TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

MINUTES FROM VIRTUAL ZOOM MEETING

10am Tuesday, 8th February 2022

Present:	Toby Metcalfe (TPM) (Convener), David Godfrey (DG), Claire Mercer Nairne (CMN), Jerry Saunders (JS), Nicola Thompson (NT), Bobby White (BW)
In Attendance:	Dr. David Summers (DS) (Fisheries Director), Inga MacGillivray (IMacG) (Clerk to the Board), Nicki McIntyre (NMcI) (NatureScot Representative)
	No members of the public were present.

1. **Apologies**
   Apologies were received from Calum Innes (CI), Andrew Parrott (AP), Mike Brown (MB) (Operations Manager) and Calum McGregor (CMcG) (SEPA Representative)

2. **Declaration of Interests**
   The Clerk intimated she had a declaration pertaining to the Strathfillan Community Development Trust who had kindly gifted the Board a year's membership permit to fish their waters.

3. **Minutes of Meeting held 14th December 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. They were proposed by JS and seconded by NT.

ACTION: IMacG to ensure Open Minutes from 14th December 2021 meeting on website

4. **Report on Matters Arising from Meeting held 14th December 2021**
   The report had been circulated previously and was taken as read.

   Lunan Water tree felling
   DS stated he considered this a key project for the Board to undertake. It would cost very little in terms of resources, as CMN would bear the brunt of the cost for the tree felling. He added that tree planting had become very popular in recent years but cautioned this could have a negative impact on salmon on certain lowland burns. He reasoned that the recently launched Scottish Government Salmon Strategy promoted evidence-based work, and that this project would provide evidence on the effects of habitat on salmonid populations.
   CMN agreed this was a worthwhile project but commented that it went against the grain of current thinking on tree planting activities.
   JS asked if the Board had the resources to carry out the project. DS replied that the Board staff had electrofished the area every year for about two hours per annum. He added that there could be a need

for invertebrate studies, which would take about one day per annum in the field. There may also be a need for a vegetation survey, which could be carried out for a modest fee by a consultant.
CMN stated that the purpose of the Board was to support and protect salmon and that tree planting there may not benefit salmon populations. She called for facts over perceptions.
After a short discussion, ALL agreed this should be a key project for the Board and were keen to see it taken forward.
The Convener stated he agreed in principle but expressed his concern over rising costs should further studies be required.
JS asked if the work could be carried out across a number of Boards, each perhaps analysing a different aspect. The Convener suggested this could be part of Scottish Government's Salmon implementation plan.
DS added that the big impetus at present was on tree planting in upland stream areas, whereas this project was focussed on lowland streams. He advised the Board should clearly set out their issues from the beginning in the hope these would be picked up by Scottish Government as part of their implementation plan.

ACTION: The Convener/DS to liaise with Forestry Scotland over Lunan tree felling project.

Piscivorous Bird Paper
DS stated the bird counts had been undertaken and the licence application would be with NatureScot by the end of the week.
BW expressed his gratitude to all the volunteers who had given time to the bird count and suggested a "get together" for all volunteers and ghillies involved. This could take the form of an informal meeting, thanking the participants for their help and explaining more about the bird count process, and should be extended to all areas of the river.
The Convener agreed this was an excellent idea and he would be delighted to attend.
After a short discussion it was agreed that the results of the bird count be shared with all involved.
The Convener thanked BW for his organisation of the bird count and encouraged Board members to attend the "get togethers".

ACTION: DS to submit piscivorous bird licence application to NatureScot
ACTION: BW to arrange ghillie/volunteer "get togethers" for upper, middle and lower areas of Tay along with Eden and Earn.
ACTION: DS to finalise bird count report and circulate to participants of bird count and Board

Ericht Abstraction sub committee
DS explained he had tried to get a meeting in place with CMcG but was awaiting a finalised date.
JS suggested the names of two people to take the places of former Board member Iain Wood and suspended Board member Mike Smith on the sub committee.
After some discussion the Convener thanked JS for his input and stated he was happy to involve the two new members if the Board approved but felt it necessary that he and DS meet with CMcG before calling a meeting of the sub committee. ALL agreed.

ACTION: The Convener/DS to meet with CMcG over Ericht abstraction
ACTION: Once Convener/DS have met with CMcG to call a meeting of sub committee.

5. **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 £281,253 to 1st February 2022 with a net deficit of (£12,940) to date. She explained this was normal due to minimal income being received until assessment invoices were sent out.

Draft Budget 2022

This was discussed immediately after item 5 on agenda. The Clerk took the meeting through the draft budget line by line explaining in detail how each figure had been arrived at. The Minutes are in the closed section of the meeting due to their being of a commercially sensitive nature.

6. **River Management Plan 2020/2021 Update**

DS had previously circulated the plan and this was taken as read. The Convener stated he was supportive of all proposals highlighted in green in the Directors report. He proposed the Board take time to digest the document and feed back to DS by the following week. Thereafter DS will be able to prepare the first draft of the new three year management plan for Board consideration.

ACTION: ALL Board members to feed back any comments to DS on draft River Plan by Friday 18th February 2022.

