TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

MINUTES FROM MEETING

10am Tuesday, 12th April 2022

Present:	Toby Metcalfe (TPM) (Convener), Claire Mercer Nairne (CMN), Jerry Saunders (JS), Nicola Thompson (NT), Calum Innes (CI), Andrew Parrott (AP)
In Attendance:	Dr. David Summers (DS) (Fisheries Director), Inga MacGillivray (IMacG) (Clerk to the Board), Nicki McIntyre (NMcI) (NatureScot Representative) via Zoom, Calum McGregor (CMcG) (SEPA Representative), Alan Wells (Awe) Fisheries Management Scotland No members of the public were present.

1. **Apologies**

   Apologies were received from David Godfrey (DG), Mike Brown (MB) (Operations Manager), Anne Woodcock (AW) and Bobby White (BW)

2. **Salmon Strategy Presentation by Alan Wells (AWe) of FMS**

   AWe explained the background to the Scottish Government's Wild Salmon Strategy and highlighted that this was a high-level strategy with an implementation plan to follow. He set out the six main priorities of the strategy namely improving condition of rivers; managing exploitation through regulations, deterrents and enforcement; understanding and mitigating pressures in the marine and coastal environment; making a positive contribution through international collaborations; developing a modernised and fit for purpose policy framework; and building evidence-based coordinated scientific research and monitoring.

   AWe stressed that the implementation plan was underway and that fisheries managers had contributed strongly and would continue to do so.

   The Convener noted that the Board's 3 year plan should demonstrate the Board's commitment to the Salmon Strategy and this should be made clear on the website. AWe agreed that partnership delivery would be advantageous.

   JS asked what the timescale was for the implementation plan. AWe replied that it should be by January 2023 and that FMS would push for this to happen. He stressed that the Scottish Government realised salmon were at a crisis point.

   CMN asked if the Tay's issues could be highlighted at ministerial level. AWe suggested the best way to accomplish this would be for DS to approach officials.

   ACTION: DS to organise Tay visit by Scottish ministers for summer 2022

   The Convener asked how the Tay could contribute to the piscivorous birds discussion, and JS added that seals were also an issue. AWe advised that a meeting would be held shortly to discuss these issues and that evidence would be sought from around the country with the view to involve Boards as much as possible.

The Convener mentioned the seal app which had been launched by FMS. AWe explained this was a GPS based app to help people report seal sightings. DS stated that the Fisheries Officers were already trialling the app and would roll out to individual ghillies on lower beats.
The Convener thanked AWe for his presentation and for all the work FMS had done and continued to do on behalf of the Boards

3. **Declaration of Interests Update**

There were no new declarations.
The Convener asked if anyone had any objections to the declarations of interest being posted on the website. ALL present had no objections but asked that those not able to attend the meeting were consulted.

ACTION: IMacG to ask whether DG/BW or JN had any objections. If no objections, IMacG to ensure declarations be posted on the website.

4. **Minutes of Meeting held 8th February 2022**

The Minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting and were taken as read. ALL agreed they showed a true and fair reflection of the meeting and the Convener signed a copy of said Minutes.

5. **Report on Matters Arising from Meeting held 8th February 2022**

The report had been circulated previously and was taken as read.

Lunan Water tree felling

The Convener updated that he had contacted Forestry and Land Scotland and was awaiting a reply.

Piscivorous Bird Paper

The Convener stressed the importance of thanking those volunteers who had been involved performing bird counts. CMN and IMacG stated they would liaise with BW to organise events in order to meet ghillies and others who have been involved in counting birds.

ACTION: CMN & IMacG to liaise with BW regarding thanking the bird counters

Ericht Abstraction sub committee

The issue is ongoing.

ACTION: Convener/DS to call a meeting of sub committee.

The Convener stated that the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative was not on the agenda but he wished to express his pleasure that the project had successfully bid for funding from NatureScot to extend to March 2023. Thereafter, funding would be sought for a four year extension.

6. **Financial Report**

The Financial papers had been circulated previously and were taken as read. IMacG presented the financial situation which showed a bank balance of £196,323 to 8th April 2022 with a net deficit of (£103,076) to date. She explained this was normal due to minimal income being received until assessment invoices were sent out.
She stressed that the 3 year plan and subsequent budget should be finalised soon to allow assessment invoices to be circulated. ALL agreed this was a good idea.

