

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Birnam Institute on Tuesday, 8th October 2013.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
John Wood
William Lindsay
Thomas Steuart Fotheringham
William Jackson
Alastair Riddell

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

Apologies: John Apthorp
David Brown
David Godfrey
Simon Furniss
Stephen Mannion
John Young
Jack Coburn – P&KC
Brian Roxburgh – SEPA

Minutes of Board Meeting of 13th August 2013:

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

Matters Arising:

TDSFB Boat:

The Chairman informed the Board that a meeting has been arranged for the following week between himself and David Clarke to discuss the boat, and whether Mr. Clarke would still be amenable to purchasing the boat and therefore paying for its upkeep, whilst making it available to the TDSFB as and when required.

John Wood raised the issue that the boat must be kept in reasonable condition as part of the contract, and this is to be explored by the Chairman at the meeting.

ACTION: Chairman to meet with D Clarke and report back to Board at next meeting.

Lease of buildings at Almondbank:

David Summers updated the Board as to the position of the lease. The main bone of contention was the length of the lease and potential “get-out” clause. From the Board’s point of view, we need this clause in case it becomes untenable, for any reason, for us to remain at our present location. DS stated that there was a suggested break every three years on the lease.

ACTION: The Chairman/DS & JW to discuss lease.

Boltachan Burn:

DS informed the Board of the situation, whereby part of this burn dried out during the summer resulting in a kill of juvenile fish. SSE also abstract water from the burn and there was a widespread assumption that this continued to be part of the problem despite their having stopped abstracting when the problem had been identified. DS stated that we needed to ascertain the facts and Head Bailiff Lee Fisher had been sent on a fact finding mission to take photos of the abstraction structure. DS has also spoken to SSE and SEPA to ascertain whether it would be possible for SSE to install a structure which would automatically cease abstraction should the burn dip below a certain level.

Opening Day 2014:

DS told the Board that Alex Salmond had indeed agreed to attend the 2014 Opening Day, and that there was to be a dinner the evening before to which the Chairman would be invited.

Financial Report:

Cash Account to 30th September 2013:

As at 30th September 2013, the Accounts are showing a surplus of £13,611, and the bank balance stands at £284,314.

Income

This year’s assessment income stands at £380,485, which represents 86% of the total payable. A reminder was sent earlier last month to chase all outstanding 2013 payments, and we have had a steady response to the £59k still outstanding.

Of the 2012 Assessment, we are awaiting £1,556 from 5 proprietors, despite a legal letter being sent by Condis. This is currently still in the process of being chased.

The Appeals figure stands at £15,491, with £5,347 rebates for both Ballathie and Cargill beats. We are in touch with the assessor on a regular basis, and all appeals are covered by our provision from 2012.

The RAFTS office rental agreement came to a close at the end of August, and there will therefore be no further rental income from this source. However, we are due to be moving to our new offices soon, and hope to rent out our existing office space.

John Apthorp has made a very generous donation of £32k to fund our new offices down at the Hatchery. Work is well under way now, and we are awaiting planning permission on a door and window to complete the project.

The Tay Foundation Lunch in August was very successful and exceeded all expectations by raising nearly £40k.

Expenditure

The Salaries forecast shows a saving of almost £15k, relating to a bailiff leaving in May, and having not been replaced. The decision has been made to postpone the appointment of a new bailiff until the Spring.

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £54,793, which includes salary costs of £21,806, relating to Steve Keay's salary, as well as 50% of Jason Walls's, the rest of Jason's costs being met by the Tay Foundation.

The New Office refurbishment has cost £40,416 to date, with an invoice of almost £7k having just been paid bringing the total to £47,362. An estimate of £4.5k should see us through to completion, bringing the total project cost to around £52k, of which £32k of this will be met by a very generous donation from John Apthorp.

We are anticipating some spend on the maintenance of the road, as this has deteriorated and is now in need of repair. As the Chairman suggested, we will be looking to include an amount in the budget each year so as to maintain the upkeep of the road.

The capital costs of £11,090 relate mainly to the hire purchase agreement on our three new vehicles, one of which was written off last month (a Jimny). Due to a clause in our insurance agreement, we have exercised the option to have a brand new vehicle as a replacement at no extra charge, which will arrive next week.

Transfers to deposit have resulted in interest of £2,084 being gained this year.

General Housekeeping:

We now have access to Internet Banking, and IMcG has been authorized to make any payments under £1,000. Any payments over this amount will be paid by cheque with two signatures as previously.

The Bank of Scotland have now informed us that they wish to make charges on our account for the use of cheques (both paying and cashing) from January of next year. We will look into methods of reducing these charges (estimated cost £300 per annum).

Governance Rules:

DS kicked off the discussion by stating that there are some new duties on DSFBs stemming from the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act which took effect on 16 September. Scottish Ministers had also indicated there would be a review of freshwater fisheries management in the near future and further changes might stem from that in due course.

In the meantime, the following areas were the main focus of the new Act.

