

NESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTE OF MEETING

Held at Ness-Castle on 21st June 2011 at 2pm

Present:

Andrew Duncan, Ness Castle, Chairman (AD)
Michael Martin, Chief Executive/Clerk (MM)
Willie Armstrong, Oich, Mandate (WA)
Don MacKay, Inverness Angling Club, Mandate (DMcK)
Bob Morgan, Garry (BM) representing Paul Williamson
Neil Cameron, Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust, Co-option (NC)
Sandy Patience, Netsmen, Co-option (SP)
Graham MacKenzie, Co-option (GMcK)
Angus MacGruer, (AMcG)

In attendance

Keith Williams, Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust, Co-option (KW)
John MacColl, Bailiff (JMcC)
Mary Martin, Minutes secretary

AD welcomed everyone and wished MM well in his new role as Chief Executive pointing out that the position of vice –chairman was now vacant. DMcK nominated WA and this was seconded by SP.

Apologies:

Annie Girvan
Ryan Rutherford
Alastair Stephen
Ben Leyshon

Minutes of last meeting

Approved unanimously.

1. Matters arising

1.1. CEO Contract

AD circulated the contract drawn up for MM and thanked NC and GMcK for their help and also MM himself.

1.2. Volunteer Bailiff

Chris Worthington, ex RAF, has asked to join as a volunteer bailiff. His salary will be paid by the RAF. MM pointed out that issues such as insurance, health & safety and whether he has a clean driving licence needed to be addressed as well as the question of his overall benefit to JMcC. It was agreed that, providing there was no cost to the Board and that JMcC was satisfied that there would be a benefit to him, Mr. Worthington could join as a volunteer. **(Action MM&JMcC)**

1.3. Netting Foyers Bay

AD referred to the netting in Foyers Bay and whether there had been any smolts. KW reported some trout but net size too big for smolts. With further experience, it was anticipated that we would eventually get some smolts.

2. Bailiff's Report

The bailiff's report was noted and the following points were then discussed.

2.1. Catch & Release

JMcC reported that the Catch & Release Summer Draw will go ahead.

2.2. Vehicles

At present the Toyoto Hilux is in the garage since it needs a new gear box at a cost of £425 + VAT and also new brake pipes. To get it through an MOT would cost just under £1000.

2.3. Merganser & Goosander Licence

The licence for shooting goosander was discussed and KW confirmed that counts of birds had been undertaken. Concerns were expressed about the number of mergansers in the System but KW said that a licence for shooting mergansers could not presently be obtained because of the linkage between the Firth and the System in relation to the feeding habits of those birds.

3. Bailiff' Sub-Committee

The report from the Bailiff's sub-committee was noted. AD explained that this sub-committee was set up to assist JMcC and give some guidance. The following points were then discussed.

3.1. Catch & Release

This is one area of difficulty for the bailiffs particularly on Loch Ness, which is difficult for the bailiffs to patrol. AMcG confirmed that the number of fishers on the Loch was low at present and felt that the catch and release policy was being adhered to.

The approach of the Inverness Angling Club to the policy was also discussed. It was noted that the Board's policy was all fish to be returned up to 15th June and 50% for the rest of the year throughout the system. The IAC policy, which was previously agreed with the Board, is that all fish should be returned up to 1st June and that a maximum of 2 fish per day can be kept after that. Apart from the small discrepancy in the June dates, the IAC policy was not inconsistent with the board's policy and for the summer fishing it simply put a limit on the maximum number of fish that could be killed on any day. DMcK confirmed that the IAC Committee very much supported the Catch & Release Policy but knew that old habits die hard and things would not change overnight. Having attended a recent IAC meeting MM was impressed with the attitude and felt there was a lot of support for the policy. The IAC President had spoken out very strongly against those few members who were known to have failed to observe the policy. DMcK suggested that a meeting with the IAC committee would be beneficial **(Action MM)**

3.2. Loch Ness Proprietors Association

It was generally agreed that more efforts should be made to improve relationships and communications with the anglers on the loch. It was noted that there had previously been a proprietors association and it was felt that there may be sufficient interest in trying to either re-establish this – or to at least get some structured lines of communication. It was agreed that MM and AMcG should meet to take this forward. **(Action MM/AMcG)**

3.3. Conon Boat (Cromarty Firth)

JMcC expressed some exasperation in relation to the management of the boat and explained the difficulties of undertaking tasks that required more personnel that he had access to. The training and use of volunteers was discussed and it was agreed that this may be a way of providing JMcC with the assistance that he needed. This would need to be given careful consideration **(Action MM/JMcC)**.

