TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

MINUTES FROM MEETING

10am Tuesday, 17th October 2023

Present:	David Godfrey (Chair DG), Calum Innes (CI), Claire Mercer Nairne (CMN), Jerry Saunders (JS), John Nevin (JN)(part), David Sands (Dsa), Mike Smith (MS)(part), Jonathon Muir (JM), Nicola Thompson (NT)
In Attendance:	Dr. David Summers (DS) Fisheries Director, Inga MacGillivray (IMacG) Clerk to the Board, Lee Harvey (Admin Assistant), Nicki MacIntyre (NMcI) Nature Scot representative. Two members of the public attended the meeting .

1. **Apologies**
   Apologies were received from Toby Metcalfe (TPM, Convener), Bobby White (BW), and Andrew Parrott (AP).

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

3. **Minutes from meeting held 8th August 2023**
   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 Chair signed the Minutes.

4. **Report on Matters Arising from Meeting held 8th August 2023**

   TGA Hatchery Visit:
   DS updated that the meeting had been held at MS's premises in Dunkeld and had been amicable. He pointed out that he had been informed that 8 TGA members were looking forward to a hatchery visit. Unfortunately, they had been informed that DS did not want them to visit the hatchery, which was untrue. DS was more than keen to extend an invitation to TGA members to visit the hatchery. NT asked if the invite could be publicised more widely.

   (MS & JN arrived)

   After a short discussion the following action was agreed:

ACTION: DS to reply to TGA and formally invite them all for a hatchery visit.

Financial Report:

Iain Wood Financial Queries:

The Clerk stated she had replied to all of Iain Wood's queries and asked MS if he had heard anything further, as she had not. MS had not heard anything about the matter either.

Boat:

DS stated he had not had time to look into the matter and this was outstanding on the list.

ACTION: DS to investigate cost of boat being put back in regular service, and circulate to all Board members.

Management Plan – Director Report:

Lochay License:

DS stated he had received the license but had not had time to review.

Meeting with Police:

DS informed the board that he had tried to arrange a meeting with the divisional commander a couple of years previously and had asked for another meeting but had yet to hear back.

ACTION: DS to report back once meeting arranged with police.

Dee Hatchery Proposal:

DS had informed the Dee of the Board's decision not to take forward their proposal. The Dee had informed him that they had approached another hatchery resource.
CI raised his concern that the Dee were unlikely to be allowed to stock as they wished.

AOB:

Marketing:

DG stated that the board needed a media presence and suggested the Dattas be contracted to carry out work until the end of the year, with a view to the new board firming up an arrangement when they took over after the election. All agreed this was a sensible course of action.

ACTION: IMacG to contact Dattas regarding provision of marketing expertise until end of year.

JS added that it would be good for the board to release a newsletter stating what the current board had achieved. DG suggested it go out before the elections in December. All agreed this was a good idea.

ACTION: IMacG/DS to liaise with The Convener regarding a newsletter to go out prior to the December meeting.

5. Financial Report

The clerk presented the latest cash account figures to the board.
DSa asked if there was a problem with debt collection for the current year. IMacG replied it was purely a resource issue and some invoices had only just been sent out, with a few remaining to be sent. DG commented that the issue had been raised a lot and a policy was required.
NT pointed out that a policy had been put in place and agreed there was a resource issue but that the appointment of LH should alleviate the problem.

ACTION: IMacG to produce plan of action for debtors with a view to clearing them by end of year.

MS suggested board members become involved and call debtors to make them aware of arrears. NT explained she and the convener had already done this.
JN suggested using the sherriff court to recover the debt. DG stated the debtor figures should be accurate before sent to court.
There followed a short discussion with the following actions being agreed:

ACTION: IMacG to look into charging interest on current debts where applicable.

6. **Management Plan – Director Report**

Pitlochry Fish Counter:

DS noted that the fish counter at Pitlochry now included an AI identification system. The count was 1,487 the previous week which was more than double what the old counter had registered. He explained the new counter still had issues, notably it was only operational between 7am and 7pm at present and did not work in coloured water.

