

NESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD BOARD MEETING MINUTES

Time: 14:00

Date: Thursday 11th September 2014

Location: Kingsmill Suite, Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club

Present:

Michael Martin: Dochfour, Mandate (MM) Chairman
Neil Cameron: Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust (N&BFT), Co-option (NC)
Graham MacKenzie: Co-Option (GMcK)
Bob Morgan: River Gary, Mandate/Alternate (BM)
Alan Scott: Angling Club, Co Option (ASc)

In Attendance:

Alastair Stephen: SSE (ASt)
April Conroy: Board Secretary
Chris Conroy: Chief Executive/Clerk (CC)
Nick Barker: (N&BFT), (NB)

Observing:

Jock Miller: Chairman of Beaully District Fishery Board

Apologies:

Andrew Duncan: Ness Castle, Mandate (AD)
Annie Girvan: River Moriston, Mandate
Angus MacGruer: Co-Option (AMcG)
Alexander Patience: Netsman, Co Option (AP)
Ken Gowans: Highland Council, Mandate (KG)
Ben Leyshon: Scottish Natural Heritage (BL)
Ryan Rutherford: Ness Side, Mandate (RR)
William Armstrong: River Oich, Mandate (WA)
John MacColl: Head Bailiff (JMcc)

1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES

MM noted apologies.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING

MM invited review of the minutes from the previous Meeting. No comments were raised.

3. ACTIONS

The Actions log was reviewed. Decisions noted on the Actions Log.

4. H & S REPORT

There were no reportable incidents. The H&S manual and risk assessments have been given an annual review, with 3 new risk assessments being added. The risk assessments are now common to both the NDSFB and the NBFT. This means that staff working together will be familiar with each



other's safe working procedures. CC also reported that John MacColl and Billy Orrock attended a one day First Aid refresher course in August.

5. GOOD GOVERNANCE

Complaints Procedure

The Board were asked to consider the comments received from Mr Patience regarding the complaints policy. These were read out and discussed.

It was noted that the comments made reference to breaches of Bye laws. CC clarified that enforcement issues are dealt with by water bailiffs rather than the Board itself. They regularly receive intelligence regarding potential breaches of fisheries law and handle this in the same way as the Police. If an informant wishes to remain anonymous then the water bailiff must honour this.

Offences are reported directly to the Police rather than the Board. They turn submit a report to the Procurator Fiscal who decide whether or not to pursue a case. The water bailiff may provide evidence as a result of a report; however the handling of the accusation is determined by Police procedures.

ACTION 4.01: BM suggested that CC add a 'rider' to the end of the Board's Complaints Procedure to clarify the distinction between the accusation of an offence in law compared to the accusation of a complaint against member(s) of the Board and/or their employees. The Board members present agreed.

Register of Interests

MM asked all board members to complete their declarations and keep them up to date.

Prevention and Detection of Fraud

CC recommended that the Ness Board treat fraud as a business risk, consider the risk factors, develop an anti-fraud strategy and produce a simple and concise statement on their position on fraud.

ACTION 4.02: All Board Members were asked to provide the clerk with a copy of passport (or other photographic ID) and a recent utility bill, if they have not previously provided them.

6. DIRECTOR/CLERK'S REPORT

CC provided an overview of the Director/Clerk's report.

CC proposed hosting the 2015 Bailiff Seminar in Inverness. All Board Members present supported this proposal.

CC provided an update on investigations into the ownership of the Netting Rights in the Firth. GMCK noted that Anderson Shaw and Gilbert collect moneys for selling Salmon and Sea Trout Royal British Legion tickets.

ACTION 4.03: CC asked to identify who is selling permits for sea trout fishing in the Firth.



ACTION 4.04: CC asked to investigate the current ownership of the Netting rights previously owned by the Beaully Fishing Rights which are believed to have gone into liquidation.

CC drew attention to the draft paper attached entitled 'Could Smolt Rearing offer a practical and economic solution to failing Salmon catches in the Ness District?'

AS questioned whether the survival rates at sea negated the benefits of smolt rearing. GMcK called for monitoring of smolts entering and leaving the system. NC asked NB whether there is a decline in the number of Juveniles present based on the Trust survey work. NB indicated that there was no evidence of this.

ACTION 4.05: MM asked for final comments on the 'Smolt Rearing' paper to be returned to CC before the next meeting.

At next Board Meeting the final paper will be reviewed and a decision taken on whether to publish the paper on the website.

CC reported that Marine Scotland Science has included the Ness District as part of a project entitled 'technical, logistical and economic considerations for the development and implementation of a Scottish salmon counter network'. This will include a study of the feasibility of installing of a fish counter system on the lower River Ness. Discussions were had about the pros and cons of Didson and Resistivity Counters. The opportunity to have third party input into a feasibility appraisal was well received by all.