AD suggested we monitor the use of the boat this year and possibly consider buying one in the future.

4. Trust Biologist Report

The Trust Biologists report was noted and taken as read. The following points were then discussed.

4.1. Off Shore Developments.

A meeting had taken place to discuss proposed wind farm developments in the Moray Firth. It was agreed that both wind farm and tidal power turbines (particularly in the Pentland Firth) represented a real threat to migratory fish and that all the fishery boards must work together and with all of the other representative bodies to ensure that our voice was heard in what will, given the economic benefits, be a difficult political environment.

4.2. Proposed extraction from River Farigaig

It was noted that Scottish Water may have an interest in water extraction from the River Farigaig to supplement Loch Ashie. It was also noted that there appears to be some confusion in the minds of SEPA over the existence of compensation flow for the Holm Burn. No compensation agreement exists and the burn has suffered from low water and fish kills. It was agreed that the management of water in this catchment required a greater degree of clarity and that the issues should be raised with SEPA. **(Action MM& KW)**

The Boards interest in seeing some improvement to the bridge apron on the River Farigaig would be raised in these discussions.

4.3. Drumnadrochit WwTW Works

We have been notified by SEPA that there will be a short term reduction in the final effluent quality from the Drumnadrochit WwTW due to work that Scottish Water need to undertake to improve the long term functionality of this works. The situation will be monitored by KW and MM will have our interest in this work noted by Scottish Water. **(Action MM&KW)**

4.4. Fish Genetics Research

KW noted the Trusts support and funding for the work on fish genetics and hoped that the outcome from this work would help in identifying escapees from fish farms.

AD Suggested that a paper should be presented to the Board to explain current state of research into fish genetics and to highlight the benefits that could accrue. **(Action KW)**

5. Presentation from Marcus Walters – Moray Firth Seatrout Project

A presentation from Marcus Walters on the work of the Moray firth Seatrout Project was well received by the board and it was agreed that funding of £500 per year for the next three years would be provided.

SP noted that the Avoch Burn used to hold a considerable number of trout but that these had disappeared. It was suggested that a project looking in to the trout population of the burn could be undertaken and that the involvement of the local school may generate interest and perhaps some publicity. This suggestion would be taken forward by SP and KW **(Action KW& SP)**

The Board expressed it's thank to Marcus for an interesting and informative presentation.

6. Chief Executives Report

MM explained that in taking on the role of CEO/Clerk his key objectives would be to ensure that a satisfactory and sustainable administrative structure was put in place, to support the Bailiffs and Biologist and to ensure that they had clear direction consistent with the boards priorities, and improve communications with the proprietors to enhance the Boards profile and reputation.

MM handed out a written CEO Report and referred to its contents:-

6.1. CEO/ Clerk's Consultancy Agreement

The first task that MM was undertaking was a detailed review of the documentation held by Strutt & Parker. There was a significant volume of older documentation but MM was not intending to look at this. After review, MM intended to destroy old unwanted documentation. This would be done in conjunction with the Chairman **(Action MM)**

6.2. Bookkeeping

MM Confirmed that 'Wats on the Books' had been engaged to provide a bookkeeping service. The bank mandates were in the process of being re-assigned with MM and AD becoming the signatories but this was taking some time. Managements accounts would now be prepared on a quarterly basis and tabled for review at future board meetings

