TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD
MINUTES FROM MEETING
10am Thursday, 23rd February 2023

Present:	Toby Metcalfe (TPM Convener), David Godfrey (DG), Claire Mercer Nairne (CMN), Jerry Saunders (JS), Nicola Thompson (NT), Bobby White (BW), John Nevin (JN), David Sands (DSa), Mike Smith (MS), Andrew Parrott (AP), Jonathon Muir (JM)
In Attendance:	Dr. David Summers (DS) Fisheries Director, Inga MacGillivray (IMacG) Clerk to the Board, Nicki MacIntyre (NMcI, NatureScot representative No members of the public attended the physical meeting.

1. **Apologies**
   Apologies were received from Calum Innes (CI)

   Before the meeting commenced, the Convener officially welcomed JM to the Board.

2. **Declaration of Interests Update**
   There were no new declarations of interest.

3. **Minutes of Meeting held 13th December 2022**
   The Minutes had been circulated prior to the meeting and were taken as read. All agreed the Minutes showed a true and fair reflection of the meeting and the Convener signed the Minutes.

4. **Report on Matters Arising from Meeting held 13th December 2022**
   The report had been circulated previously but was not taken as read and the following points were noted:

   Minutes from meeting held 25th October 2023:
   IMacG had amended the minutes to reflect the Convener's comments and subsequent board approval. The Convener signed the Minutes.

   Health & Safety:

   ACTION: DS to arrange a H&S meeting with all staff.

   Fillan Bank Project:
   DS explained the Scottish Rural College (SRUC) and Loch Lomond Countryside Trust were keen to proceed with investigating the project. A Wild Strathfillan initiative had been set up and this would be its first project with others being developed in due course. Funding to develop the project had been received from the Nature Restoration Fund. DS advised the project required both landowners to be on board. A meeting with both had taken place and a flood risk assessment would be commissioned.

JS asked what the project entailed. DS replied the project covered some of the best spawning grounds on the Dochart. During the 1970s the Scottish Office had installed a long flood defence scheme which was built around 6 feet above the flood plain. Unfortunately, during a spate, the water did not spread out, but instead had exacerbated bank erosion downstream.

The Convener asked if Loch Lomond National Park could cover some of the costs of project delivery. DS replied that the whole cost would be funded by the Nature Restoration Fund.
JS asked if the cost of TDSFB Fisheries Officers time to clear the site could be recouped from funding. DS replied he did not think this would be the case.

ACTION: DS to take the project forward with the project partners

Replacement Fisheries Officer:
The Convener intimated this would be discussed at the budget meeting.

Beaver License:
DS has raised the issue with the NatureScot licensing officer but has not yet contacted NFUS.

Loch Lomond & Trossachs Authority:
DS advised that he had attended the "future nature route map" meeting and had circulated the document to all board members the previous evening. He explained the LLTA were keen for organisations to sign up to the initiative and that he would be supportive of the board engaging. He added that water and river restoration was one of the themes of the initiative. DS stated that the Cononish was vulnerable to overheating and that tree planting and peat land restoration would be applicable now. The board could inform LLTA of their priorities and LLTA could then push these forward.
The Convener asked the board if they would agree to allow DS to follow this up as it affected roughly 5% of Dochart and Loch Earn and some of the earliest spring salmon.
DSa asked if the Lochay was included to which DS replied it was not.
The Convener asked how much of DS time the project would consume. DS replied that it wouldn't be too onerous.
JM asked if the proposals included benefit to salmon. DS replied that the proposals did include benefit to salmon and that was why he would ask the board to get involved.

ACTION: The board agreed to the proposal and asked DS to take forward with project partners.

MS indicated that he was finding it hard to make an informed contribution and decisions because the board papers were issued so late. NT stated that IMacG had been on sick leave and that she was uncomfortable with the board taking issue with a member of staff on sick leave. Various other board members agreed with this sentiment.
MS then asked DS when the LLTA paper had been produced. DS replied that it had been distributed a couple of weeks previously. MS commented it could have been distributed earlier.
The Convener sympathised with MS frustration but stated the cause of the problem was lack of resource. This would be alleviated by the Administration Assistant post being filled.
JS stated that DS and IMacG had been very busy with meetings the past week at least.

TDSFB/TRT Joint Meeting:
The Convener advised he and CI (Chairman of TRT) had agreed a joint meeting would be beneficial.

ACTION: IMacG to agree with CI and to invite TRT to TDSFB meeting on 6th June 2023 at 7pm

5. Financial Report
IMacG advised February meeting was usually when the budget was set. However, this had been thwarted by two of the biggest drivers in terms of numbers not being available: the assessment revaluation figures were not finalised and she had only received the wage increase figures the previous evening. She therefore proposed holding a separate budget meeting in the next couple of weeks. All agreed this would be a good idea.

