

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, 18th April 2017.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
Geoff Coates
John Wood
Alastair Riddell
David Godfrey
Iain McLaren
Claire Mercer Nairne
David Brown
Colin McFadyen (TGA rep)

In Attendance: Inga McGown - Clerk
Dr. David Summers – Fisheries Director
Nicki MacIntyre (SNH)
1 member of the public

Apologies: Alastair Munro
Brian Roxburgh
John Apthorp
Steve Mannion
Simon Furniss

Declaration of Interests:

There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of Board Meeting of 14th February 2017:

Matters Arising:

Health & Safety:

ACTION: IMcG to email copy of H&S manual to all Board members.

Bailiff Update:

DS explained that 4 people had expressed an interest in the bailiff job, but he did not feel any were suitable for the position. CMN suggested utilising social media, and GC suggested contacting colleges specialising in aquaculture. DG suggested using Fishpal, and also put forward another possible candidate.

ACTION: DS to post job description on social media and also contact colleges.
ACTION: DS to meet DG's suggested candidate.

Hatchery Update:

DS informed the Board that a meeting of the subcommittee that is reviewing the hatchery operation would take place directly after the Board meeting.

Board Meeting Dates:

The Chairman informed the board that there had been a discussion regarding changing the meeting dates, but it had been decided that this was not feasible, and they would therefore remain the same.

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

Financial Report – Budget 2017:

The Chairman opened the Budget presentation by stating that the recent revaluation process had seen most beats witness a significant increase in their rateable values. He explained that the appeals figure was historically set at 5% following a revaluation, but that this revaluation had seen 7 years pass instead of 5, and the values had risen fairly steeply. With this in mind, it had been decided a more prudent figure for the appeals would be 7.5%. All Board members agreed that this would be the most prudent approach.

IMcG went on to present the proposed budget. She explained that an assessment percentage of 46% would give a modest surplus of £2,714, with the overall percentage increase on beats of 25%. She then went through each line of the budget, explaining the figures. She explained that the pension and death in service premium had increased largely due to the new auto enrolment guidelines.

The road maintenance budget of £10k was queried, to which IMcG replied the top part of the road now required resurfacing, and there was some discussion to be had with a neighbour as to the split of costs between the two. She had contacted one contractor several times but had received no quote. DG suggested getting in touch with another contractor he had details of.

ACTION: IMcG to contact other contractor regarding road repairs.

CMN queried the Hatchery budget of £44,000, asking how many eggs were being produced for this sum. The Chairman stated that DS was conducting a review of the hatchery and this would give the Board options to consider.

The Chairman queried the rent and rates figure, to which IMcG replied she would get back to him.

ACTION: IMcG to get back to Chairman on rent and rates figure.

There were no other queries, and the Board approved the budget for 2017.

IMcG then went on to present the cash account, as follows:

Cash Account to 7th April 2017:

As at 7th April 2017, the Cash Account showed a deficit of £103,747, which is normal for this time of year before the assessment payments are received. The overall bank balance stands at a healthy £304,573k, with £100,000 of this being invested.

Income

In this first quarter, income from last year's assessment stands at £10,123, with the non payers still being chased.

There is additional consultancy work due to Almondbank works being carried out. To date, this accounts for £1,500 of the consultancy fees, with another £5k being budgeted for the year.

Other income of £70 relates to the Spey Board's contribution to the cost of a meeting.

Expenditure

Percentages of salaries for both DS and IMcG have been paid to the end of March from the Tay Foundation as per the agreement.

Yet again, it should be highlighted that a rent invoice has yet to be received (now £101k to the end of 2016). A provision is made in the statutory accounts, and there are easily enough funds to cover the cost.

The £18,312 spend in rent, rates and general insurance largely relates to the insurance bill of £17k for the year.

The subs cost of £14,953 is largely made up of the Board's contribution to Fisheries Management Scotland of £14,496.

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £7,753, of which £5,836 is salary related.

The spend of £804 under projects is all related to the smolt project and is mainly made up of expenditure for the second trap (shed, ropes etc).

Health & Safety Report:

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

Bailiff Update:

This was covered in Matters Arising.

River Garry Update:

DS explained he had met with SSE and works were due to start either this week or next. There had been a minor problem concerning potential disturbance to nesting raptors, but it was hoped this would be resolved shortly.

The Chairman stated that there would be an increase in the volume of water flowing down the Garry when works commenced and wondered how this would impact other parts of the river system. DS replied that the river level downstream would go up and that ought to be noticeable on the year so far graph for the Killiecrankie gauging station on Fishpal.