DSa asked if DS had any faith in the new system, as it was an important management tool. DS replied he was fairly confident in the numbers, as everything was on video so could be checked. He reckoned the number was nearer to 2,000 than 1,487. He and the Operations Manager had attended a meeting with SSE and had been impressed by the new system.

DG asked if the system would be fully operational next year, to which DS replied it would. He added that SSE had installed a system on the Lochay and hoped to set up a network of counters in time. He noted that to be fair to SSE, they were trying hard to rectify the issue.

CMN asked if the historical figures were reliable. DS replied it was well known that fish had been missed from the counts in the past. Indeed, in 2004/5, he explained that SSE had put cameras in to watch the fish, and 50% of grilse had been missed from the count. SSE had rectified this by installing extra rings in the counter system to detect these fish. DS explained that when the nets were decommissioned this meant there were more grilse in summer and for a number of years up to 2005 there was likely to have been significant undercounting. In 2018, SSE upgraded the resistivity counter system but it became too complicated and the count became unreliable. The next upgrade to the resistivity counter in 2022 appears just to have exacerbated the issue.

DG stated counters were a useful tool for the board but was difficult to manage as it was SSE that managed the counters and not the board. JS asked if juvenile counts gave a better picture, to which DS replied they did. DG asked DS to keep pressure on SSE and to share the issue with the wider world. DS replied he would certainly share the story once the full picture was revealed. Indeed, he noted the board and SSE had been in dialogue over the issue for over 2 years.

Bird Licence:

DS explained this had now been received, although he had asked for a license for male goosanders on the Earn and this appeared to have been overlooked. He was in discussion with NatureScot on the matter.

Seal Licence:

DS noted that the sea mammal research unit wanted to trial a sonar device which would detect seals, initially on Scone estate.

ACTION: JS to liaise with DS regarding seal sonar device on Scone estate.

Broodstock Application:

DS explained the broodstock licence was now further depleted due to Marine Scotland's decision not to allow stocking the main stem of the Garry anymore. Initially, the stocking policy had allowed for stocking for 4 years maximum. However, the board had been allowed to stock longer than this and had indeed proved that some salmon had returned. DS had contested the decision but this was refused. DS added that mitigation stocking had been granted for the Glas Choire area but the number of eggs allowed had fallen from circa 300k to100k.

DS noted that broodstock licence had allowed for 60 on the Tilt – now 18; Garry had been 60 – now 12.

JS asked if the decision had been influenced by the recent Pitlochry Angling Club correspondence, to which DS replied this probably had not helped. The main issue had however been the counter figure which was sitting at 700 when the figure was closer to 2,000. He explained Marine Scotland policy allowed for 2% of fish in river to be collected for broodstock.

JS asked if hatchery capacity could be bolstered by non SAC waters. DS replied he had submitted an application for the Eden and Earn and had been granted 5 from Eden and 60 from Earn in the licence.

CMN suggested using FMS to negotiate higher figures. DS explained that NatureScot were also in the mix as they did not permit enhancement stocking in an SAC.

JM asked what the 2% broodstock figure was based on. DS explained Marine Scotland used a scaling process which incorporated counters and rod catch figures, neither of which were 100% reliable. However, if they indicated fish were not there, then the likelihood was this was actually the case. JM suggested having better counter system. JS asked how this could be done in practical terms.

MS suggested mitigation stocking against predation. DS explained this was unlikely to be approved under current Marine Scotland policy.

DSa wondered if hatchery funding would be better spent elsewhere. DG explained that the issue had been discussed many times. He added that proprietors wanted to fund the hatchery, and that it also represented a beacon of hope for anglers and proprietors. JS added that the proprietor survey had indeed shown the proprietors were keen to fund the hatchery.

Temperature Logging:

DS noted the project would be taken forward by Andy Sides, who had been recruited by the Tay Rivers Trust as Project Development Officer. He explained that temperature loggers had been deployed in the Shee in July and had been removed before the recent storms hit. The data had been extracted and shown that temperatures could fluctuate in shallower upper tributaries but remained fairly stable lower down the tributaries, which was as DS had predicted.

