TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

DRAFT MINUTES FROM MEETING

10am, 6th August 2024

Present:	Claire Mercer-Nairne (CMN) Chair, Toby Metcalfe (TM), Iain Wood (IW), Alan Craig (AC), Nicola Thompson (NT), Calum Innes (CI), Lorraine Henderson (LEH), Andrew Parrot (AP), Jim Perrett (JP), Iain Wood (IW)
In Attendance:	Dr.David Summers (DS) Fisheries Director, Lee Harvey (LH) Admin Assistant
Apologies:	David Godfrey (DG), Bobby White (BW)

1. **Presentation by Sean Robertson from FMS**

   Sean Robertson gave a thorough presentation of how the seal spotting app could be adapted to log sightings of piscivorous birds.

   DS suggested that a coordinated count where everyone logs the sightings using the app would save an enormous amount of work. CMN Agreed and felt that the app could also be used to remind users of dates and times of counts. AC thought that the app could pull all the information together and allows you to see what everyone is doing. DS mentioned that users could be able to report on the app at anytime and also use the synchronized data for a licence application.

   Sean Robertson suggested a drop down menu could be added to filter data into synchronized and one off sightings.

   DS asked if Goosanders could be split into male and female as this was necessary for licence applications.

   LEH suggested that a focus group of individuals from up and down the river could run a pilot to iron out any issues with the app prior to roll out. Sean thought it would be great to be able to do this and LEH offered to identify individuals who would be willing to take part.

   CMN asked about promoting the app and how to inform angling groups etc. NT suggested that BW may be able to assist. JP suggests a WhatsApp group for all up and down the river. NT felt that the app would flag areas not covered and allow BW to look at mapping.

   IW suggested a short instruction video would be very helpful.

   Sean Robertsons presentation and Q&A session ended.

2. **LEH Brief introduction to the Board**

Lorraine Henderson (LEH) had joined the Board as mandatory for Burnmouth Fishings.

3. Apologies

David Godfrey (DG) and Bobby White (BW)

4. Minutes from meeting held 4th June 2024

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.

5. Report on Matters Arising from Meeting held 4th June 2024

Monthly fishing reports to be posted on Tay Rivers website. These are now being posted on Tay Rivers

CI to ask LH for a breakdown on Suzuki Vitara costs.

ACTION: LH still to give CI a breakdown of Vitara costs

CMN had spoken to FMS regarding developing a bird counting app – Sean Robertson from FMS came along to the meeting to present it.

DS has spoken to Fishpal and arranged for all donations to go to the Tay Rivers Trust.

JP is still willing to train Board staff on flow gauging.

ACTION: JP to train staff in flow gauging

CI has now defined the hatchery water intake area that is owned by the TRT. Water to the Hatchery comes from land owned by TRT

BW to add MS to WhatsApp group when MS returns to the Board and then follow up potential contacts.

ACTION: BW to add MS once he returns to the Board.

LH has sent out all assessment invoices and DS worked up a budget in IMG's absence.

DS thanked the Board members who had sent comments re the priorities document and would welcome others to send in theirs.

ACTION: LEH to get back to DS with comments

LEH is going to discuss the admin requirements of the Tay Liaison Committee with MS and get back to the Board.

ACTION: LEH to discuss Tay Liaison Committees admin requirements with MS and report back to the Board.

6. Financial Report

DRAFT

LH gave a summary of the financial reports which were circulated prior to the meeting. LH confirmed that the 2024 assessment invoices had been sent out along with a statement of account for all proprietors with outstanding amounts.

LH mentioned that she has a spreadsheet of queries and updates for the Assessor, and it was suggested that she should ask the Convener to send a letter along with the spreadsheet to the assessors.

ACTION: LH to ask the Convener to write a letter to the Assessor to go along with the spreadsheet of updates/corrections

LH asked for permission to get the large heater in the Hatchery repaired before the winter. All present agreed.

