

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Kelt Reconditioning Unit and Hatchery, Almondbank on Tuesday, 12th August 2014.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
John Wood
Stephen Mannion
Simon Furniss
John Apthorp
David Brown
William Lindsay
Alastair Riddell
David Godfrey
Gavin Clark – SNH

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

Apologies: Brian Roxburgh – SEPA
William Jackson
Jack Coburn – P&KC
Thomas Steuart Fotheringham
John Young

Declaration of Interests:

There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of Board Meeting of 3rd June 2014:

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

Matters Arising:

Smolt Tagging Project:

DS suggested that, given the staffing and resources required for the project, coupled with the questionable future of DSFB's, we should postpone looking into this project for at least another six months.

The Chairman stated that this project was part of our long term strategy and, as such, should be considered a priority, to which the Board agreed

ACTION: DS to draw up a detailed costed proposal for the next Board meeting

Trackers on Bailiff Vehicles:

IMcG had previously circulated options and costings from various vehicle tracker companies. She then went on to recommend Teletrac, as they fitted our brief most closely and were competitively priced, to which the Board agreed.

ACTION: IMcG to progress with Teletrac perhaps on a 6 month basis to see if coverage is an issue, and report back to the Board at the end of that time.

Stronuich Counter:

AR asked for feedback from the counter, to which DS advised he had spoken to SSE who had done work on the counter and hoped it was now working. In the past the counter had recorded false information due to wave action.

There then followed a discussion regarding the Lochay fish counter. Annual summaries from the counter should continue to be made available in the annual report.

ACTION: DS to follow up the Stronuich Counter with SSE.

Road Maintenance:

IMcG updated the Board on the four quotes received, stating that the Operations Manager had favoured Kings. DG suggested holding 7.5% of the total cost of the work back for a year in case of snagging issues, which all agreed was a good idea. IMcG suggested getting in touch with the owner of the land surrounding the road to see if anything could be done about the trees.

ACTION: IMcG to progress with Kings Contracts ASAP.

Health & Safety:

IMcG advised the Board that the Operation Manager would be sent on a Health and Safety training course in the near future, and that the Operations Manager was finalising dates for all to receive a First Aid course.

As to the Health and Safety audit, it had been discussed and, on reflection, the full Health and Safety audit completed by Green's of Haddington last year was deemed to have met the Health and Safety requirements, and therefore, no further action need be taken.

River Garry Update:

DS circulated the draft letter to send to the First Minister, copying in John Swinney, SEPA and SSE regarding our frustration with the Garry issue. The letter had not been sent, as SEPA had promised an announcement on this subject, and it was thought the letter would no longer be valid. However, it is now two months on, and there has been no movement, therefore the Board agreed to sending the letter.

ACTION: DS to send letter.

DS went on to give an update on the River Garry situation, having previously circulated details of the flow trial. A trial had been attempted in early July, but was abandoned due to rainy conditions. A second flow trial was undertaken at the end of July in dry conditions. It was evident by looking at the photographic evidence that, even at the highest flow option, the flow is still too low for salmon migration. However, the higher flow would mean an increased loss of electricity generation, particularly for Errochty power station, which may be an issue for SSE.

An issue of concern was SEPA's seeming continuing interest in restoring flow to the Bruar Water. DS believed that there may simply not be enough water to go round everywhere and if anywhere had to be sacrificed it had to be the Bruar. DS went on to suggest that the definition of what constituted a water body may give grounds for objection to such a proposal, as it may be better to look at the River Garry as a whole, rather than subdivide it into sections as is currently the case.

SF enquired what the Spey's reaction had been to the ongoing saga, to which DS replied it would be interesting to know the outcome of the meeting between SEPA and the Spey which was being held today.

Financial Report:

The Annual Statutory accounts are still with the auditor awaiting completion, and will be with us shortly.

Cash Account to 6th August 2014:

As at 6th August 2014, the Accounts are showing an increase of £158,322, and the overall bank balance stands at £435,237, of which £100,000 is being invested to generate further income.

Income

The Assessment payments are 83% paid to date, with reminder letters to go out later this month. Payments for 2012/3 are still being chased.

To date, a rebate to the Crown Estate has been paid for the amount £737, with a further rebate due to the Finegand Estate of over £1,000.

It is our intention to have the old offices on the rental market in the near future, as the lease has now been signed. We have been advised that rental of this kind of property in these market conditions may be hard to attract, and are therefore forecasting a nil income for the remainder of the year.

Expenditure

Regarding salaries, we are still forecasting to make a £6k saving overall due to the delayed bailiff start date and the £2k government rebate.

We have still not received a rent invoice from the government for the buildings, but a provision has been made in the statutory accounts for this payment.

