairman/Election

The Chairman informed the Board that it was his intention to stand down as Chair from this meeting onwards, but due to a minor technicality he would officially chair the December meeting and stand down formally at that time. In the meantime, he suggested IMcL should take over as Prospective Chairman, which ALL unanimously agreed to. He then intimated that it would be a good idea for IMcL to chair the meeting, to which ALL unanimously agreed.

(SF entered meeting)

He then thanked all Board members for their support during his Chairmanship, and left the room.

(IMcL entered the meeting as Prospective Chairman)

Minutes of Board Meeting of 8th August 2017:

The Minutes were agreed unanimously and were signed by the Prospective Chairman.

The Prospective Chairman then welcomed BB, the new P&K Council Representative to the meeting.

Matters Arising:

John Athorp Presentation:

IMcG stated that a gift had now been sourced and was awaiting its arrival. She would then arrange the presentation.

Bailiff Update:

DS explained that a new bailiff had now been appointed, and gave details of his employment history and credentials. SF added that he had worked with the new bailiff the previous day and had been very impressed by his professionalism and work ethic.

Road Repairs:

IMcG explained that she had a quote which she believed to be reasonable, and that she was in talks with the owner of Site 5 regarding sharing the costs. They were pursuing a usage based apportionment, which was yet to be finalised, but she hoped it would be agreed soon.

ACTION: IMcG to agree split of costs with Unit 5, and proceed with work.

Financial Report:

IMcG stated she would update on the assessor situation in the financial section.

Biosecurity and maintaining river system:

ACTION: DS to investigate biosecurity measures for the Tay for next season

Financial Report:

Cash Account to 10th October 2017:

As at 10th October 2017, the Cash Account showed a slight deficit of £3,868, and the overall bank balance stood at a healthy £403,749, with £100,000 of this being invested.

Income

To date, 55% of 2017 assessments have been paid. Reminders will be sent shortly. The forecast and budget still stand at 7.5% of total for appeals, which equates to just over £38k. IMcG explained that the assessor had indicated that he had offered the Eden and Earn a 20% reduction in their 2016 levy to account for their category 3 status, which would equate to around £7k. Unfortunately, one proprietor had not agreed to this, and therefore the decision would be delayed until 14th December.

As to the appeals placed which did not relate to Category 3, the assessor had sent IMcG a list, and she intimated to the board that the cost of the appeals would be in the region of £33k were the assessor to grant a 20% discount on all (which would be worst case scenario). All things being equal and if the same amount of funds were required for 2018, this would equate to a 6-7% increase in levies for 2018. IMcG explained that she would work on the budget when she had received confirmation from the assessor of the appeals, as there was little point carrying out such work until the rateable values were certain.

In the meantime, the budget and forecast figure of £38k would cover most of the shortfall should the 20% be agreed for the Rivers Eden and Earn, and the worst case scenario of 20% reduction for all appeals registered separately.

Expenditure

There will be a slight saving of around £4k due to the additional bailiff starting later in the year than anticipated.

Again, there should be a small saving of around £2k in road repairs, but there may be slightly more of a saving once negotiations with Unit 5 have been finalised.

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £21,080, of which £17,589 is salary related.

Health & Safety Report:

DS noted that there had been no reportable H&S incidents since the last meeting.

Bailiff & Staffing Update:

The bailiff appointment was covered under Matters Arising. It was noted that the Operations Manager has now moved to within a ten mile radius of the hatchery.

Lack of Grilse:

DS stated that FMS had sent out a brief, which ALL had been emailed prior to the meeting, and that this issue was bigger than that of pink salmon. He went on to explain that there had been some rumours that a couple of rivers in the north had done not badly this season, but by and large most rivers in Scotland had seen a diabolical season. The Pitlochry counter had effectively flatlined over the summer and into the back end.

Historically, during the 20s to the 50s, there had also been few grilse and autumn fish, but the spring salmon run had tended to be strong during this period.

JW asked what the grilse situation was in Norway and Iceland, to which DS noted it had been down earlier in the year. DB stated that Norway's catches had been really poor and that there had been few silver fish from July onwards.

DG asked what the main issues were, to which DS replied it was largely a marine issue. DG asked whether the river was producing enough juveniles, to which DS replied that juvenile surveys had been carried out, and numbers were generally comparable with previous years. He had noticed about 3-4 years previously that there had been very few fry in the very

uppermost reaches of the River Almond, and there had not been many last year, but this year there had been better numbers of fry at all sites, but few parr.

DS explained that if there are poor marine survival rates, vulnerable areas will lose fish, but fish will still be produced in prime areas. The Chairman stated that it was the role of the board to ensure the river naturally produced as many smolts as possible.

DB suggested that predators were not helping the situation, as they are not “controlled” now as they were many years ago.

