

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Hatchery, Almondbank on Thursday 6th August 2015.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
Simon Furniss
David Godfrey
Claire Mercer Nairne
Alastair Riddell

In Attendance: Dr. David Summers – Fisheries Director

Apologies: Jack Coburn
Eric Starke
Brian Roxburgh
Iain McLaren
David Brown
Mike Brown
Steve Mannion
John Apthorp
John Wood
Inga McGown - Clerk

The Chairman explained that IMcG couldn't attend the meeting, and updated the Board as to her new working hours, now that she had moved home. She would now be working two full days per week, plus hours from home to make up 24 hours, whilst also answering diverted phone calls from home. This arrangement would be reviewed at the end of the year.

Declaration of Interests:

There was only one update, being Alastair Riddell who had now retired from Green Highland Ltd., whilst still maintaining an interest in his own private hydro scheme.

Minutes of Board Meeting of 2nd June 2015:

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

Matters Arising:

Horseshoe Weir:

DS explained that he was still pressing Ian Fullerton regarding this issue, but Mr. Fullerton had not yet visited the site, but informed DS that his son would be taking over this matter.

ACTION: DS to liaise with Ian Fullerton.

Website:

ACTION: DS and CMN to liaise regarding the website.

Fishpal:

The Chairman and JW had discussed, and it had been agreed that the TDSFB would continue to pay £6,000 until next year, when it would be reviewed, depending on the situation with the Malloch Trophy.

Stormont Angling Club:

DB was still to provide the Board with information regarding the offer of Crown fishing on the River Almond. However, DG informed the Board that he had heard that Stormont AC had agreed to take on the fishing on a five year lease. Therefore, the Board decided to forget consideration of taking it on as a sanctuary area.

Review of Board Priorities:

DS had met with bailiffs to inform them of new Operations Manager position to be advertised, and all had been keen to expand their working role into areas besides bailiffing with a view to becoming more multifunctional.

Parabolic Filter:

DS had spoken to the hatchery manager who informed him the filter could not be utilised. It was agreed to sell it and try to find a buyer for it.

Financial Report:

Cash Account to 3rd August 2015:

As at 3rd August 2015, the Accounts are showing an increase of £131,682, as the Assessment payments continue to take effect. The overall bank balance stands at a healthy £426,433, of which £50,000 is being invested to generate further income, with a further £100,000 to follow.

Income

Over 80% of the Assessments have now been paid, with the remainder being chased.

We are still actively looking to rent out our old office building and are using Graham & Sibbald as our agents. Although we have had a few enquiries to date, we have received no concrete offers yet.

It is looking highly unlikely that the Hatchery will require Tay Foundation funding this year, and therefore the budget and forecast remain at zero.

Expenditure

There remains a potential small saving on salaries, which will very much depend on when the new Operations Manager role is filled. The post has been advertised on the ASFB/RAFTS website with a closing date of Friday 14th August, and already a number of CVs have been submitted.

The training forecast has gone up by £1k to £5k to cover a netting course in August, and an electrofishing course in September.

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).

The heat and light budget and actual stand at £7.5k, with the remaining heat and light budget of £8k being found in the kelt reconditioning budget., with little expenditure against it to date.

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £16,161, of which £13,642 is salary related.

Overall, the forecast is showing a slight deficit of £1,667 against budget.

Statements and narrative relevant to the Board's current financial position had been circulated prior to the meeting, but since the administrator was not present, it was not possible to consider these in greater detail at the time. The Chairman invited questions on the accounts, but there were none forthcoming.

Health & Safety Report:

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

Wild Fisheries Review:

The Chairman explained that this item was the main issue for consideration in this meeting. DS had prepared a draft response to the Wild Fisheries reform consultation paper, which had been circulated to board members. Some board members who were unable to attend had already passed on their thoughts, and the deadline for submission was the following day. The Chairman invited DS to go through the document and each proposed answer was considered in turn.