ACTION: LH to get the large heater in Hatchery fixed

LH mentioned that she had received some partial payments instead of the full amounts from some proprietors and asked if this was something that had happened before. NT & AP mentioned that historically, some proprietors had paid in instalments, but this had been discontinued and they now had to pay on Invoice. This could possibly explain the credit limits which had been set on accounts on Sage. It was stressed that Statutory Levies are being invoiced out to the Proprietors.

CMN asked what our Professional Indemnity insurance level was and asked DS to check this.

ACTION: DS to check Professional Indemnity insurance level

IW was asked if he was happy with LH response to his queries which he had emailed. He confirmed that he was.

7. Director's Report

The Director's Report was taken as read.

Ericht Focus Group

DS mentioned that the Ericht focus group was now operating under the banner of the TRT. There had been a meeting 2 weeks previously chaired by the First Minister, John Swinney MSP. DS had been on holiday at the time but understood that further meetings were to be organised and that SEPA had been tasked to report regularly to John Swinney on progress. DS considered the key issue was well understood. SEPA had said they would review the status of the fish farm's CAR license from moderate to good back in 2019. This needed to be done.

CMN thought it was a good thing that this initiative had been community driven.

TM mentioned that if SEPA are to chair the steering group, DS should keep the pressure on and felt this required all of our support. TM also felt the Ericht Focus Group had been very effective to date. CMN mentioned that SEPA are also project managing numerous issues under the Wild Salmon Strategy.

River Garry

DRAFT

DS explained that a sample from the fin of each fish used to stock the River Garry was taken whilst stripping to provide DNA. UHI could then determine the parentage of the juveniles sampled in the river, whether stocked or wild. SSE were paying the cost of processing this.

UHI had just finished processing the last three years' samples, and while the first three years had mainly found stocked fish, the latest samples had found wild fish throughout the mainstem of the river, often in the majority. There were only stocked fish in the Allt Glas Choire. The restoration of salmon to the Garry had been successful but this would mean Marine Directorate may now confirm no more stocking in the Garry. They had refused a broodstock license for the Garry last year.

NT thought this showed the fish had reached a tipping point of sustainability. DS explained that the juvenile fish in the Garry have become much smaller than at the start, and this indicates they are at saturation. If fish are no longer stocked in the mainstream of river the wild fish will do better. The UHI work can even show how many wild families there are and even though the spawning habitat is not great in the upper reaches, there are even wild fish there now.

DS would like to sample returning and relate these to the Hatchery. Alternatively, UHI were investigating whether they can relate juveniles to grandparents through DNA, but this may be challenging. Proving whether the returning "wild" adults were originally hatchery fish or not was a key remaining question. CMN agreed that this should be done, and DS needed UHI to inform the Board what would be required to catch the adults.

NT wanted this good news story of a stocking success and the recolonization of wild fish publicised. It only happened thanks to the Hatchery. DS was to make sure the data are correct and UHI have the story 100% before an article is submitted to Trout & Salmon, for example.

CMN considered this work might influence the review of the Scottish Government's stocking policy.

TM noted that these results were particularly important in regard to some skepticism which had been expressed about this work. He was also delighted to see catch reports exceeding the 5 year average for the first time since he had been on the board. DS speculated that this was four years on from the very big summer run of 2020. Apparently, there had been a lot of fry following that on the River Tweed. It would be interesting to see if there were more grilse this summer therefore.

8. Hatchery and operations Manager's reports

The Hatchery Report was taken as read. The Board wished to thank the Hatchery Manager, Craig Duncan, for all his work.

The Operations Managers Report was taken as read.

9. River Priorities Report

NT mentioned the possibility of a partnership with the River Eden Sustainability Partnership (RESP) and the TRT.
LEH asked if DS could send her a word document rather than a PDF. DS agreed to do this.

ACTION: DS to send LEH a word version of the priorities document.

