

NESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF MEETING

Held at Caley Thistle Football Ground on Thursday 20th September 2012 at 2.00pm

Present:

Andrew Duncan: Ness Castle, Chairman (AD)
Don Mackay: Highland Council, Mandate (DMcK)
Nigel Fraser: Dochfour, Mandate (NF)
Annie Girvan: River Moriston, Mandate (AG)
Willie Armstrong: River Oich, Mandate (WA)
Bob Morgan: River Gary, Mandate/Alternate (BM)
Neil Cameron: Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust (N&BFT), Co-option (NC)
Graham MacKenzie: Co-Option (GMcK)
Angus MacGruer: Co-Option (AMcG)

In Attendance:

Michael Martin: Chief Executive/Clerk (MM)
John MacColl: Head Bailiff (JMcC)
Keith Williams: (N&BFT), (KW)
Alastair Stephen: SSE(AS)
Eric Verspoor: SALGEN Consulting Ltd (EV)
Rachel Murray: Minutes Secretary
CI Matthew Reiss: Chief Wildlife Officer (MR)

Apologies:

Ryan Rutherford: Ness Side, Mandate (RR)
Ben Leyshon: SNH (BL)
Paul Williamson: River Gary (PW)
Sandy Patience: Nettsman, Co Option (SP)

1. Approval of Minutes:

The minutes of the Board meeting held on 21st June 2012 at SNH Headquarters were approved and signed by the Chairman without amendment.

2. Actions:

MM reported on the Actions from the meeting on 21st June 2012 as follows:

- 1 - 4.1 A meeting between the Bailiffs/Ghillies/Proprietors has not yet been organised.

- 1 – 15.2 Candidates for press support have been interviewed and Bill McAllister has been appointed.
- 1 - 15.3 BM to set up rota for release of freshets in River Garry
- 1 – 4.3 The full response from SEPA to the Board’s letter of 27/02/12 has been issued.
- 1 – 7.11 MM is continuing to investigate prices to advertise proprietors fishing on Fish Pal
- 3 The Health and Safety policy has been issued to the two new summer bailiffs.
- 4.10 CI Reiss will attend today’s meeting.
- 4.13 KW advised that he does not require a testing kit for UDN and if a fish is suspected to be suffering from UDN the best procedure to follow is to take the fish straight to the lab where tests can be carried out.
- 5.1 A bunch of flowers was sent to Mary Martin to thank her for her secretarial input.
- 6.3 MM advised that he did not write to CI Reiss regarding the local wildlife officer caught fishing on a boat on Loch Ness however AS advised he had spoken to the individual concerned.
- 8.2 MM advised that the web developer has been instructed to carry out work to improve the website. Members are encouraged to engage with this to ensure that we get good input and create a quality site.
- 8.2 The website will be displayed at next Board.
- 10 The video clip of wheely boats has been issued to the Board for information. The Chairman advised the best location would be to incorporate at the new bridge at Mill Stream however DM advised that he had asked the IAC and they took the decision not to proceed on this occasion. Possible locations to be investigated are the Province or Cross Hedgings

3. Health & Safety.

There were no Health & Safety issues to report.

4. CEO Report on Key Issues.

The CEO's report was noted. It was noted that MM was still awaiting Spring catch data from the River Moriston and other locations so the Spring catch data issued to the Board will be significantly updated. The following points received further discussion.

7. William Rourke has been working on updating the website however the site is still short on content. William Rourke is working at a reduced rate of £35 per hour and will be invoicing the Board for his time, as this is now a cost to the Board the website needs to be actioned quickly. MM asked that all proprietors send him information to be included on their pages.

The Chair further requested that all Board members look at the website and revert to the Chair or MM with their comments.

8. The Marine Harvest licence has been granted however MM is yet to receive any formal acknowledgement that this is the case. MM is not happy that an explanation as to why the licence has been granted has not been issued and will therefore take this matter up with the Scottish Government. **Action MM.**
9. Circa 80 letters have been issued to local restaurateurs advising them of the procedure to follow if offered illegal rod caught salmon from anglers. There was an instance of a restaurant in Inverness advertising River Ness Salmon for sale on their menu, when questioned the restaurant advised that an angler had brought the salmon in and offered them for sale. It is illegal to sell rod caught salmon but not to buy it, as the restaurant were then selling it on to customers traceability from an environmental point of view is an issue.
10. MM has offered his support to the IAC as the new link bridge will have a negative impact on a very good part of the IAC's fishing. MM advised that the Board should also offer support to the IAC.
11. The ASFB have proposed to enlist the help of a PHD student to carry out a study on head lesions on returning salmon. ASFB have asked the Board if they would contribute to funding this. The first year of the study has been funded however the Board will take a view if approached again on funding.
12. It was suggested that a meeting should be arranged with all Board members to brief on the proposed Rivers & Loch Institute with EV speaking. **Action MM.**
13. It was agreed that guidance notes will be issued to Caley Marina advising the rules surrounding fishing for trout in Lochs Dochfour and Ness. **Action MM.**

An issue with trout fishing was raised in that some proprietors believe that they also have the rights to trout fishing. MM undertook to seek clarification from the Board's lawyers on this point. **Action MM.**

JMcC advised that the West Highland Sailing website details salmon fishing. MM undertook to approach West Highland Sailing regarding this. **Action MM.**

5. Finance Report

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

- 5.1 The management accounts were discussed, the Chairman noted that there had been a drop in cash but this was mainly a timing issue due to the employment of summer bailiffs and will correct naturally.

