

Subject: Ness District Salmon Fishery Board
Date: 16 December 2021
Location: By Video Conference via Zoom
Attendees: Michael Martin, Mandate Dochfour (MM)
Neil Cameron, Mandate Ness Castle Lodges (NC)
Graham Mackenzie, Co-optee Ness District Anglers (GM)
Harry Fraser, Inverness Angling Club (HF)
Bob Morgan, Mandate River Garry (BM)
Scott Mackenzie, Mandate Ness-side (SM)
Angus MacGruer: River Oich, Proprietor (AM)
Janet Campbell, Mandate, Highland Council (JC)



In attendance: Thomas MacDonell, Wildlands Ltd, Dochfour (TM)
Alastair Stephen, SSE (AS)
David Sutherland, Ness Castle Lodges (DS)
John MacColl, Head Bailiff (JM)
Chris Daphne, Fisheries Biologist (CD)
Alastair Campbell, Bidwells (AC)

MINUTES

| ITEM | ACTION OWNER |
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| 1.0 Apologies | |
| 1.1 Apologies were noted from Donald Macdonald, Ness-side and Andrew Steele, SEPA. | |
| 2.0 Approval of minutes from previous meeting | |
| 2.1 MM invited comments on the minutes from NDSFB Board meeting of 16 September 2021. No comments were raised. The minutes were approved by those present. | |
| 3.0 Actions log | |
| 3.1 28.01 – Sept '21 – <i>The CEO/Clerk to add the issue of smolts becoming trapped in the Caledonian Canal to future action logs.</i> Outstanding. | |
| 3.2 28.02 – Sept '21 – <i>The CEO/Clerk to arrange Annual Public Meeting, Annual Report and Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.</i> Annual Report and Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors now done. Annual Public Meeting to be discussed as part of agenda. | |
| 3.3 28.03 – Sept '21 – <i>Board Members to ensure new address for the return of fishery assessments in time for CC to send out the notices as returns will be received after his leave date.</i> MM confirmed the current address in use for the Board is The Fishing Bothy at Ness Castle Lodges. | |
| 3.4 28.04 – Sept '21 – <i>CC or new CEO/Clerk to issue 2021/22 fishery assessment notices in October once a new return address is provided.</i> Assessment notices have been sent . | |

- 3.5 28.05 – Sept '21 - *MM to confirm where the £8,000 sits within the management accounts.* Outstanding.
- 3.6 28.06 – Sept '21 - *A new accountant will be required as Andrew Duncan is retiring this year.* Appointment of new accountant noted on the agenda.
- 3.7 28.07 – Sept '21 - *Foyers and Farigaig to be include in future survey programs.* Noted for future action.
- 3.8 28.08 – Sept '21 – *Board to make a decision regarding the employment of a new fisheries assistant as soon as possible.* Not actioned and will await Brian Shaw taking up his position in January.
- 3.9 28.09 – Sept '21 – *A new name is required to replace CC on the licence. The named licence is responsible for ensuring the licence is carried out legally.* MM confirmed the current bird control licence is in his name. No action has been taken to authorise marksmen. This to be handed over to B Shaw. A new licence will be required from Nature Scot in B Shaw's name.

SM commented that enhanced counts were required across the catchment and that volunteers would likely be available if asked, including a count of Loch Ness. JM commented that Loch Ness had been counted in past and experience indicated it is difficult to co-ordinate a large number of volunteers, which was why Board staff had undertaken counts in recent years.

Action – BS to review future count process.

BS

- 3.10 28.10 – Sept'21 – *Review and update existing sea trout guidance and make available at the places where permits are issued.* Outstanding – **Action – BS to take up on arrival.**
- 3.11 28.11 – Sept'21 – *There is a statutory requirement for the annual report to be compiled and approved at the Annual General Meeting in December, including the dates for meetings and fishery returns.* This is complete.
- 3.12 28.12 – Sept'21 – *Administrative matters to be addressed before CC's departure on 8 October 2021.* MM updated as follows:
- New postal address had been arranged.
 - BT number: a temporary transfer to Ness Castle office is in place for 28 days. This can probably only be renewed once.
 - Deirdre Watson had agreed to manage the Board's bank account in the short term. NC also has access.
 - MM currently monitoring emails and has Board laptop.
 - Paper files had been taken to a storage unit leased at Longman Estate. JM and CD have access.
 - Web and social media currently on hold, though minutes and annual report have been uploaded to the website.