7. Operations Manager Report

There was no Operations Manager report due to resource issues.

8. Hatchery Report

There was no hatchery report due to resources. DS explained that the important hatchery issues had been discussed in his management report.

9. **Fishpal Contract**

MS explained that Sam Carlisle had stepped down from Fishpal and he and CMN were now dealing with his replacement, Will Draper. In short, they had agreed to a reduced fee of £4,500 and had removed the exclusivity clause.
MS suggested leaving for the new board to decide. All agreed this was the best way forward.
IMacG asked what had been agreed for 2023 and that there had been no invoices. The feeling from the floor was to leave the situation as it was.

10. **December 2023 Voting**

MS stated he thought the board's auditors should be verifying the votes, and not FMS as the Clerk had suggested. DG questioned whether the auditors were truly independent as they were paid by the board. JS agreed that FMS were suitable, as did CI and NT.
A short discussion ensued with the board agreeing to approach Wattie Barbour to be verifier.

ACTION: DS to contact Wattie Barbour to be independent vote verifier at election.

MS stated he had previously asked how many votes were available and the split between upper and lower and had still not had a reply from the Clerk. The Clerk explained she had been very busy on statutory and staff work but would answer his request as soon as she could.

ACTION: IMacG to supply MS with total number of votes for both upper and lower beats as soon as she can.

11. **Health & Safety Report**

DS reported no notifiable accidents in the last two months.

ACTION: DS/IMacG to rebadge H&S Manual as Board and Trust manual for TRT new employee

12. **Staffing Report Update**

NT updated that LH was now in position and that IMacG could now work with the HR consultant with a view to finalising her contract. She added that DS would also need time with the HR consultant to finalise his contract.

ACTION: DS/IMacG to ensure all staff contracts finalised by end of year.

13. **TRT Update**

CI advised that the recent fundraising dinner had raised £17k in funds and voiced his disappointment at the lack of support from the board. He added that John Apthorp had been extremely generous in donating wine, and that the TRT had celebrated David Barwick's 50 years on the Tay with a presentation and speech.

Project Development Officer:

CI noted the PDO was now in place and that he would be furthering the Upper Shee Project.

Lease between TDSFB and TRT:

CI advised this was in hand and a draft lease had been prepared. DG asked what the break period was, to which CI replied it was a 12month rolling lease.

Roadworks:

CI advised the roadworks had now been completed and the TRT had met with residents to see if anyone had an appetite for further improving the road. Another tender had been drawn up to fill in potholes and repair damaged surfaces, which most residents were comfortable to contribute to.

Crayfish:

MS asked if there were any action points on the crayfish project. CI advised that crayfish were invasive and were active in the upper Shee. The TRT were trying to establish their spread, with samples being taken this year and more to be taken the following year. DS added that it was not clear what impact crayfish had on salmon populations but they had definitely spread in the Ericht and could be a potential issue. JN asked if they were a protected species. DS replied that a license was required to fish for them but it was unlikely you would receive a licence unless you were conducting scientific work.

14. EIR Update

IMacG gave an update on the EIR status.

15. AOB

TGA Minutes:

JS raised his concerns that the TGA minutes reflected a continuing bullying and harassment of the Clerk. He pointed out that the board had a duty to protect staff against such behaviour and that the minutes had contained untruths.

DG replied that the Clerk had set the record straight in her reply to all board members and suggested that the TGA moved on from this. JN agreed the TGA should move on.
MS stated that from his perspective the meeting had been productive but agreed the issues should be left in the past.
There was a short discussion and the feeling from the floor was that the board had done all it could to forward relations but the TGA were unfortunately unable to let go of past issues.

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

(The members of the public left the meeting)

The following items were discussed in private by the board as they were of a commercially sensitive nature.

16.Financial Report – Debtors Update
20.AOB

End of Open Meeting Minutes

The next meeting is scheduled to be held physically at the Birnam Arts Centre on Wednesday, 6th December 2023 at 9:30am, followed by the AGM and Triennial election at 11am.