Fishpal:
IMacG explained that Sam Carlisle from Fishpal had been unable to attend this meeting and would not be able to attend the April board meeting. After some discussion, all agreed the Fishpal and budget meetings could be combined and held on Zoom.

ACTION: IMacG to arrange Fishpal/budget meeting to be held in next fortnight.

Revaluation:
DSa asked why the salmon fishing revaluation rates were sent out so late – i.e. they are to be sent out late March and are effective from beginning of April. IMacG explained the valuation office was under resourced and the process that has to be followed to deal with rating appeals It is expected that the overall valuation on the river will reduce reflecting a period of lower catches.
AP asked if perhaps the Perth Joint Valuation Board complaints procedure could be used to highlight the situation.

ACTION: IMacG to complain to Perth Joint Valuation Board regarding the timings of revaluation rates on behalf of the board.

JS asked how many assessor areas the board dealt with. IMacG replied 3.
The Convener thanked MS for chairing the remuneration committee and the salary reviews.
DG stated it would be useful for all to have sight of how the valuations are calculated.

ACTION: IMacG to ask Joint Valuation Board for formula for calculation of rateable values and circulate to board members.

DSa asked if everyone received valuation notices and if appealed, were these backdated. IMacG replied that every proprietor is issued with a valuation notice and that appeals were backdated, which caused budgeting issues.
DSa asked if the percentage charged on the levy invoices could be standardised for smaller amounts, say £300 charged to all small proprietors. IMacG stated that the same percentage should be applied to all proprietors.
JS mentioned the Dee invoiced in a slightly different way.

ACTION: IMacG to ask Dee how they invoice and circulate to all board members.

The Convener noted that although income may be difficult to gauge until the revaluation was finalised, the expenditure could be calculated.

ACTION: IMacG to circulate draft budget w/c 27/02/23.

Fishpal:

IMacG advised that the Fishpal contract required to be renegotiated.
MS stated he thought it wrong to spend £6k on Fishpal and JN agreed.
DG was of the opinion that Fishpal needed the support of boards and anglers. Letting capabilities would suffer if beats shunned Fishpal, as catches would not be captured. He saw it as important to keep a contract with Fishpal as it is one of the most searched angling sites in the UK.
CMN suggested giving Fishpal set objectives such as promotion of events on the Tay.
The Convener noted it would be useful to have proposals and alternative propositions.

There was a discussion surrounding Elveguiden, a Norwegian fishing platform which had recently started taking bookings from some Tay beats. These beats had now been removed from Fishpal. The feeling from the floor was this was outwith the scope of the board. However, the beats had stopped providing catch information on Fishpal and had stopped providing information to the weekly Tay report.

ACTION: All to provide feedback to IMacG on any propositions/ideas for new Fishpal contract.
ACTION: DS to speak with Ian Wood about providing the board with the catches for the beats that he represents.

Tay Scottish Invasive Species dedicated officer:

IMacG informed the board that Mark Purrmann-Charles would be the dedicated SISI officer on the Tay from1st April 2023. This would have an impact on cash flow as MPC's costs would be recouped on a quarterly basis from NatureScot. She did not think this would be too much of an issue. However, MPC had the option of a lease vehicle, of which she thought 6 months would be paid by NatureScot.
The board agreed to fund the other 6 months lease costs should this be necessary.

ACTION: IMacG to investigate the lease deal for SISI project vehicle.

Vehicles:

IMacG advised the board that a second hand pick up had been bought and the new Isuzu had arrived at the garage.
MS enquired about branding of new vehicles. IMacG replied she had spoken to the Fisheries Officers team and they had stated they did not require permanent signage as they carried out surveillance work, but they could use magnetic signage for project work.

ACTION: IMacG to arrange for magnetic signage for new vehicles.

JN suggested dash cams for the vehicles. DS replied these had been fitted already in the vehicles.

Audit Letter:

IMacG discussed the audit letter in detail, praising the auditors for completing the audit smoothly and issuing a letter which kept the board informed.

JS asked that it be officially recorded that IMacG had done a great job and the accounts had a clean bill of health.

DSa asked if the audit could be carried out sooner, so the board could be made aware of any issues sooner rather than later. IMacG replied this could be done but her resources were stretched. It was on the cards for the 2022 accounts.

(JM left the meeting)

Marketing and Social Media:
DG asked if AW was still working for the board. DS replied she was. JS added that TRT were negotiating a contract with her.
JS commented that the audit letter had flagged the risk with having one person dealing with finances and the effects of this if that person went on long term sick leave. The Convener added that this underpinned the decision of the board to appoint an admin assistant.

ACTION: IMacG to ensure finances on next meeting agenda.

6. **Management Plan - Director Report**.
DS had circulated the paper prior to the meeting but it was not taken as read.