ACTION: IMacG to set up TDSFB Planning and budget meeting before end April

7. River Management Plan 2022 Update

Mill of Ross Weir, River Earn

DS stated he had responded to another draft SEPA CAR licence variation regarding the weir collapse near the fish farm on the Earn. He was now happier with the proposed licensed flows and smolt screening but was awaiting a plan for the proposed construction which would show how these would be delivered in practice. The Convener asked if the Fisheries Officers would be monitoring the screens. CMcG replied it was up to the licence holder to comply with the conditions and for SEPA to monitor.

AWe stated the licensing issue was a key point for discussion with SEPA.

The Convener stressed that monitoring was very important. CMcG agreed but explained that SEPA had limited resources at their disposal.

Comrie Flood Defence

DS stated he was to meet Perth & Kinross Council on site to give a view on a major proposed green bank reinforcement on the Ruchill Water involving tree trunks and rootwads rather than rock armour.

Piscivorous Bird Licence

DS explained that the application had been sent weeks ago but he had not heard back from NatureScot. He advised that NatureScot had asked that non-lethal deterrents be undertaken and explained that he and JS were looking at trialling a smolt shepherding scheme on the Ericht and Isla. He explained the old licence had expired in January.

Seal Licence

DS advised he was awaiting the outcome of the seal licence application.

Beavers

AWe explained he sat on the Beaver Strategy Group and that Naturescot were considering a wider strategy for expansion of beavers throughout Scotland. The Convener suggested the Board be funded for their work in clearing beaver dams to allow fish passage. AWe replied that there was a focus on the management and mitigation of beaver presence and that if beavers were seen as a public benefit, then it was fitting that the public should pay for that benefit.

Battleby Weir

DS explained that the repeated damming of the fish pass at Battleby Weir by beavers was an ongoing issue and he was concerned about smolt migration.

SISI Project

Already discussed under 5 Report on Matters Arising.

Biosecurity Plan

DS stated that biosecurity plans had been an initiative driven by RAFTS some years ago in conjunction with all Scottish rivers. Updating these plans was an agreed part of the SISI project. He had now updated the plan and thought it a good idea to share.

ACTION: DS to circulate updated Biosecurity Plan to all Board members.

Dochart Bank Project

DS advised that he had liaised with SRUC (tenant) on the River Fillan regarding an embankment which he believed was now causing accelerated erosion downstream of it. There was in principle agreement to remove the embankment and reconnect the river with its floodplain. An initial survey to assess quantities would be undertaken by a contractor in May and that SRUC had agreed to pay half

the £1,800 (+VAT) consultancy charge, with the Board picking up the other half. Funding would be sought to carry out the actual removal work.

Dall Burn Weir

DS explained that apart from the River Gaur, the Dall was the only tributary of Loch Rannoch where fish could naturally go any significant distance. However, an impassable weir is situated about 500 yards upstream from Loch Rannoch. Restoring fish passage by 2027 was one of the agreed actions in SEPA's River Basin Management Plan 3. DS had previously submitted all information regarding this weir to SEPA. He had made enquiries regarding progress and was awaiting a reply. CMcG noted this was part of SEPA's RPM3 program to restore water bodies to good or excellent status which was now in its third phase. The Convener noted this would also be applicable to the Ericht.

River Garry

DS advised that the UHI were close to finalising an updated report on the presence of wild and stocked juveniles in the Garry. He added that once completed this would form a fascinating story as there was great depth to the monitoring detail.

Lochay

DS advised that he and the Convener had submitted papers to SSE, SEPA and NatureScot. DS and MB had visited 3 sites with SSE where there was concern surrounding 3 fish passes which might not be 100% effective. DS had suggested SSE needed to rethink the fish passes and replace them with wider and less steep passes which could operate at higher flows. He was encouraged that SSE were not wholly dismissive of the issue. Abstraction is also an issue in this area.
DS stated that he and the Convener had met with SEPA and SSE and they had learned about SEPA's review process for hydro abstraction.

