TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD
MINUTES FROM VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING 7PM, TUESDAY, 10th AUGUST 2021

Present:	Toby Metcalfe (Convener) (TPM), David Godfrey (DG), Calum Innes (CI), Claire Mercer Nairne (CMN) (part), John Nevin (JN), Andrew Parrott (AP), Jerry Saunders (JS), Michael Smith (MS), Nicola Thompson (NT) , Bobby White (BW), Iain Wood (IW) (part)
In Attendance:	Dr. David Summers (DS) (Fisheries Director), Inga MacGillivray (IMacG)(Clerk to the Board) 1 member of the public

The Convener welcomed CMN back to the Board.

1. **Apologies**
   Apologies were received from Allister Wallace (AW) and Nicki McIntyre (NMcI) (Nature Scot)

2. **Minutes of Meeting held 8th June 2021**
   The Minutes had been circulated previously and were taken as read. The Convener asked if there were any amendments to be made to the Minutes. There were no changes, and the Minutes were unanimously agreed to be a true and fair reflection of the meeting.

3. **Report on Matters Arising from Meeting held 8th June 2021**
   The report had been circulated previously and IMacG presented it on screen. The Convener asked if there were any comments.

   JS pointed out that he had not been handed the responses to the consultation. IMacG advised that the responses would be shared with JS soon. The Convener advised that all responses would be circulated to all Board members and a schedule would be produced to deal with all responses. MS suggested a shared drive. The review and recommendations from the consultation responses will be circulated to Board members before the end of the month for their consideration/approval.

   ACTION: IMacG to forward consultation responses to JS.
   ACTION: IMacG to set up shared drive for Board members to access all consultation responses

4. **Financial Report**
   IMacG presented the financial report and the Convener stated that NT and AP had been appointed to assess IMacG's workload and would report to the Board on the matter shortly.

   DG asked if the Fisheries Officers could now double up in their vehicles as COVID rules relaxed, and IMacG stated she would investigate the possibility. DS added that presently there were too few staff members to actually double up on shifts.

MS expressed his dismay at how the finances were being handled and asked for consistency, and for the appeals and bad debts figures to be split. The Convener advised this subject would be dealt with in the closed section of the meeting.

AP shared his view on the COVID restrictions, stating that he had not seen anything in writing to advise that restrictions had been abolished. The Convener stated that the Board would guide DS on this subject.

DS advised that there would be another £5k in income from consultancy work.

The Convener asked for clarity on the Garry spend. DS explained that SSE had paid the Board in the previous financial year for the Garry work, but the University of Highlands & Islands (UHI) had taken a long time to carry out the analysis and invoice the TDSFB for the work. The spend to date was therefore a timing difference and the project was a nil cost to the Board as SSE effectively paid the TDSFB who in turn paid the UHI.

5. River Management Plan 2020/2021

The Convener advised that the main focus would be on areas of the plan which had not yet been started. DS highlighted the areas of the plan which required more attention, and the following actions were agreed:

Buchanty Spout

ACTION: MS/JN in liaison with DS to try to facilitate the works at the Buchanty Spout by securing approval for the works from the owners of the Abercairney Estate.

Shochie Weir

ACTION: DS ti liase with MS/JN to consider how best to take forward the Shochie Weir situation and report back to Board.

Invasive Species

A discussion on Invasive species ensued. DS advised that the SISI project had been of great benefit to the river, and it was important to keep the program going. The Convener added that SISI funding was currently scheduled to be cut next year. Given the desirability of continuing the great work done under the SISI project consideration therefore had to be given as to how this might be funded. The TDSFB may require to make provision for this however sourcing funding from elsewhere was the strongly preferred outcome.
AP advised that the Council had a statutory responsibility for the control of invasive species, and he would follow this up. CMN advised that there was funding for an umbrella of invasive species such as mammals and ranunculus.

ACTION: MS/JN to assist DS identifying future funding opportunities for the control of invasive species and mink control once the current SISI project ends.
ACTION: AP to follow up responsibility for invasives with regards to the Council
ACTION: ALL to forward funding opportunities to DS for invasive control
ACTION: CMN to check with Scottish Farming Union about possible invasives funding.

Dochart/Lunan water

DS advised that he and CMN had applied for a felling licence some time ago, but this had not been forthcoming from Scottish Forestry.

ACTION: DS to chase felling licence for Dochart/Lunan

Hatchery

DS advised that he had applied for the broodstock licence but that he had had no time to pursue the Braan initiative.

Hydro

DS advised that he had not lobbied SEPA over the Upper Garry and Lochay issues. Regarding the Lochay, he advised awaiting the results of electrofishing surveys before putting a case together to take to SEPA.

ACTION: DS to present Lochay case to SEPA once electrofishing data for 2021 received.
ACTION: DS to circulate project proposal for the Lyon to Board members by end of August 2021.

Knowledge

DS explained that the Fisheries Officers were mostly electrofishing, largely for the NEPS project and Garry sampling. They have a tight schedule till mid-November, firstly concentrating on juvenile electrofishing and then on broodstock fishing.
Regarding the invertebrate issue, DS advised this would be delayed until SEPA had their systems operational after the cyber attack.

The Convener advised there were a number of fish passage issues and that he and JS would help DS on this topic.

ACTION: The Convener/DS/JS to liaise over lobbying SEPA on fish passage issues and a plan of action re weirs and dams.

6. Plan of Additional Work

The Convener explained that DS and the team had taken on additional work, and he was keen that this be shown separately from the River Management Plan.

DS advised that the team would be starting on the Ardle Project imminently, which would be paid for by Marine Scotland.

