

**NESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF MEETING**

Held at SNH Headquarters on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2012 at 2.00pm

**Present:**

Andrew Duncan: Ness Castle, Chairman (AD)  
Don Mackay: Highland Council , Mandate (DMcK)  
Paul Williamson: River Gary (PW)  
Sandy Patience: Nettsman, Co Option (SP)  
Neil Cameron: Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust (N&BFT), Co-option (NC)  
Graham MacKenzie: Co-Option (GMcK)  
Angus MacGruer: Co-Option (AMcG)

**In Attendance:**

John MacColl: Head Bailiff (JMccC)  
Keith Williams: (N&BFT), (KW)  
Bob Morgan: River Gary (BM)  
Eric Verspoor: SALGEN Consulting Ltd (EV)  
Rachel Murray: Minutes Secretary

**Apologies:**

Michael Martin: Chief Executive/Clerk (MM)  
Ryan Rutherford: Ness Side, Mandate (RR)  
Nigel Fraser: Dochfour, Mandate (NF)  
Annie Girvan: River Moriston, Mandate (AG)  
Willie Armstrong: River Oich, Mandate (WA)  
Alastair Stephen: SSE(AS)  
Ben Leyshon: SNH (BL)

**1. Approval of Minutes:**

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2012 at Ness Castle Fishing Lodge which had previously been approved were signed by the Chairman. The minutes from the Board meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2012 at Ness Castle Fishing Lodge were also approved and signed by the Chairman without amendment.

**2. Actions:**

The Chairman reported on the Actions from the meeting on 03 May 2012 as follows:

- 1 - 4.1 A meeting between the Bailiffs/Ghillies/Proprietors has not yet been organised.
- 1 - 6.2 The CEO has made contact with the Wildlife Officer.
- 6.4 The Case IN 10005590 has been dropped, a letter will now not be written to the PF.
- 7.1.1 Outstanding genetic work has been completed.
- 1 - 15.2 Candidates have not yet been approached regarding press support however two possible candidates had been identified and would be interviewed.
- 15.3 It was agreed that PW would set up a rota for when freshets will be released into the River Garry and submit to the Board for approval. When the Board agree the rota it will then be passed to SEPA for approval and then to SSE for programming. It was also suggested that this schedule should be kept private as at the moment information on when freshets are released is in the public domain and the area gets very busy with canoeists around the time of new releases.
- 4.3 The CEO is still to issue the full response from SEPA to the Board's letter of 27/02/12.
- 6.1 Item covered by agenda.
- 6.2 Item covered by agenda.
- 6.3 Item covered by agenda.
- 6.4 Item covered by agenda.
- 7.10 Item covered by agenda.
- 7.11 The CEO is still to investigate prices for advertising fishing on Fish Pal.

### **3. Health & Safety.**

There were no near missies to report. JMcC advised that the two new summer bailiffs will require copies of the Board's Health and Safety policy. The Chairman advised the CEO would issue (action MM)

### **4. CEO Report on Key Issues.**

The CEO's report was noted. The following points received further discussion.

- 4.8 It was noted that a good relationship had been established with the BWB representative who sits on the N&BFT. A meeting with BWB now needs to be arranged. The CEO will be briefed prior to any meeting being arranged.
- 4.9 The letter of objection to Scottish Ministers on SEPA's intention to grant Marine Harvest an extension to their licence had been circulated to the Board. The Board agreed it was a good letter and noted they had not yet received a response.
- 4.10 The Board agreed they would welcome Matthew Reiss who heads up the Wildlife Crime Section of the Northern Constabulary to the next Board meeting and the Chairman undertook to invite CI Reiss. (action MM)
- 4.11 It was noted the Board had received a disappointing response from Environmental Health regarding them assisting us in stamping out the sale of rod caught salmon, including kelts.
- 4.13 The individual who took a photograph of a fish infected with UDN has been thanked. KW has spoken to all Ghillies and asked that they are vigilant and report any further suspected cases. If numbers of infected fish increase KW undertook to obtain a live sample for further analysis. KW also undertook to ensure he had the correct testing kit for UDN and brief all anglers as required. Fish infected with UDN should still be returned and there have been no further reports of UDN within the Board's area.
- 4.14 The Chairman asked that the CEO's contract be extended for a further year. The Board agreed they are happy with the current CEO to continue in his role and the Chairman undertook to issue a new contract. The Chairman noted the current CEO has been an excellent addition and had done much excellent work. The Chairman further added, on behalf of the CEO, that the CEO feels the additional hours worked and not claimed are a donation to the Board and would therefore like to see additional works being carried out on the first 3 miles of the River Ness.