Stanley Mill

DS explained that the presence of apparently trapped kelts at the hydro had been an issue and that this had been discussed with CMcG but required further discussion.

NEPS Project

DS explained this had not gone ahead in 2022 due to lack of Marine Scotland staff.

8. Plan of Additional Work Update

Sampling Adults

DS explained that NEPS would not happen in 2022 and that resource shortage had meant PIT tagging could also not go ahead this spring. But, he stated he had concerns regarding the low return rate of PIT tagged adult salmon at the Pitlochry dam detector. He was especially concerned that there might be increased mortality caused by the pit tagging process itself and this needed to be tested.
DS proposed tagging big parr in the Errochty in the autumn. By spring those which were going to die due to PIT tag process would not have survived or shed their tags and a comparison could be made between the surviving smolts and smolts caught in the smolt trap and tagged in the spring. DS had contacted Marine Scotland regarding funding.
ALL thought this a worthwhile project and gave their approval.

Lyon

DS will submit a paper on the Lyon issues to Scottish Government as part of the salmon strategy as it "fell between the cracks" of SEPA's CAR licensing policy and RBMP3. Basically, there appears to be an issue with low growth rate of fish and an abnormal invertebrate community which may be related to an altered temperature or chemistry regime, or both.

Loch Rannoch – TRT Development Project

DS explained that Eric Verspoor from TRT was looking to work with the TRT, Loch Rannoch Angling Club and the Rannoch Conservation Association to investigate rare genetic types of brown trout in the Rannoch area. He added that there were other species of coarse fish which had been introduced to small lochs in the Rannoch area and that the another proposed project would look at managing or removing these stocks. There would be a potential issue if any of these alien species spread to other parts of the river.

9. Director Report

Covered under items 7 &8 on Agenda

10. Operations Manager Report

MB on annual leave.

11. Hatchery Report

Hatchery Manager on annual leave. DS reported that all eggs had now been stocked out bar those which will be stocked in the Lochay as parr.

12. Health & Safety Report

DS advised there had been no reportable incidents since the last meeting that Green's of Haddington had visited in February and a report was imminent.
He advised that staff had undertaken a first aid refresher course.
(Awe left the meeting)

13. Tay Rivers Trust Update

Road Repair

CI reported that the road repairs continued to be one of the main TRT issues. He explained that the TRT were in the process of getting quotes for both soil nailing and gabion basket solutions.

Lease

As to the lease, he explained the Board wished to renew the lease with TRT but did not want to enter into a long term arrangement but would prefer a lease of a defined term with breaks. He added the Board had asked to maintain current rent and occupy hatchery building only. A heads of terms would be required.

MoU

This was now agreed by the TRT and was ready for sign off.

Projects

CI advised on the following:
Loch Rannoch Project - Eric Verspoor is seeking funding from NatureScot
Centenary Dinner – this is on track and is a huge achievement for the river
Malloch 2021 – A winner is to be decided imminently

14. Lease of Hatchery Building from Tay Rivers Trust Update

Covered under item 13 on agenda

15. **TRT/TDSFB Memorandum of Understanding Update**
    Covered under item 13 on agenda

16. **Marketing Update**
    The Convener expressed his appreciation of AW's work.

17. **Governance & Policies Update**
    JS congratulated NT and AP on their accounting procedures policies.
    NT advised that HR work with HR consultant was ongoing and progress had been made in job descriptions and contracts. It was agreed once these were finalised that they be presented to the Board for approval before being rolled out to employees.
    The Convener considered this a fundamental piece of work.

    JS updated the Board on the Board member Misconduct policy.

    ACTION: JS to liaise with FMS on Misconduct policy.

18. **Ghillies & Volunteers Lunch**

    ACTION: CMN/IMacG to liaise with BW

19. **AOB**

    Information Commissioner for Scotland
    A paper had been circulated prior to the meeting and was taken as read.
    IMacG explained the situation in full.

    The following items were discussed in private by the Board due to the fact they are of a commercially sensitive nature.

20. Minutes from Closed section of Meeting held 8th February 2022
21. Draft Budget 2022
22. Financial Report – Debtors Update
23. Proposals for co-optee Board member
24. AOB

End of Open Meeting Minutes

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 7th June at 7pm