River Garry Update:

DS reported that the contractor, AMCO had now completed work on the main Garry intake, and that flow was now being released. At the Glas Choire intake, work is progressing and should be finished soon. The full amount of flow cannot be released until this site is fully commissioned.

He went on to explain that the Operations Manager had conducted some electrofishing surveys in the area and had been encouraged by the amount of flow coming down. In addition, DS agreed with SEPA and SSE over the adaptive management plan, which may have to be tweaked over the coming years.

The big question was whether wild salmon could get over some falls with the flow available and spawn successfully, and DS explained that the bailiffs had been up to monitor the situation, but the water was too high to see anything. However, they would be back to monitor the redd situation later in the year. They have seen fish below the falls, and juvenile surveys will be conducted in various sites for monitoring purposes.

DS explained that he had agreed with SEPA that we should continue to stock the Garry, but that the stocked fish should be identifiable from the wild spawned fish. To this end, a project would be set up to genetically fingerprint the hatchery bred fish, so they would be identifiable from the wild spawned ones. This type of thing has been done before by the Spey Board, and so the technology is tried and tested. However, DS explained there would be a significant cost associated (around £10k), but SSE have indicated they may be willing to contribute too. DS stressed that unless this work was carried out, SEPA might be reluctant to see stocking going ahead.

DS then explained that on 30th October, Roseanna Cunningham MSP will officially open the River Garry, with an official press conference at the Pitlochry Visitor Centre, followed by the opening at the intake.

Fisheries Management Scotland:

DS explained that FMS were aiming to become a company limited by guarantee, and that the details had been emailed to the Board prior to the meeting. He went on to state that he had been elected onto the FMS board, and that should anyone have any comments on FMS becoming a company limited by guarantee, they should forward them to himself.

Hatchery Update:

DS thanked the TGA for the funding which had been used to purchase electrofishing equipment. He explained that catching broodstock in any sufficient quantity had been an issue for the hatchery, and the decision had been made to deploy two teams this year. The fishing had started the previous day with 5 fish caught, but the process is hampered by bad weather, and a further 80 fish are required.

The Chairman stated that he had attended the training day and had been impressed by the enthusiasm shown by the volunteers

River Lyon:

DS reminded the Board that AR had asked for these items to be included in this meeting, and they were twofold.

Firstly, with regard to the Lyon Genetic Program, the Operations Manager had now collected all the samples and then went on to briefly explain the project. The UHI will process the samples over the winter, funded jointly by the Tay Foundation and Lyon proprietors, with manual help given by the Board.

Secondly, DS explained the situation at Stronuich dam with regards to the counter there. Originally, it had been sited below the dam, but there was evidence to suggest some fish may not have made it over the dam, rendering the counter data less valuable. The counter was then moved by SSE into the fish pass on the dam, but it had never worked properly there due perhaps to weather conditions. DS has raised the issue with SSE. They have agreed to discuss over the winter.

AR stated that there was to be a Lyon proprietors meeting on 26th October at 5pm in Fortingall Village Hall regarding the Lyon Genetic Program and that he wished DS, the Chairman and the Operations Manager to attend.

ACTION: DS to look into possibility of moving the counter at Stronuich dam in the near future.

AOB:

River Braan

SF explained that a significant number of fish could be produced in a tributary of the Braan if the fish passage was opened at the Hermitage and again at Rumbling Bridge. He stated that potential funding could come from the Griffin Windfarm.

The Chairman agreed that the board should be doing its utmost to get more smolts out to sea, but that this project could run into problems with SNH, and indeed NMCI stated it was unlikely the project would get the go ahead from SNH.

DG argued that this was about removing barriers, and not stocking above waterfalls. SM stated that a few fish do manage to get above the falls but far more are killed in the process, and that he would welcome this initiative, but could foresee problems with National Trust. SF stated that a fish pass was not necessary, but if the top of one rock was taken off, this would remove a barrier.

DS said he believed opening the Hermitage site and indeed Rumbling Bridge would be technically feasible, but that such proposals might not necessarily be viewed favourably by

the National Trust for Scotland, the Forestry Commission or other landowners. Such a project would require strong local support if it was to have any chance of success. He suggested that in the first instance the best idea might be to contact John Swinney MSP to see whether he might be supportive of such an idea in principle and take things from there.

The Chairman suggested trapping the fish and manually transporting them above the falls, to which NMCI stated that SNH would probably oppose this action.

ACTION: NMCI to ask whether transporting the fish would be a possibility.

SF proposed the board take this on as a project and CMN seconded.

ACTION: DS to approach John Swinney to ascertain his view on such a project.

Beavers Update

NMCI explained that the situation regarding beavers was the same as before, but SNH were awaiting the draft Parliamentary Order to give beavers formal protection. This was anticipated to be in place in the spring.

CMN pointed out that beavers had the capacity to cause thousands of pounds worth of damage, and this could ultimately affect the rateable value of a beat.

There were no further items, and the Chairman thanked the Board for attending, and closed the meeting.