DS stated that the Atlantic Salmon Trust were working on a project to analyse the effects of beaver dams on fish passage. DS explained that the AST had approached the Tay to be part of the project which would involve leaving beaver dams in situ for a long period of time. DS advised that this was not something he could sanction as future generations of salmon populations could be lost during the study which approach was approved by the Board.
The Convener asked how the project would be funded. DS replied the AST would fund.

MS advised he had scale samples from his smokehouse fish and DS advised he should store them in paper envelopes to be collected at some point.

ACTION: DS to produce Additional Work paper for next meeting

7. Governance

The Convener advised this would be a standing item and asked if anyone had any comments or queries. There were none.

8. Fisheries Director Report

The Report had been circulated previously and was taken as read.
JS thanked DS and the team for the many hours they had spent on the abstraction issues on the Ericht at Blairgowrie, gathering data to influence SEPA. He asked that DS pass on the sentiment to the Operations Manager and his team.

ACTION: DS to pass on appreciation of abstraction work to Fisheries Officer team.

9. Operations Manager Report

DS advised that the Operations Manager had been on annual leave but would produce reports for future meetings. He stated that the team had been mostly carrying out NEPS and Garry sampling work and that enforcement had been quiet.

Enforcement

The Convener asked the Board if any incidents of illegal activity had come to their attention recently.
JN replied that Loch Tay had been an issue with the sheer number of anglers, but that many were ignorant rather than wilfully breaking the law.
DS advised there had been sniggers found around Blairgowrie.
JN asked if Buchanty Spout had poaching issues. DS replied that due to low water and constant stream of spectators watching the fish, this was not a poaching hot spot.

(IW joined the meeting)

DG advised that he had handed over SSE paperwork to DS regarding Buchanty Spout issue, and DS agreed SSE should be involved in the issue and potentially fund any improvements.

Jet Skis

The Convener advised that he had been contacted regarding the issue of jet skis on the river.
AP explained that the Council was aware of the issue and were exploring the legalities of the problem but had been rather hampered by legislative precedents. JS added that the Stormont Angling Club had also been involved and were actively lobbying on this issue.
The Convener stated that this highlighted the conflict between the environment and leisure activity and suggested the Board express their concerns to reinforce the Council's position on the issue. AP agreed this would add pressure and urged any interested parties to contact their local councillor to bring the issue to the fore.

Operation Wingspan

The Convener asked if anyone was familiar with Operation Wingspan which was a police initiative to combat wildlife crime.

ACTION: DS to check with Operations Manager regarding Operation Wingspan correspondence.

Crayfish

The Convener enquired about the crayfish issue on the Blackwater. DS intimated that he had received an email from a proprietor who was trying to obtain a licence from Nature Scot to catch crayfish as the beat was inundated with them, but thus far had received no reply from Nature Scot.
DS advised it was illegal to fish for crayfish (they are an invasive species) and therefore there was no effective means of dealing with the issue. He stated the issue was not confined to the Tay. Nature Scot did not appear to want to licence the catching of crayfish. Their policy for their control is to

leave them to control themselves through adults predating on the juveniles. Nature Scot fear that catching crayfish may well spread the problem even further.

(CMN left the meeting)

10. Health & Safety Report

DS advised there had been no notifiable health and safety incidents in the preceding two months.

11. Tay Rivers Trust Update

CI updated the attendees on the road repair issue, stating that a project manager had been hired to oversee the work and that a preferred tender had been identified. There were now issues with the neighbouring landowners who had put the adjoining land up for sale and appeared to no longer be interested in discussing the road repair. He advised that the TRT would like the works completed as soon a possible to avoid broodstock transportation, weather and contractor issues, and that the preferred contractor had quoted 3 weeks to be mobilised and 20 days to complete the work.
DG suggested narrowing road to complete work on the TRT's land.

The Convener advised that the Memorandum of Understanding update would be discussed in the closed meeting due to it containing sensitive information.

12. AOB

Update on River Ericht

The Convener explained that MS, DS, JS, IW, the operations team, and himself had all been involved in working towards a clearer ability to monitor flow of water into the lade and ensuring the CAR licence conditions were adhered to. They had been working closely with a Blairgowrie Angling Club representative. The independent flow assessment commissioned by the Board had been sent to SEPA. No response has yet been received from SEPA. SEPA has been liaising with the lade operator and the fish farmer but as yet it is unclear what measures SEPA are intent on delivering. The Board are intent on achieving the detailed flow review committed to by SEPA, along with the correct flows being maintained in the river and a monitoring system in which all parties have confidence.
DS added that the licence conditions for the fish farm were an interim measure dating back to 2019. Due to various reasons including COVID and the cyber-attack, SEPA had not undertaken their review. The review process should now include the correct screening requirements.
MS suggested involving the turbine owner.
IW advised that the main problem lay with identifying the sluice owners and DS added that he had carried out an extensive title search, but the issue was complicated. The Convener stated that SEPA could cut through the legal issues to facilitate a workable solution being delivered.

Website

IW reported that the TRT text had now been uploaded and images had been sent to Castabroad. IW would meet Castabroad on Thursday morning with a view to having some pages ready by the end of the week. He expected the website to be live at the end of August/beginning of September.
The Convener thanked IW for his input.

The Convener stated that promotion and marketing was very important and to that end he and DS would send a report to all proprietors after each Board meeting summarising the essence of the meeting. This would keep proprietors informed on a range of issues.

ACTION: The Convener and DS to produce a summary of each Board meeting to be sent to all proprietors as soon after the meeting as practiceable

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The Convener drew the open meeting to a close.

(the member of the public left the meeting)

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 26th October 2021 at 10am

End of Open Meeting Minutes