DS started by explaining that it had been difficult to consider in many areas, but had focussed on the main issues which would affect the Tay. One such issue was funding, which in DS's view didn't stack up and could have major financial implications for the Tay as indeed for other major rivers, which, as far as he could see, could be asked to contribute much of the funding.

AR asked whether there was a national strategy, to which DS replied there was not but that it was due to be worked on. The general feeling was that it was a bit difficult to produce a structure without a national strategy. The Chairman asked whether the Board could meet with local politicians in order to explain the situation and raise its profile within government. All agreed this would be a good idea and after some debate, decided that John Swinney would be a good choice. Roseanna Cunningham was also considered as the Perth Town Water would be affected by the licence to kill law, which would mean that no Perth locals would ever be able to catch a fish and take it home again.

ACTION: DS/SF to organise meeting with John Swinney.

There then followed a discussion surrounding the proposed response to the consultation paper, with the following being the more salient points to note:

Asked whether the proposed FMOs should be charitable bodies, DS raised the concern that charities cannot help sell private fishing, nor employ bailiffs to patrol private rights, and that this perhaps required further consideration by the Government.

Again, he stressed that funding could be an issue particularly for larger rivers, who in some way would be used to subsidise smaller rivers. He also added that the proposed system would be more centralised and that rateable values across the country would need to be aligned. DS compared the Tay rateable values with those of the Dee and found that they were largely twice as high for an equivalent catch, which could in part explain why the Tay levy percentage is much smaller than the Dee's. Certainly, he stressed that the Government would have to examine this area and make all rateable values comparable.

As to whether all species fishing right owners should pay towards the new structure, DS suggested this could be explored, but that he was sceptical it would raise much. DG thought this was linked to rod licencing and wondered how it would be policed, and what it would cost. The Chairman stated that there seemed to be a positive feeling for the introduction of rod licences from some quarters. DG asked what the cost was, to which SF replied it was roughly £70 per week for salmon fishing in England. CMN felt this would be the end of family fishing, and the Chairman concurred that this could be the case, and that it would contradict the Government's "fishing for all" strategy.

Carcass Tagging:

DS explained to the Board the mechanics of the proposed system, namely that there will be no more netting at sea, but it could continue in estuaries; net and coble fishing will get quotas based on existing five year averages, and rivers will have a quota based on harvestable surplus, although it is still unclear how this will be calculated.

DG asked who the consultants for the project were, to which DS replied Marine Scotland.

DS went on to explain that proprietors will apply for a quota but at the moment it was not clear how much this would cost. DG argued that we already return in excess of 80% of fish caught and that there was no need for the new system. The Chairman voiced his concern that it would only be the wealthy that would be able to afford to fish in future.

The Chairman then suggested that a maximum of 10% of the catch might be kept for all fish caught on Tay beats, and asked the assembled proprietors to see what it would mean to them in one of their good years and also in one of their bad. He then asked DS to table the information for the most prominent beats on the Tay.

ACTION: Proprietors to send their figures to DS, and DS to table this and circulate.

AOB:

Tay Ghillies Association:

The Chairman expressed his thanks to the TGA for their generous donation of £4,500 to the TDSFB which had been utilised to procure bailiff equipment.

ACTION: IMcG to write letter to formally thank TGA on behalf of TDSFB.

New Chairman:

The Chairman explained to the Board that he, along with DS and AR, had met with a potential new Chairman. His details would be circulated round the Board, and if all agreed, the Chairman would invite him to the next Board meeting in October, with a view to him becoming Chairman in the near future.

ACTION: The Chairman to ask potential chairman to send his CV to DS for circulation round the Board members.

Licence to Kill:

DG asked whether this would be in place for 2016 as proposed, to which DS replied that he had heard nothing to the contrary and that it should be in place for next season.

The Chairman suggested writing a letter to all proprietors to keep them up to speed on the latest developments, and perhaps arrange an open meeting for all proprietors and persons connected with the river.

ACTION: IMcG to send letters to all proprietors and arrange open meeting.

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