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £29,843, of which £13,831 is salary related. There looks to be a saving of around £4.5k in salaries, as we have decided not to employ a Hatchery Assistant/Biologist for the time being due to the current political climate. However, this potential saving has not been included in the forecast, as the road repair works may exceed the £20k budgeted.

The website costs are forecast to increase by £3k to cover the cost of Bob White's reports on the Tay, which are included on Fishpal and on his blog site, for which he is paid £250 per month.

The New Offices have cost £2,531 to date, and the bailiffs are to start work on welding the fire escape stairs in the near future. The forecast shows a cost of £5k to complete the work, and we are awaiting news from Camerons as to when they can complete the job. DG suggested having the work done sooner rather than later before we have adverse weather conditions.

ACTION: IMcG/DS to chase with Camerons.

Overall, the forecast is pretty much in line with budget for now, although there may be some savings to be had on the Appeals figure of £23,400.

Health & Safety Report:

There were no Health & Safety issues to report since the last Board meeting.

Fishing Report:

DS advised the Board that the fishing lately had been disappointing to say the least. However, the Tay was not alone in this, and it would be interesting to see if the recent rain would produce any change. DB added that Norway was in a similar position.

DS had previously circulated a paper on the potential causes of our current lack of fish, and went on to explain that the marine conditions are changing as temperatures have increased. Salmon thrive in cooler water, as warmer water contains a lower level of nutrients. This may have been compounded by the migration of mackerel into the Norwegian Sea, where many of our grilse tend to head. Obviously, this may have led to the grilse facing more competition for food.

DS then went on to explain that he had studied a similar issue some 20 years ago, and that the climate of the sea continually changes and it is not certain how long this current phase might last.

Garry Update:

This was covered previously under “Matters Arising”.

Fisheries Review:

The latest review bulletin had been circulated to all Board members and staff, and was taken as read. DS had met with other river directors the previous week, and they were to meet Andrew Thin the following week.

The current thinking is that there may be regional Boards, with a few of the smaller rivers being amalgamated. The assessment system of generating income may still be used, albeit administered by a central unit, who would then apportion it to Boards.

There is evidence that Thin may have already started to write his report, and if a Bill is to appear this time next year, the Government would have to produce a consultation paper soon. Andrew Thin has been tasked with looking into fresh water fishing as a whole, and reviewing protection orders.

SF asked if rod licencing would come into play, and DS replied that he didn't think it would, but that others thought it might. It would be potentially politically difficult to go down this route.

JW stated that it was clear that the Boards would be done away with, and with this in mind, how would Boards be wound up? For example, would assets be split between proprietors, or would the new body appropriate these assets? Other Boards, such as the Esk have started to move assets from their Board to their Charitable trusts. The Kyle Trust are considering moving their netting rights to the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust. The Chairman stated that this was a good point and that we should all think about it with a view to discuss at the next Board Meeting.

ACTION: ALL to examine the issue with the view to discussing at next meeting.
ACTION: IMcG to ensure this item is on the agenda.

Dall Burn Weir:

DS explained to the Board that the weir is situated on one of the most significant tributaries of Loch Rannoch, and that it is impassable at 8ft high. As part of an ongoing RAFTS project to identify and remove obstructions from potential spawning grounds, this weir has been listed in the top 20.

It was thought that the weir was on land belonging to Dall Estate but it has since been found by DS that the land may belong to the Forestry Commission. RAFTS is to follow this up in the coming weeks.

AOB:

Horseshoe Weir:

DB brought up the issue of the damage to the weir, where the concrete has broken away and undermined the weir. He did not think it would be a huge problem this year, but could potentially become an issue if left unchecked.

DS replied that we were aware of the issue and had photographic evidence of the damage, but it was presumably the responsibility of the lade owner to maintain the weir. DB added that there was £6k available from the Stormont Angling Club specifically for such a project.

ACTION: DS to see the lade owner regarding the weir, and discuss the reparation.

Buchanty Weir:

DG brought up the issue of the state of disrepair of the aforementioned weir, stating that he and JC had been to see it after the previous Board meeting. It was agreed that any repairs required the cooperation of Abercairney and Glenalmond Estates.

Chairmanship:

The Chairman expressed a view that he wished to stand down at the next election (December 2014), and had so far been unsuccessful in finding a replacement. He asked that the Board consider whether any of their number would wish to stand, or indeed, if they knew of any suitable candidate willing to stand. He also asked that the Board consider whether they would be willing to re-stand for election.

ACTION: ALL to consider whether they wish to stand for election as Chairman, whether they know of any suitable candidate willing to do so, and if they are to stand for re-election.

To be discussed during October's meeting.

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

Next Meeting: 9:30am Tuesday, 7th October 2014 at our Hatchery in Almondbank