The Board members were reminded that in order to comply with the money laundering regulation 'Wats on the Books' proprietor (Deirdre Watson) needed to see proof of identity for all board members (photo of passport picture page and a current utility bill). These could be posted or a pdf could be emailed to Ms Watson or sent to MM who would pass on. **(Action Board Members)**

6.3. Accounts

The Board confirmed the re- appointment of Frame Kennedy & Forest as accountants to the board. Accounts for last year will now be prepared **(Action MM)**

6.4. Cars and Vans

The Board had previously agreed to a budget of £12k to purchase a second hand Toyoto Hilux. MM proposed that a new vehicle should be purchased and be financed through M/ Finance – a company used and recommended to MM by the

Spey board. The deposit and annual payment could be adjusted to be in line with the budget. The Board confirmed their agreement to this proposal and asked MM to progress with the purchase as soon as possible **(Action MM)**

It was noted that the existing Toyoto would need about £1k of expenditure to get it through its MOT and it was agreed that, given that the gearbox was also not working, this money should not be spent. MM & JMcC were asked to dispose of the vehicle at the best price that they could. **(Action MM& JMcC)**

MM advised the board that the two Fiesta vans were on a finance lease with the Bank of Scotland. The costs were £484.84/month up to November 2011 when a bullet payment of £5280.00 needed to be paid. After that the lease went in to a 'secondary period' which called for an annual payment of £484.84 paid each December. MM intended to make further investigation in to the conditions of the lease and to review the options for disposal and replacement of these vehicles. **(Action MM)**

6.5. Other Issues

MM tabled fish counts from the Dundreggan and Invergarry fish passes. These showed an encouraging improvement from last year. MM agreed to forward these to anyone who was interested **(Action MM)**

MM issued an advisory note from the ASFB on Saprolegnia fungus

6.6. Points of Interest

MM raised a number of points which he believed may be of interest to the board and asked board members to let him know (by email) of items that they may like to have included in his report **(Action Board Members)**

7. Finance Reports

Finance issues were covered in the CEO Reports. At future meetings this item would cover the management accounts

8. Sub Committee Reports

8.1. Upper river

MM reported that he had met Mr Eric Verspoor who was about to retire from Marine Scotland. Mr. Verspoor was an expert in the field of salmon genetics with a speciality in working on rivers that had lost their native runs of fish. Mr Verspoor was about to set up a small company that would offer services to owners /proprietors who wished to re-introduce native salmon runs back in to damaged systems and he was eager to offer a service to the board. It was agreed that he would be invited to attend the next meeting of the Sub Committee. **(Action MM)**

8.2. Web Site

In RR's absence AD advised the board that the Web site was now in existence but that it needed to be populated. MM commented that this would need the cooperation of a number of the board members who would be asked to make contributions. MM agreed to liaise with RR to ensure that progress was made with populating the site. **(Action MM/RR)**

9. Health & safety Policy

An updated version of the Health & Safety policy and manual, produced for the board by Green's of Haddington, was tabled. The policy was approved by the board.

MM asked all board members to ensure that they were fully conversant with the contents of the manual and AD noted that H&S would now appear as the first item on the agenda at future board meetings.

10. AOCB

10.1. Cheque Signatories

AD asked for board agreement to AD and MM becoming the signatories for all board accounts and business – with only one signature needed. A motion to formally approve this was moved by GMck and seconded by WA. The motion was unanimously approved by the board.

10.2. Catch Returns

Letters were about to be issued asking proprietors to send in there Spring catch data. DM asked if this could be done electronically. **(Action MM)**

10.3. Recently Accredited Bailiffs

GMcK asked how the services of the recently accredited bailiffs could be used and it was agreed that an action plan needed to be developed **(Action MM)**

10.4. Mandatory Catch & Release

It was noted that there has been no formal response from the government in relation to the request for a mandatory Catch and Release order. This was to be taken up with Manson Wright. **(Action MM)**

10.5. Water Spilling from the Canal

WA noted that an excessive amount of water was spilling from the canal into the River Oich and asked that this was queried with SEPA/ BWB. **(Action MM)**

The meeting closed at 17:30