Seals:
DS advised that there had been a proposal from outwith the board to investigate the possibility of a legal challenge to the seal licence issue. The Convener had reported that there was not much support from the Tay for spending money on a judicial review.
DS continued that Fisheries Management Scotland had met with Marine Scotland to discuss the issue. The Dee had tried a new method involving a jet ski with a seal scarer attached.
DS had been told that seal scarers were unlikely to work on the Tay. He was however investigating their cost and workability. He urged the board to consider seal scaring methods as it was perhaps the best that could be hoped for.
BW commented that there was an abundance of evidence of seal predation issues on salmon stocks from other rivers. He did not see why rivers had to provide further evidence.
DG asked if the right to shoot any rogue seals ascending the river had been lost. It had, effectively.
JS asked if it would help if anglers/ghillies were to report seal damage.

ACTION: DS to circulate seal spotting app details to board.

Fisheries Management Plan:
DS advised that money had been provided to boards for the Fisheries Management Plan. This would use Storymap which was a GIS based system. He explained the Forth had an officer dedicated to Storymap. DS explained he had been working on the project for some weeks, populating a spreadsheet taken from the board's three year plan. He would submit this in the next week to FMS and would earn the board £4.5k.
CMN asked if the board could tap into the wild fishery fund, although she pointed out the funds were derived from fish farms. DS explained the fund had been set up in conjunction with FMS and was largely to fund west coast projects. He thought it might not be appropriate for the Tay to apply for funds from this source given it was really intended for under-resourced west coast rivers and there had been much criticism in the angling world over it being "dirty money".

JS added that there had been much criticism of FMS and the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) for receiving fish farm funding. BW stated it was a pity JM was not available to explain the situation with the AST.

Riverwoods Project:
DS advised that the Riverwoods Project was well funded, and that Scottish Wildlife was backing it. He urged the attendees to watch the film.
DSa commented that the film's main thrust was that water temperatures were rising, and trees could be planted to supply shade.
DS replied this was an element of the film, but the film also included the idea that salmon "lived in trees", i.e. fallen trees. He questioned the percentage of the salmon population which would live in fallen trees in local boulder rivers which were full of cover anyway. DS advised that two Tay groups had been accepted for funding by Riverwoods to develop projects. One project involved planting trees in the Ericht area and the other on the upper Almond.
DS had been asked to advise on both projects and had done so.
DSa suggested offering advice and a contact point for Rannoch proprietors in the Rannoch area.
JS commended DS on his report on arable burns and the convener seconded this sentiment.

JS stated that the TRT were looking at projects to encourage riparian fencing to improve habitat.
CMN intimated that fencing had a short shelf life as her estate had experienced significant damages to fencing due to different user groups.

Consultancy:
DS advised that board staff had carried out 5 fish rescues the previous year and had invoiced out around £9k. On discussion with other boards, the TDSFB pricing was slightly higher in comparison.
The convener asked if all board members were happy with the rates being charged. All were happy.

Lochay:
DS updated that SEPA were progressing a review of SSE license and that progress was being made. He had attended meetings and would share more with the board once the process was completed.

Lunan:
DS stated a report had been submitted but there was no feedback as yet.

Ericht:
DS advised the issues were still ongoing with a second letter being sent to Mairi Gougeon MSP. So far, no reply had been received.
JS stated the next stage was to mount a public pressure campaign. JS asked for board approval to continue. The convener stated he thought the initiative dovetailed well and fulfilled the board's statutory obligation to protect salmon. NT commented that the board had little control over non board members in the sub-committee.
JS explained that the Ericht was in a mess with pollution, abstraction, beaver issues and asbestos issues.
The convener added that he had attended a meeting the previous week with the sub-committee and was pleased by the level of local support for the group.
NMcI added that the council had put money into fixing the dump issues and had found asbestos. DS explained that part of the dump had been fixed but this had been washed away.

ACTION: AP to circulate update on asbestos issues on the Ericht from Perth & Kinross Council.

JN asked if the gate could be repaired. DS replied a gate repair might make little difference as people imagined the gates were a huge problem, but in reality it was the abstraction licence that allowed the water to be taken. Indeed, at certain times, the fish farm is legally entitled to abstract most of the flow.

7. **Operations Manager Report**
The Operations Manager report had been sent out prior to the meeting and was taken as read.

8. **Hatchery Report**
The Hatchery Report had been sent out prior to the meeting and was taken as read.

9. **Scottish Government Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan**
The convener advised that IMacG would circulate the minutes of the meeting held with Alan Wells of FMS regarding the implementation plan

ACTION: IMacG to circulate minutes of Implementation Meeting plan to all board members.