## **5. Finance Report**

The finance report was discussed and the points undernoted received further discussion:

- 5.1 The Management Accounts were presented to the Board. There is a surplus of £17,461 for the year, after providing for £5202 for half of the upper system report and £4971 for bad debts of which almost half is for the Angling Club's appeal against its assessment.

It was noted that the savings were mainly from CEO and secretarial support part was due to the CEO's wife Mary not charging for her secretarial input. It was agreed the Board would purchase a bunch of flowers and send them to Mary. (RM to action)

It was noted that the improvement in the Cashflow was due to better housekeeping and money being collected from proprietors more quickly.

The Chairman noted that the Board are right to be conservative and prudent for the next 2 to 3 years however a long term spending plan is required. Chairman to action, following receipt of upper system and habitat reports.

5.2 The year end accounts are with Frame Kennedy Forrest.

## **6. Bailiffs Report**

The Bailiffs Report was discussed by the Board with points receiving further discussion undernoted:

- 6.1 JMcC advised the Board that there had been a purge of poachers on the Oich, many of the poachers caught were locals with one individual being caught on 3 occasions. 6 individuals were caught on one Sunday. Since the purge the Oich has been very quiet.
- 6.2 JMcC advised he is not sure what plea Mr Dyker is going to submit therefore the possible outcome of the case is unclear at this stage.
- 6.3 It was noted that two part time bailiffs have been appointed.

JMcC further advised that the boat has broken down – the boat is a vital tool to effectively patrol. PW advised he has a boat in Skye that could be utilised by JMcC to patrol. PW's boat is damaged but JMcC could have it if the Board paid for the cost of repairs. JMcC will look at boat and assess.

JMcC further advised several boats have been caught on Loch Ness without numbers. He has to investigate further. Two individuals were caught on a boat on Loch Ness on a Sunday, one of the individuals was the local wildlife officer. The Chairman suggested the CEO should write to Matthew Reiss to advise. (Action CEO)

## **7. Biologist Report**

The Biologist Report was discussed by the Board with points receiving further discussion undernoted:

- 7.1 The updates on 2011-2013 fisheries management plan actions were noted. A discussion on the Upper System fish stocks followed.

KW advised he has spoken to genetics regarding the Upper Garry fish and is waiting for information from Norway to ascertain the origin of the fish. However early investigations suggest they are fish farm escapees. There is no evidence of inter mixing in the lower end of the Garry. It was asked if there is evidence that Norwegian fish are having an impact and EV advised that without Mark Coulson's report he is unable to complete his findings. There is still a small population left on the Upper Garry and the Board took the view they should work with what is there with the hope that when EV's investigations are concluded there will be a clearer insight into the best way forward.

There is no evidence to prove that fish found below the dam on the Upper Garry are Norwegian fish farm stock or wild fish however KW is now using a tool to specifically tell if fish are Norwegian fish farm escapees.

Testing on the Moriston was discussed and it was agreed that EV would put recommendations to the Board and adaptive management may be the best way forward. It was concluded that a decision will be made at the next Board after EV's report has been issued.

- 7.2 The habitat surveys are nearly complete with interesting findings, fieldwork will be completed by the end of July. KW to pass his report to the Chairman by the end of August 2012.

KW has sent a letter to Highland Council regarding the lack of flows in the Whin Park area and is awaiting a response. When flows are established smolts may be introduced.

KW advised that going forward electro fishing will be more targeted and will focus on the parts of the system that require further remedial action.

KW has completed a spraying course to deal with non natives, more non natives have been discovered on the Ness and Ness Islands. KW further advised that there are bids for European funding in train for treating non natives and funding for rhododendrons is 100%.

PW advised that they had cleared the Oich of rhododendrons some years ago and they still have survey maps of the areas cleared, this could require action as the rhododendrons have started to grow back in places.

KW further advised that he has been in dialogue with a representative from SEPA regarding lack of compensation flow on the Holm Burn, SEPA advised they have spoken to SNH and the RSPB and there is no

formal agreement in place. KW felt this was not acceptable so he undertook to go back to SEPA regarding compensation flows.