BS

AS highlighted that the Board address would need to be confirmed as part of the purchase order arrangements for SSE contributions. He also reported that a draft legal agreement

between the Board and SSE was likely to be available soon and could be circulated once B Shaw is in post.

3.13 28.13 – Sept '21 – *The Board to identify and appoint a replacement Chairman, ensuring that the process meets good governance requirements.* On the agenda.

4.0 Health and Safety report

4.1 MM reported that there had been no reportable incidents since the last meeting.

5.0 Good Governance

5.1 MM reported that the Board had complied with good governance requirements since CC's departure. **Action – Agreed that the Register of Interests declarations be reviewed when BS in post.**

BS / CLERK

6.0 Finance report

6.1 A report for the quarter ending 15 November 2021 had been circulated with the meeting papers. MM noted the actual income/expenditure figures were better than budget, largely due to salary saved following staff departures. **Action – Debtors understood to have been cleared, but this to be checked.**

BS / NC

7.0 Biologist's report

7.1 An updated biologist's report had been produced by CD and circulated with the meeting papers.

7.2 CD gave the following brief verbal update:-

- The e-fishing databases had been updated with this year's results and NEPS data sent to Marine Scotland, whose report is awaited.
- Staff had completed the year's programmed SISI work. There is visible die-back of invasive species in most areas after several years' treatment. New sites of Japanese Knotweed have been identified close to Dores beach and will require treatment.
- Fish for the Garry project were currently being stripped by John Gibb at Strathcarron hatchery.

8.0 Bailiff's report

8.1 An updated bailiff's report had been circulated with the meeting papers and was taken as read. There were no queries or comments raised.

9.0 Any other business

a. Annual public meeting

MM had spoken to Alan Wells at FMS and confirmed that a derogation on holding a public meeting was appropriate at present due to Covid restrictions. It was agreed that the Annual Public Meeting be deferred to the spring.

b. AST proposal for Loch Oich

A copy of the Atlantic Salmon Trust proposal for a smolt tagging project in the River Garry and Loch Oich had been sent with the meeting papers. MM summarised the proposed project aims of tagging and monitoring smolts to assess how their behaviour was affected within Loch Oich, specifically the potential for fish to end up in the Lochy system or in the Caledonian Canal, and also the effects of predation within Loch Oich. The perceived benefit is to ensure that the smolts produced from the Garry project have the best possible chance to make it to sea and to maximise the benefit of the money spent on that project. MM noted that AST was not asking the Board to provide direct funding for the project but was asking for support through staff time in assisting with capture, tagging and monitoring. Two cohorts of smolts would be monitored with some being tagged and released to find their way through Loch Oich and a second group being tagged and then trucked and released downstream of Loch Oich.

The Board discussed the proposal, with comments made concerning the potentially significant extent of staff time required; the effectiveness of seeking to assess the extent of predation and limitations on how this could be addressed; and whether Loch Oich was the most significant area of concern in relation to the Caledonian Canal, with Dochgarroch being cited as a greater potential problem.

TM introduced himself to the meeting. He suggested that a decision on the project would best be deferred until B Shaw was in post, given how involved he and the Board staff might be.

