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## **NESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD MINUTES FROM BOARD MEETING**

**Time:** 14:00

**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> September 2016

**Location:** Telford Suite, Inverness Caledonian Thistle Football Club

**Present:**

Michael Martin: Dochfour, Mandate (MM) *Chair*  
Alexander Patience: Netsman, Co Option (AP)  
Annie Girvan: River Moriston, Mandate (AG)  
Cllr Ken Gowans: Highland Council, Mandate (KG)  
David Sutherland: Ness Castle, Proprietor (DS)  
Graham MacKenzie: Co-Option (GM)  
Neil Cameron: Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust (NBFT), Co-option (NC)  
Ryan Rutherford: Ness Side, Mandate (RR)  
Bob Morgan: River Gary, Mandate/Alternate (BM)

**In Attendance:**

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

**Observing:**

Gordon Armstrong: Ness Castle Fishery Manager

**Apologies:**

Eric Craig: Angling Club, Co Option (EC)  
Andrew Duncan: Ness Castle, Mandate (AD)  
Angus MacGruer: River Oich, Mandate (AM)  
Ben Leyshon: Scottish Natural Heritage (BL)

### **1. WELCOME & APOLOGIES**

MM welcomed all and noted apologies.

### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PREVIOUS MEETING**

MM invited comments on the minutes from the previous meeting. None were raised. The minutes were approved.

### **3. ACTIONS LOG**

CC reviewed the actions completed this quarter and provided an update on those actions which remain open:

8.01 Produce set of canoe guidelines - remains outstanding, action carried forward.

11.01 JM reviewed three options for replacing the van, all new, and valued at £7995 + VAT. The alternative would be to seek quotes for used vehicles. All agreed to proceed with purchase of new van.

**Action 12.01 – CC to purchase new Vauxhall Combo van.**

11.02 Issue the 2016/17 fishery assessment at levy of £1.55 in the pound – notices not due until October 2016.

11.03 Present offer of £2,500 in support of Inverness Angling Club - CC given a mandate to discuss the offer with the Inverness Angling Club.

#### **4. H & S REPORT**

There have been no reportable H&S incidents, however there was a minor incident involving another car colliding with one of the work vehicles. No injury was resulting.

CC noted that the H&S manual has been updated and revised. ASt offered to review the manual in particular regarding the review of risks on SSE sites.

**Action 12:02 - CC to provide risk assessments to ASt to review and consider external review.**

#### **5. GOOD GOVERNANCE**

CC noted that all of the 'Good Governance' procedures will be reviewed in December 2016 after the Triennial elections. This will include revisiting the Register of Financial Interests, with declaration forms being completed and signed by the new board.

#### **6. FINANCE REPORT**

CC provided a review of the Finance report, no issues were raised.

The draft Annual Accounts for the year ended 15<sup>th</sup> May 2016 were provided for early sight – to be recirculated in December. No issues were raised by board members.

#### **7. DIRECTOR/CLERK'S REPORT**

CC provided a review of the Director/Clerk report. He reported that the Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project is progressing well with a 56 per cent survival of this year's smolts.

**Action 12.03 – CC to arrange a visit to the Drimsallie Hatchery (including ASt and GM) in late October/early November.**

**Action 12.04 - CC to arrange an Upper Garry Salmon Restoration Project steering group meeting to put outstanding actions to a timeline, including a programme for genetic analysis.**

CC reported on a recent site visit to Whin Park Lade with representatives from the Highland Council. This included updates on the proposal to replace the existing intake screens, install gauge boards to monitor flows and removal of the debris dam in the lower reaches of the Lade. He noted that a small

number of salmon smolts were observed in the Lade and that the boating lake operator was witnessed opening the padlock on the intake sluice (despite reassurances from the Council that all the locks had been changed). KG agreed to speak with the Head of Infrastructure at the Highland Council.

CC provided an update on plans for fish passage improvements on the Holm Burn Weir. The Highland Council will carry out the following:

- Provision of a notch in the top weir (Autumn 2016);
- Alterations to the positioning and dimensions of subsequent notches; and
- An addition of a 'pre-weir'.

***Action 12.05 - CC to send Highland Council technical drawings relation to the improvement at the Holm Burn Weir to BM.***

CC led a review of the outputs from the Moriston Aerial Survey.

KG asked about the Scottish Salmon Festival. CC reported that plans were being made for a repeat event in August to September 2017.

CC reported the results of the 2016/17 Bird License Application, which he had recently found out had been successful. CC thanked all those who have carefully recorded and reported data this year that was essential to the application process.

## **8. HEAD BAILIFF'S REPORT**

MM introduced the report and asked if there were any questions for JM. CC highlighted that the summer has been very busy this year in terms of bailiffing.

## **9. NBFT SENIOR BIOLOGIST REPORT**

NB provided a review of the Senior Biologist Report. No questions were raised.

## **10. CONSERVATION LIMITS**

David Sutherland (DS) enters.

CC provided a review of the current correspondence and consultations that have taken place. The Scottish Government had recently announced a proposal that the Ness District remain at 'Grade 3' status (mandatory catch and release) for the second year running. CC provided those present with an additional paper entitled 'Proposed Ness District Conservation Limits Action Plan'.

The Board agreed that it cannot accept the current approach, classification and in particular the consequential management actions. The Board agreed with the recommendation to get an informed second opinion from APEM Limited. The Board decided to give a mandate to CC to proceed with this work up to a value of £5k, with authority to the Chair to approve expenditure up to 10k, and the board to be consulted on any expenditure above this value.

***Action 12.06 – CC to approach APEM Ltd in terms of a proposal for an independent review of CLs***

KG agreed to take this up with the Council Tourism Officer and the Environmental Officer.

CC reported that he had been invited to attend a meeting with Marine Scotland Science and Policy in Pitlochry to discuss the Ness Conservation status. MM suggested that the meeting be moved to Edinburgh at a date when both MM and CC can be present. The Board agreed.

AP confirmed that the Salmon Netting Association met with Kerry Campbell two weeks prior at which questions were raised with the Scottish Government in terms of compensation payments and potential research opportunities. He reported that responses to these questions were awaited.

***Action 12.07 - CC and NB to review scientific approaches that would prove useful for both the management and the cultural heritage along with funding application options with SP. Proposals should be brought to the board.***

## **11. WILD FISHERIES REFORM**

CC confirmed that the Wild Fisheries Reform has not been included in the current legislative programme announced by the Scottish Government, which will result in a delay to its implementation. He gave a review of the latest updates in terms of the ASFB/RAFTS joint working group, transitional arrangements group and CPD group.

## **12. 2015 ANNUAL REPORT**

It was agreed that the Annual Report should follow the same format as the previous year. The proposed dates for the 2017 meetings were approved by board members and will be included in the 2016 Annual Report.

## **13. AOCB**

Confirmation that the next Board Meeting and annual meeting of qualified proprietors will take place on the 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2016.

CC asked whether the board should continue to consist of six representatives of qualified upper proprietors and two representatives of qualified lower proprietors. All confirmed this was agreed.

**THE MEETING CLOSED AT 16:20**