## **8. Report from Sub Committees**

- 8.1 EV undertook to submit his report on the scoping study to the Board by the end of July. EV then gave a verbal summary of the proposed scheme to re-introduce salmon to the River Garry. Discussion ensued and it was agreed that following receipt of EV's report and more information on cost and funding options the Board would be in a better position to make a decision on this. However the Board largely agreed that the scheme sounded like it would be beneficial and worth pursuing subject to financial controls.

EV then left the Board meeting at 3.45pm

- 8.2 The Chairman advised that the website is up and running and information is being uploaded.

PW advised that he has spoken to one of his web developers who PW can provide to the Board at cost for 1 day per week for a six months to one year period to upload all information. Once all information is uploaded it was suggested that the Board could then take over the administration of the website. PW further advised that he was meeting the CEO to discuss further and will update the Board at the next Board meeting. (Action CEO/PW)

It was further noted that at the next Board meeting RM would display the website for discussion. (Action RM)

## **9. Report on 'Working Group' meeting with IAC**

The Chairman presented a brief summary on the meeting held on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> June of the 'Working Group' with Inverness Angling Club. It had been a good meeting and progress is improving the poor state of relations which has existed over the past years. The Board acknowledged that IAC committee have a difficult task.

The IAC agreed to discuss at their 2012 AGM a scheme in which it would make it obligatory for all members to release 50% of all catches with this being implemented in 2013/2014. This together with the 100% release rate to the beginning of June could give an expectation of a 65% release rate over the next 3 to 4 years. The Board agreed this would be an acceptable level and it was noted that Scotland wide 65% for angling clubs was above average.

IAC were asked to look at spring fishing and to include June however they felt that that the 50/50 release scheme is enough for their members meantime.

The IAC agreed to put a link to the NDSFB website on their website however declined to publish the catch and release scheme on their website.

It was asked if an IAC committee member should be co-opted onto the Board however no decision was made meantime.

The IAC undertook to report back to their committee and a written agreement will be worked out at the next Working Group meeting.

The Board discussed the practicalities of implementing a voluntary 50/50 release scheme. The Chairman indicated that he sees the present dialogue with IAC as the beginning of the journey and not the end, progress is now being made and there always has to be a balance between protecting the fish and keeping the fishery going.

By way of incentive JMcC suggested that members of the IAC who put fish back in the month of June should be offered a side of smoked salmon, it was agreed this was a good idea and DM undertook to implement.

The Board will be updated on progress at the next Board meeting.

## **10. Disabled Access Presentation**

The Chairman presented photographs of the Geisher Platform on the River Teith in Stirling and advised that the local army had been asked to build the structure making it very cost effective.

Discussion ensued on best location for disabled access fishing and DM advised that there are existing concrete slabs at the Generals Well that can be used by disabled fishers but also do not impact of able bodied fishers like a platform would. The Mill Stream was also suggested as a potential location for disabled access as there are already planned works to be carried out there for the new bridge.

It was agreed that given the force of the water flow on the River Ness concrete platforms would be a more appropriate solution and that the works should be carried out at the Mill Stream in conjunction with the bridge contractor.

Information received by the Chairman from the Wheelyboat Trust was issued to the Board. A wheely boat is a large boat with an hydraulic disabled platform built into it so wheelchair users can get into the boat and fish from their wheelchairs. A wheely boat would be suitable for the Board's system as they can be used in lochs and rivers and the Wheelyboat Trust would fund the boat. The boat could be stored at Dochgarroch and transported by trailer to location. The idea was opened to the Board for discussion.

It was asked if there is a demand for a disabled access fishing boat but as this has never been advertised it is difficult to tell what demand there would be for it.

It was agreed that RM would issue link to online video clip of wheely boat in use to all Board members and the Chairman would further investigate concrete

slabs at the location of the proposed new bridge crossing the River Ness and present findings at the next Board. Action RM & Chairman.

DM advised that the IAC are applying to THC Common Good Fund for upgrading paths at Mill Stream and DM would raise concrete slabs at the next IAC committee meeting. Action DM.

### **11. Purchase of Dormant Netting Stations**

The paper from the ASFB was presented to the Board and discussed. It was agreed that at the moment it is not in the Board's best interest to purchase dormant netting stations. The Board will await developments in the Fishery and Agricultural bill and re-address at a later date.

### **12. AOB**

**With there being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 5.15pm.**

**Next meeting is to be held on 20<sup>th</sup> September, time and venue TBC.**