DRAFT

10. Health & Safety Report:

No notifiable reports/accidents had occurred since the previous meeting.

11. Staffing:

Inga will be leaving the Board's employment on 27th September. A full report will be read out in the closed meeting.

12. TRT Update:

CI gave a brief report on the work of the TRT.

CI confirmed that bird surveys carried out for the River Shee project, had now all been completed and funded by Cairngorms National Park grants. It was also mentioned that they had applied for further grants for a wider planting project and temperature loggers for the upper Shee.

CI also mentioned that they had withdrawn their application to the Natural Restoration Fund as they wanted to simplify it and resubmit.

CI spoke about the eDNA draft report on Crayfish in the Shee and how DS was still awaiting a finalised version.

DS said that the upper limits of crayfish had been identified in both the Ardle and the Shee. He thought the belief was that Nature Scot would not license general trapping, which may be ineffectual anyway because young crayfish then apparently survived better. He speculated that if larger crayfish were the most likely to move upstream then there may be a case for trapping at the upper limits to remove the larger ones. Would this then slow down the upstream progress? This might also interest local people who felt powerless to deal with crayfish. A license would be required to trap the Crayfish and they would need to be destroyed and not eaten. DS confirmed that the Board already had some traps.

TM asked if in DS's opinion, the Crayfish have an impact on juvenile fish. DS felt this still had to be ascertained for salmon. Buglife have SEPA's archive of invertebrate data and DS had asked them to investigate species that may be sensitive to crayfish in the Ardle and Shee, for example, larger invertebrates like large stone flies. DS has seen data that implied that crayfish may not be a risk to some of the smaller invertebrates preferred by salmon, but they will eat small fish and salmon eggs.

IW asked if there was no evidence in Galloway? DS explained that he recalled a PhD student in the Clyde, finding evidence that some of the "olives" benefited from the Crayfish eating predators but that he would get in touch with Galloway Trust and ask them.

ACTION: DS to chase the final edna report on Crayfish.
ACTION: DS to contact Galloway Trust and ask for any evidence that they may have on crayfish impacts.

The River Eden Sustainability Project as mentioned by CI and the part that the TRT can play to assist them.

DRAFT

13. AOB

AP notified the Board that PKC has decided to close Perth Harbour as a commercial port. This is moving ahead slowly as they do not have the power to close it themselves and Transport Scotland has been approached to close the harbour. They must still accommodate large ships moving up the river.

PKC wish to redevelop Perth Harbour as a sporting facility, and this may impact on our interests around the area.

NT Announced that Eleanor Coyle our HR Consultant is retiring/reducing her workload and will no longer be able to continue Board work.
CMN or DG are to thank Eleanor formally.
We need to identify a replacement and NT, LH and DS will work on that.

ACTION: CMN or DG to thank Eleanor formally
ACTION: NT, DS & LH to identify a replacement for Eleanor our HR Consultant

IW mentioned that there still was nothing published regarding Mr John Apthorp's passing. He offered to follow up with Mr Apthorp's secretary, as there had been no response to DG's email seeking permission to publish an article.

ACTION: IW to follow up with Mr Apthorp's secretary re permission to publish an article

LEH mentioned that she was concerned regarding the lack of response to emails particularly by DS. She thought that a centralised email address may help.

CMN would like all queries acknowledged and then we can get back to them. LH offered to reply to any emails that come through admin@tdsfb.org or lee@tdsfb.org and then pass them onto the relevant person for answering.

ACTION: LH to acknowledge all enquiry emails and then pass onto the relevant person to deal with

CMN mentioned that she does receive notifications of enquiries received through social media and wondered who responded to that. DS Advised that the Operations Manager responded to these enquiries but that he would ask him how these were dealt with.

ACTION: DS to speak to the Operations Manager to find out what is happening with enquiries sent on social media

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

End of Open Meeting Minutes

The next meeting is scheduled to be held physically at the Hatchery on 22nd October at 10am

DRAFT