It was noted that the Board have not spent any of the Special Projects fund. This will be addressed. **Action Chairman.**

AS asked that the date of the SSE payment be confirmed to him. MM undertook to find out and advise. **Action MM.**

- 5.2 The audited accounts are identical to the management accounts and it was noted that this is a tribute to Deirdre Watson and the control she keeps over the accounts. MM asked the Board to approve so the audited accounts can be taken forward to the AGM to be approved. The Board approved.

- 5.3 The list of aged debtors was discussed. It was agreed that the best way to resolve the Glengarry Estates payment was to agree to write the debt off if Glengarry Estates can provide proof that payment has been made. **Action MM.**

Frederick Oldham is ex-directory so is proving difficult to trace, MM will continue to pursue but may need to take a view to write this off at a later date. **Action MM.**

It was noted that the River Beaully is under new ownership. MM undertook to find out who the new owners are. **Action MM.**

The Board agreed to write off the Williams debt.

The Chairman advised, with the Board's backing, that he is happy for MM to make judgements on bad debt.

6. Wildlife Crime Unit

CI Matthew Reiss, the Wildlife Crime Co-ordinator, addressed the Board. Following CI Reiss's address he advised that he would be interested to get the opinions of the Board on their experiences with police. CI Reiss advised that MM has his email address and would welcome the Board's comments.

MM advised that miscommunication has, on occasion, resulted in cases being dropped without prosecution. CI Reiss undertook to look into this and report back to MM. **Action MM.**

MM advised that going forward he would contact CI Reiss with issues.

The Chairman thanked CI Reiss for his time and CI Reiss left the meeting at 15.40.

7. River Garry Restoration Scoping Study

EV gave a presentation to the Board on the scoping study he has undertaken on development of an Atlantic salmon restock on the River Garry.

(AS left the meeting at 16.30).

Following the presentation and a question and answer session with EV the Board undertook to obtain the full report from EV and set up a meeting with the Steering Group to take matters forward. It was suggested that Marine Harvest should also be invited to this meeting. **Action MM.**

EV undertook to issue his report in the next 3 weeks.

(AG and EV left the meeting at 16.50)

8. Bailiffs Report

The Bailiffs Report was noted.

9. Biologist Report

9.1 The Biologist Report was noted.

9.2 KW gave a presentation to the Board on the Ness Habitat Survey he has been undertaking. KW then welcomed questions from the Board.

The Moray Firth coastal beats were tabled for discussion. KW asked the Board what areas are priority and it was agreed the coastal burns will take longer as they are dilapidated.

The priority has to be to understand why salmon are not coming back on the main stretch of the River Ness, it was suggested that they may be coming back later than usual. Discovering the problem that is causing salmon to not return to the River Ness needs to be investigated, it was suggested that it could be due to the fish farm at

Dores but the Chairman dismissed this as the decline has been happening over many more years.

The Chairman suggested that spending money on creating spawning areas in the Whin Park Laid may not be the best use of funds as there are existing spawning areas that cannot be filled.

KW advised that the Board have to take a very careful approach on how this is viewed. In addressing this issue the Board needed to recognise the difference between the fish stock “required” to maintain the system versus the fish stock “desired” for sport – which would be a bigger number.

The Chairman advised that in his opinion there are not enough fish in the system at the moment.

MM advised that the habitat survey is part of the equation and there is a need to ascertain what KE believes the habitats are capable of and what can be done to improve the habitats.

MM requested KW prepares a list of action points to work from and KW undertook to produce this. **Action KW.**

Hatcheries were discussed and KW advised that if the Board want to proceed with hatcheries he will prepare the risks and benefits so that the Board can make decision. KW advised that hatcheries are only one tool in the box and cautioned the Board on an over dependency on them. KW agreed to provide reports from other areas on hatcheries for Board to make decision. **Action KW.**

It was concluded that the piece of work KW is working on needs to be concluded, summarized and action points clearly set out for the board agreement. KW is required to carry out more fieldwork and electrofishing to identify the areas of the system that need work. KW advised that smolt traps may need to be used to ensure accuracy of work.

Following KW’s report the Board need to make a decision based on KW’s findings.

10. Spring Catch Returns

A copy of the spring catch returns was issued. It was noted that MM was still waiting to receive AG’s figures for the Moriston and as a result these data given should be treated as very provisional. AG to action.

11. Update on ASFB/RAFTS Code of Governance

The Board will be updated on the ASFB/RAFTS Code of Governance at the next Board meeting.

12. AOB

The Chairman advised that he and MM will meet prior to the next Board meeting to clearly set out the aims and objectives of the Board to be discussed at the next Board.

With there being no further business to discuss the meeting closed at 17.45

Next meeting is to be held on 6th December, time and venue TBC.