JS reminded Board members about the feedback from the 2021 plan consultation and asked if the Board or TRT could provide any science regarding the effect of beaver dams on upstream and downstream migration. DS replied that the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) were trying to raise significant funding for such a project. However, there was a risk that in gathering scientific evidence of the effects of beaver dam building (ie leaving dams in situ) this could inadvertently eradicate some salmon populations on certain parts of the Tay

NMcI stated that NatureScot was keen to hear any views on beavers and could be contacted through beavers@naturescot.com. There are also a couple of NatureScot officers who could provide practical help and on-site visits.
(DG left the meeting)
DS explained that he would be exploring the idea of adapting screens to exclude beavers from certain burns to ensure migrating salmon can pass with NatureScot and FMS.
(DG entered the meeting)

(The Board Meeting stopped for a comfort break and reconvened at 12:10pm.)

7. **Plan of Additional Work Update**

Not discussed.

8. **Director Report**

This was previously circulated and taken as read.

9. **Operations Manager Report**

MB had submitted the Operations Manager Report. As he was on annual leave, this had been circulated and was taken as read.

10. **Hatchery Report**

Report had been circulated previously and was taken as read. DS explained that the number of eggs produced by the hatchery had been less than prior years due to poor weather during broodstock catching time and COVID restriction impact on hatchery.

11. Health & Safety Report

DS advised there had been no reportable incidents since the last meeting and he would be meeting Green's of Haddington for the Health and Safety audit the following week. TM added that staff training was a priority post COVID noting that an enhanced provision for training costs had been included in the budget.

12. Tay Rivers Trust Update

CI was unable to make the meeting but had sent a summary of TRT activities.

ACTION: IMacG to send Board members the TRT Update email from CI

The Convener explained that the main activities the TRT were focussing on were the road repairs, which had now been passed to another expert firm due to complications with neighbouring landowners. IMacG updated the Board on Salmon in the Classroom work. The Convener stated that the Crown Estate Scotland may have funds available for such a project and the TRT should consider applying for financial support.

ACTION: IMacG to add Crown Estate Scotland potential funding of SITC project on next TRT agenda

DS explained the Upper Tummel project and JS updated Board members on the proposed fundraising dinner to be held later in the year details of which will be ready for final approval by the end of the month.

13. Lease of Hatchery Building from Tay Rivers Trust Update

The Convener advised that he and CI were to meet on 22nd February to discuss the matter.

14. TRT/TDSFB Memorandum of Understanding Update

The Convener stated the MoU had been circulated to Board members and was awaiting feedback. There was general agreement that the MoU should be displayed on the website.

ACTION: ALL to feedback comments on MoU to DS before DS follows up with CI.

15. Marketing Update

AW had provided a marketing report which was circulated previously and taken as read. The Convener expressed his pleasure at the work AW had undertaken which had raised the profile of the river.

CMN explained there would be an event which she and AW were working on which would be on the 18th to 19th March. The event would be open to all, with casting demonstrations and other attractions.

ACTION: IMacG to ask AW to produce a short paper on the event to distribute to Board.

CMN noted that it would be advisable to have the Opening Day press release sooner rather than later for 2023.

16. **Governance & Policies Update**

NT advised that the finance proposals had been rewritten to policy papers, with input from Iain Wood and that debtors procedures had also been examined.
As to volunteers, she, DS and AW had met and produced a paper, currently with the Convener and CI and effectively seeking funding for a Volunteer Officer post.
NT intimated that the HR Consultant had been busy reviewing staff contracts and policies and this had been communicated to staff at a recent team meeting.
DS added that this work should be completed by next Board meeting.

JS stated that the FMS code of conduct – misconduct of a Board member section did not include a right to appeal process and wished to take this up with FMS.
There was no strong feeling from the floor and therefore JS agreed to update the Board policyand liaise with FMS regarding their policy along the lines of current ACAS procedures.

ACTION: JS to formally propose amendment to Board policy and liaise with FMS

17. **Ghillies & Volunteers Lunch**

BW suggested Ghillies and Volunteers "get togethers" as previously mentioned in the "Matters Arising" section. These should be in the evening to allow ghillies and volunteers to attend and should cover Upper, Middle and Lower sections of the river, along with the Eden and Earn. There was some discussion surrounding the item with the following actions agreed.

ACTION: The Convener/DS & IMacG to work up a format for the events
ACTION: BW to feed back how many meetings were required, with venues and dates/times.

The Convener reiterated that he was very keen for the Board to engage with ghillies and volunteers.

18. **AOB**

SISI Project

The Convener stated that funding for the project would end in October and he was keen for the project to continue.

ACTION: The Convener/DS/IMacG to meet with MPC to consider how the project might be extended.

Scottish Government Salmon Strategy

The Convener wondered if it might be a good idea to invite Alan Wells of FMS to the next Board meeting to explain the strategy. ALL agreed this was a good idea.

ACTION: IMacG to ask Alan Wells of FMS to attend next Board meeting.

TGA

The Convener stated there had been no further correspondence with the TGA with regard to their FOI request and that they had been provided with as much information as the Board could give.

Open Meeting

IMacG asked the Board for their views on the venue for the next Open Meeting. After some discussion it was decided the meeting should take place via Zoom as it was felt this format provided the most flexible opportunity for interested parties to attend.

Proprietor invitations to Board meetings

JS asked if proprietors were still invited to Board meetings. The Convener replied that this would be resumed for April meeting.

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

19. Minutes from Closed section of Meeting held 14th December 2021
20. Draft Budget 2022
21. Financial Report – Debtors Update
22. Proposals for co-optee Board member
23. AOB

End of Open Meeting Minutes

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, 12th April at 10am