1. The Annual Report. This will not present us with many problems as we comply with most of what is required anyway. The main change will be that the AGM will be used to consider the report as draft prior to it being released to the public domain.
2. All future meetings must be publicised and open to the public.
3. We must set up a complaints procedure. DS and IMcG have reviewed several complaints procedures spanning different areas of commerce and public services, and DS would recommend the Board adopt the ASFB recommended procedure, which should be reviewed in the light of experience when the Board saw fit. We have some work to do in finalising the procedure.

ACTION: Chairman/DS & IMcG to have a session on finalising the complaints procedure to be presented at next Board Meeting.

4. Register of Members Interests – it was proposed that IMcG keep a folder on the interests of all Board and staff members, and that this be updated on a regular basis.

ACTION: IMcG to email all Board Members and staff with the ASFB template sheet
ACTION: All Board members and staff to return completed sheets to IMcG

Review of Strategy/Future Projects:

DS opened the discussion by presenting a paper on the current priorities and projects within the TDSFB remit, and outlining where we have made progress, and areas where we have been unable to make progress. Obviously, the Kelt Reconditioning Project has diverted manpower and focus away from other projects.

The most significant project for our immediate consideration is the proposed Tummel Smolt Tagging study.

Will Lindsay inquired about the River Garry project, to which DS replied that a decision was still awaited from SEPA. A main source of contention appeared to be the allied proposal to increase abstraction from the Spey but that work appeared to be underway to try to resolve this. It seemed that SSE were also frustrated by the very slow progress.

DS then went on to outline that we would probably require another member of staff in the form of a biologist to progress any significant new projects. For example, the Tummel Project, whereby we already have £40k in order to purchase the equipment, but have no staff to execute it.

The smolt tagging project basically entails tagging smolts anywhere upstream of Pitlochry Dam with PIT tags which would later be detected when adult salmon passed a detector placed in the fish pass at Pitlochry Dam. Marine Scotland Science is very keen on this potential collaborative project and had already provided the capital funding. We need to look at methods of how we get the manpower to progress this project.

John Wood stated that he would like to see contractors fulfilling the job. William Jackson asked if we could look at existing staff doing the project. DS said we cannot use existing staff as we are skeletally staffed as it is, and there was little to be gained by obtaining detailed information from time sheets. As we have such a small operation, we pretty much know what everyone is doing.

The Board agreed to the outline of the project.

ACTION: DS to work up financials and present to the Tay Foundation as a next step.

Season Extension:

DS informed the Board that the season extension packs would be distributed to ghillies in the next few days.

The Chairman enquired as to what basis we would be able to make a recommendation to extend the trial or otherwise. DS replied the Dee appeared to have extended their season not by demonstrating that there was a harvestable surplus of clean fish, but that an extended catch and release fishery would have no detrimental impact. It might be valid that a demonstration of a demand for this type of fishing with a positive economic impact might be enough.

There followed a general discussion, the upshot being that the majority of the Board were keen to see a trial extension for at least another year, and preferably three, given the first year of the trial had suffered from poor conditions and low effort.

ACTION: DS to await 2013 extension figures before submitting a recommendation in November 2013, with a view to having an answer to the extension by next Board meeting in December.

Fundraising Project:

Alastair Riddell updated the Board on what the fundraising project had been doing, including launching their prospectus last month, along with meeting some big oil company leaders who have not to date expressed an interest. AR had also met with one local company and was to take this forward, and report back at the next meeting.

ACTION: AR to liaise with IMcG in order to send out information to proprietors in the hope of gaining their support.

Tay Foundation Lunch Update:

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank William Jackson and his Committee on behalf of the Board. William Jackson, who had chaired the Lunch Committee went on to thank his committee, which had led to almost £40k being made on the lunch.

WJ further proposed a number of points, namely would we look at match funding for the amount. IMcG has done some preliminary work, but we would ideally need a project to match it against.

ACTION: IMcG to look into this further and draw up a recommendation.

WJ went on to ask whether the monies could be split between projects, and not just go to the Hatchery. We could also improve our profile by handing over a cheque for the amount and having this event captured by the local news. He ended by saying that we probably need to think about our next fundraising event sooner rather than later.

Tay Foundation Membership:

John Wood opened the discussion by outlining his paper which has been circulated to all Board members. The salient points being that Boards and Trusts are now being urged to disassociate from each other in terms of chairmanship and membership i.e. they should not share a chairman, nor should they have too many Board members on the Trust. There was a further recommendation that no Trust members should be proprietors.

TSF questioned whether it was appropriate not to have proprietors on the Foundation, as they are the custodians of the river. AR did not agree with this clause either, and stated that any potential conflicts of interest could be dissuaged by a declaration of interests.

DS reminded the meeting of the forthcoming review by the Scottish Government and that it was essential that proprietors should not even be perceived as benefitting from the charity.

The Chairman stated that it was for the Foundation Board to agree at their next meeting. He then went on to state that he would be standing down as Chairman of the Foundation in light of the recent advice. The Board agreed that this would be the best course of action, and that they would await the Tay Foundation meeting before electing new TDSFB representatives for the Tay Foundation.

Alastair Riddell stated that he had been co-opted onto the Foundation and would like to continue to represent the TDSFB on it.

AOB:

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

**Next Meeting: 9:30am Tuesday, 10th December 2013 at Birnam Institute
The AGM will follow at 11am**