The convener noted he had asked the local SEPA head for an implementation plan between now and 2027 for all projects affecting the Tay catchment.
MS expressed his frustration with the apparent lack of progress with SEPA issues on the Tay.
He suggested listing all projects and correspondence regarding these projects and handing over the full list to SEPA.
BW added that it was good to have spoken to Alan Wells of FMS and he should be updated on a regular basis. The convener asked who was attending the FMS AGM at the end of March as he would be going along with DS. JS said he could probably attend too.
DS explained SEPA were due to give a talk on hydro reviews and DS would be following this with a board perspective.
The convener stated he would like to see projects delivered and was concerned about SEPA's resources to deliver.

ACTION: IMacG to circulate FMS conference details to all again.

JS stated he was disappointed with the egg count for the year. DS replied the count was not finalised and there were another 400k eggs to go.

10. **Health & Safety Report**
DS advised there had been no reportable incidents since the last meeting. The convener added he had read the report and that DS would be holding a H&S staff meeting in due course.

11. **Staffing Report Update**
NT reported that the SISI project officer would be transferring from the Esk to the Tay full time and this had presented some technical issues which IMacG and the HR consultant were covering.
She advised that TRT were advertising for a Development Officer position and the proposed joint meeting between the TRT and the TDSFB would be helpful for the successful candidate.
NT explained that the Administration Assistant job description was with IMacG and the HR consultant and this would be circulated once finalised.
She added that the contracts meeting would be held the following week to iron out minor issues identified. Hatchery cover was the main issue to be covered off.

12. **TRT Update**

The convener advised that work would start on the road w/c 6th March 2023. DS added that JML contracts had won the tender and briefly explained the process.

(AP left the meeting)

The convener added that he had an action under the hatchery heading.

ACTION: The convener to chase Antje Branding regarding funding for the TDSFB hatchery.

The convener advised that CI was chasing Blackadders on the lease issue.

JS stated that the Malloch Dinner date would be Saturday 7th October 2023. He would be contacting the 2022 dinner attendees first to give them first refusal before opening up the invite.

JN asked who owned the shed next to the hatchery. DS advised that TRT were the owners. JN intimated he may know of someone who would be willing to rent it out for boat storage.

13.Loch Lomond & Trossachs Authority

This was covered previously in the meeting under item 4 matters arising..

14.Marketing Update

The Marketing report had been circulated previously but was not taken as read.
IMacG went through the report. She advised that a Norwegian based fishing website had been caught plagiarising TDSFB website material. She had taken legal advice on the matter and was advised to contact the site owners, asking that the material be taken down with immediate effect. She pointed out that AW had detailed the issues in her marketing report.
The convener had intimated he would prefer the site to keep the content but would like if they could make a donation to TRT as a gesture of goodwill.
MS suggested he could deal with the matter informally by speaking to the UK contact for the website.
The board decided to ask DS to follow up the matter.

ACTION: DS to contact Iain Wood regarding plagiarism issue and catch returns.

15. AOB

Insurance Quotes:

MS asked if the insurance had been concluded. IMacG replied she thought from the correspondence received, that the quotes were similar but this had been superceded since she had been on sick leave. The insurance was due by 1st February and had been paid by the existing company to give continuous cover.
MS advised IMacG scrutinised utility bills as he had encountered issues with his business accounts.

Buchanty Spout:

MS had been on site and would discuss with DS .

ACTION: DS to give update on Buchanty Spout.

SSE Compensation payment:
MS asked if the SSE payment was static. DS replied it had risen year on year but was not strictly a compensation payment for damage done. He explained the payment briefly. DG added that compensation used to be paid to proprietors.

ACTION: DG to ask Simon Clarke about contract clauses on compensation.

Earn Electrofishing:
BW advised he had attended the Dunning Angling Club AGM and had been asked by Jim Perrett if burns could be electrofished to ascertain if there was a case for mitigation stocking. Mr. Perrett believed many burns could be quite steep and were prone to being washed out by flooding.

ACTION: DS to ask Fisheries officer team to monitor Earn burns for juvenile stock issues.

BW lamented the fact there was no Earn representative on the board any more. IMacG pointed out that they could still attend board meetings as the meetings were public.

Environmental Information Requests(EIR's):
IMacG updated the board on the number and status of all EIR's and complaints.
JS noted that proprietors may be interested in the amount of time and resource taken by the board and staff to process these requests.

DSa left the meeting.

TDSFB Policies:
JS stated that the new policies had all been adopted and the website should reflect the new complaints procedure.

ACTION: Complaints policy to be updated on website.

Annual Public Meeting:
IMacG advised this would be held on 15th March at Birnam Arts Centre and she would book and advertise the meeting accordingly.

NMcI left the meeting.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending and the Open section of the meeting came to a close.

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

16. Minutes of Closed Meeting held 13th December 2022
17.Financial Report – Debtors Update
18.AOB

End of Open Meeting Minutes

The next meeting is scheduled to be held physically at the Summerhill hatchery on Tuesday 11th April at 10am