The potential for supporting a PHD position with the Rivers and Lochs Institute (RLI) was discussed. This will investigate the use of integrated genetic and demographic approaches to assessing the conservation status of salmon stocks. The project was stated as being potentially very exciting. Part funding has been secured. SSE are considering contributions. NB commented that practical support for sampling sounded feasible. MM noted the full support of the Board in principle to the project. The financial and practical support for the project will need to be agreed. AS suggested that this should be positively viewed by the IAC and that he had asked Eric Verspoor from RLI to produce a summary document.

CC gave an update on the Scottish Salmon Festival, Inverness which is planned for September 2015. AS asked to be involved in future meetings with HC regarding the weir at the Mill Stream on IAC's Beat. AS noted a correction to the Director's report from 'working loosely' to 'working closely'.

BREAK

CC asked to return to the previous item and gave an update on the Holm Burn Restoration Project. CC reported that an application had been made to Marine Scotland for permission to capture broad stock in the close season as part of an incubation box project. Donald MacDonald has given 'in principle' permission for river restoration and adaptations to the weir to improve fish passage. Permission will next be sought from SEPA and Highland Council to proceed with in river enhancement works. These will be delivered in partnership with the Moray Firth Trout Initiative.

7. FINANCE REPORT

The Finance Report was reviewed by MM along with the Draft Annual Accounts (year ending May 2014) for approval at AGM in December. CC noted that the Annual accounts have been subjected to an Independent Examiners report as per the latest ASFB guidance. No questions or comments were raised.

8. HEAD BAILIFF'S REPORT

The Head Bailiff report was reviewed and no questions or comments were raised.

9. NBFT BIOLOGISTS REPORT

NB reviewed the NBFT Biologists report section by section. NB noted that Electrofishing is progressing. Provisional results on the Upper Gary and Loch Gary indicate low densities of juvenile salmon as previously reported, however the Lower Gary was more promising. NB also reported that they had recorded the first salmon fry on the Gear Garry.

NB reported that salmon fry had been recorded above Ceannacroc weir on the River Moriston, although in lower numbers than expected. ASt suggested that there may be an opportunity to adjust the flow through the fish pass to optimise fish passage.

Pearls and Peril

NB provided an update on the Pearls in Peril Project and CC identified that the project is receiving praise. CC highlighted that it is a significant achievement to have successfully predicted the date of spatting and successfully encysted 150 juvenile salmon and trout.

GMcK noted that pearl mussel surveys were currently being undertaken elsewhere in the catchment. Neither CC nor NB had been notified, but suggested that this was most likely part of SNH's national pearl mussel survey programme.

10. CONSULTATION ON STATUTORY CONSERVATION MEASURES

CC summarised the Scottish Government's announcement that they will shortly consult on options to protect early-running spring salmon across Scotland. CC explained that the consultation period may occur before the next Board Meeting and so comments are being invited now in preparation.

CC raised a list of questions for consideration by the board, as listed in the consultation paper.

ACTION 4.06: CC to produce a draft response as soon as possible and issue this to the Board for their comments prior to the next board meeting. The Board agreed to this process.

GMcK remarked that the principle of using the end of April date was insufficient and CC agreed that it is widely recognised that 'spring' salmon run well into May. All agreed that an end of April date would undermine the current good practice and that the guidance should encourage 100% release until the end of May.

CC noted that the Board should be mindful of the impact upon Net Fishing and representing these interests.

BM suggested that catch and release are not the only conservation measures that need to be in place. BM suggested that when the temperature rises above a particular temperature that fishing should be suspended as any release would likely result in mortality. The relative practicalities of this measure were discussed.

11. WILD FISHERIES REVIEW - UPDATE

CC noted the board paper on this topic and invited comments.

ACTION 4.07: MM suggests a dialogue be invited with the Beaulieu Fishery Board regarding any potential future merger identifying challenges and opportunities. CC is to identify other possible scenarios and make some proposals. Input is invited from all Board Members.

12. 2014 ANNUAL REPORT

CC invited comment on the Annual Report and suggestions for the next Annual Review. AS noted that the standard last year was very high. CC suggested that the content could be condensed in the future. AS suggested condensing the Annual Accounts section in particular. All members present liked the content and approach from last year and wish for it to be continued. All agreed that electronic copies should be made downloadable and distributed by email but that a high quality colour prints should also be provided.

ACTION 4.08: AS offered to help obtain quotes for printing and agreed to assist in quality checking final drafts before printing. CC to seek sponsorship and advertising.

CC noted the proposed dates for the 2015 Board Meeting dates:

- 29th January 2015 – Annual Public Meeting (evening event open to the public)
- 19th March 2015 – Board Meeting
- 18th June 2015 – Board Meeting
- 17th September 2015 – Board Meeting
- 17th December 2015 – Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Board Meeting

13.AOCB

AS would like to express gratitude of the IAC to the NDSFB for their support in applications to the Highland Council for a grant from the Common Good Fund. A grant sum of £9,500 been approved for the next three years (2015 to 2017), plus favourable consideration for a further two years. AS noted the high number of juniors in the club. AS confirmed that there are now over 131 Juniors (aged up to 17) signed up to the IAC. This was applauded.

THE MEETING CLOSED AT 17:01