The Chairman enquired about the smolt trap, to which DS replied there was an update from the Operations Manager in his Director's report, which had been circulated earlier. Basically, around 1,300 smolts have been tagged to date, with 121 being caught in the Garry and the remainder in the Errochty. DS explained that either the Garry trap had a lower trapping efficiency because it was in a bigger river or that, because of low flows and lower water temperatures, smolts had yet to emigrate from the River Tilt. The trap would be left in the Garry to see which was the case for the remainder of the smolt run. Its location would then be reviewed for next year.

The Chairman stated that the target was to tag 2,000 smolts and we are obviously well on the way to achieving this.

JW asked whether the Errochty smolts were being recaptured in the Tummel trap, to which DS replied that indeed some had been, and some smolts had been detected at Pitlochry also.

IMcL asked whether there was an issue for adult fish returning and producing multiple counts on the detector. DS replied this had been found to occur elsewhere, but the data can be sifted, and multiple counts detected and dealt with.

Hatchery Update:

IMcL asked the Board what they wanted from the review, to which the Chairman stated he wished to ascertain whether it represented value for money. DB asked whether there was a need for more volunteers and equipment.

CMN asked whether we could consider 'ranching' which she had recently seen in Finland, to which IMcL replied it was extremely cost prohibitive, costing upwards of £1,000 per returning fish. DS explained that he had produced a ranching analysis a number of years ago which had looked at the process in various countries. It had worked for some countries, but this had tended to be where wild survival rates were good. It had been tried in the UK but found not to work well enough to be viable.

ACTION: DS to recirculate ranching analysis to Board.

There then followed a lengthy discussion surrounding the capacity of the hatchery and how best to maximise it, or if indeed maximisation was the key strategy. DS pointed out that in order to do anything with the hatchery, we must first have the broodstock numbers and this would have to involve forming two teams to carry out broodstock fishing. The Chairman was of the view that our mission was to put 2,000 extra fish over the Pitlochry dam, and wanted to know how best to achieve this.

DS replied that the review would take these points into consideration.

ACTION: DS/IMcL/AR to produce Hatchery Review document for next meeting.

Wild Fisheries Review Update:

DS stated that Simon Dryden from Marine Scotland had given a presentation at Fisheries Management Scotland's annual conference on the Scottish Government's future plans regarding Wild Fisheries Reform. They were still proposing to bring in a requirement for boards to have to produce fishery management plans which would have to be approved by Scottish Ministers and this would require legislation. DS was unsure how this would work in practice, but a group had been formed and was in the process of producing a template, which would incorporate conservation plans. Timings of any Bill had still to be established and it was unclear when this might ever be brought in. DS also mentioned that the Government may look for rivers to test their plans on, and it may be an idea for the Tay to volunteer, to which all agreed.

AOB:

Beavers

CMN asked what the current state of play was for beavers. NMCI replied that a survey to provide updated information on their numbers was due to start, and that any legislation to legalise them wouldn't be brought in before late summer.

DG asked whether they were protected now, to which NMCI replied they were not, although it was a grey area, as although they could be shot it was not lawful to be in possession of a carcass. She urged the Board to consult the SNH website, which detailed all the latest information.

Scottish Invasive Species Project:

DS explained to the Board that he had been approached by Chris Horrill (ex RAFTS director) regarding employment of an Invasives Coordinator to cover the Tay and Esk districts in a proposed national invasive plant eradication project. RAFTS had originally intended employing these officers but this would no longer be possible as RAFTS was now disbanded. Therefore, the request to TDSFB as a potential employer. A bid was shortly going to be submitted to the Heritage Lottery and, if successful, this position would be fully funded with

no cost to the Board. With the demise of RAFTS SNH have taken on leadership of the project which is proposed to last for four years. DS explained that the work did require to be carried out, but the TDSFB didn't have the resources to do the coordination of such work. This could be a good solution. The areas included in the proposed bid are the Isla/Ericht catchment, the Tay up to the Strathtay area (but not including Loch Tay), the Tummel below Kinloch Rannoch and the lower Garry as well as the Esk district.

The Chairman asked what this had to do with the Board, to which DS replied that invasives were becoming a big problem in the Tay catchment and would only get worse without intervention of this nature. It was still possible to fix this problem now, given the right resources. He asked whether the Board would consider the employment, that the Lottery would cover salary and necessary vehicle, but that the board would be asked to provide an office and other overheads.

CMN asked whose responsibility the containment of invasives was, to which NMCI replied it was the landowner's responsibility.

After much discussion, the Board agreed that they did not want to pursue employment of the Invasives Coordinator, but that they would provide any assistance they could, with office accommodation being one.

ACTION: DS to relay the decision to Chris Horrill.

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