It was agreed it should be noted in the Minute that the project had been discussed by the Board but a final decision should be deferred until B Shaw was in place. A decision will be required before the next Board meeting if the spring migration of smolts is to be assessed. **Action – B Shaw to review project proposal.**

BS

c. Appointment of Clerk

MM noted that he had been in discussion with Bidwells concerning the provision of the services of a Clerk to the Board. At this point AC temporarily left the meeting. It was agreed that Bidwells be appointed for an initial interim period to be reviewed once B Shaw was in post.

d. Appointment of Accountant

Following his indication that he wishes to retire. The Board formally recorded their thanks to Andrew Duncan for all his work for the Board. **Action – MM to write a letter of thanks on behalf of the Board.**

MM

MM noted that the previous accountant Frame Kennedy had indicated a willingness to assist, but that other candidates might be identified. It was agreed to defer a final decision until the next meeting.

e. Appointment of Press Officer

MM reported that Bill MacAllister, who had provided public relation services to the Board in recent years, was looking to increase the retainer sum currently paid and whilst the sum itself was quite low, the percentage increase was large. It was suggested that as the Board had only a limited potential requirement for press coverage, payment on an as and when basis might be more appropriate. It was agreed to leave any final decision at present. **Action – MM to send a holding response.**

MM

f. Procurement of vehicle for CEO

MM reported that the Dacia previously used by CC had been declared unroadworthy and had been sold for £500. Quotes for the lease of a pickup truck had been received from Arnold Clark and had been circulated along with the meeting papers.

NC reported he had spoken to Corrie Motors who currently have an Isuzu double cab pickup available in Inverness for £36,000 on the road. They were offering a finance package based on 48 months at £637 per month with a £9,000 deposit. The vehicle carries a five-year warranty. It was noted that new vehicles were extremely difficult to come by at present and that Arnold Clark had indicated a seven-month waiting period. The Board agreed to proceed with purchase of the Isuzu from Corrie Motors based on the finance package offered. **Action – NC to arrange.**

NC

g. Mandate for Dochfour

MM confirmed he would be stepping down from the Board and therefore a new mandate for Dochfour would be required. It had been proposed that TM be mandated on behalf of Wildlands, the new proprietors of Dochfour, for the interim period until the next triennial election in September 2022. This was agreed and TM was welcomed to the Board.

h. Appointment of Chairman

MM confirmed his intention to step down as Chairman of the Board alongside his relinquishment of the mandate from Dochfour. DS proposed a vote of thanks to MM for all his hard work over the last few years and in particular in recent months following the departure of key staff. MM thanked the Board members for all their support.

MM went on to indicate that the appointment of a replacement Chairman was a matter for the Board but he wished to recommend NC be appointed to this role. In recent times NC had been very supportive, effectively acting as an official Vice Chair as well as participating in the recent interview panel which had resulted in B Shaw's appointment. NC confirmed he would be willing to step in as Interim Chairman until the triennial elections in September 2022. The proposal was seconded by GM and approved by all those present.

i. The following items were also discussed:

- AS indicated that he would be happy to arrange a tour of the catchment and specifically the SSE infrastructure, for B Shaw. Other Board members expressed an interest including SM and TM.
- NC reported he was currently looking into alternative offices for the Board and had recently enquired at Great Glen House. Other suggestions were premises at the Inverness Harbour offices, or at Dochfour Estate (contact through Galbraith).
- MM reported that 2021 catch returns so far indicated a total of approximately 500 salmon, though two significant returns were still awaited.

- MM indicated that he would also be stepping down from the Board of Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust (NBFT). NC confirmed he would take up this position. GM queried why the Trust had not yet been wound up; this was reported to be due to the extent of funds still held by the Trust and decisions being required for distribution thereof. There being a second vacancy for a Ness Board member, GM agreed to be reappointed to the NBFT Board.
- MM noted that the Board's Bank Account Mandates would require to be transferred. Two resolutions were put forward and approved for amending the account signatories and the authorised internet banking users. These resolutions are attached to this minute for recording and for submission to the Bank.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed.

Banking Resolutions

At the board meeting held by the Ness District Salmon Fishery Board on 16th December 2021 the members present passed the following resolutions and these resolutions will be recorded in the minute book.

Resolution 1

Michael Martin is authorised to revoke authority for Michael Martin and Christopher Conroy as Business Internet Banking users for the business account held with the Clydesdale Bank PLC and for Neil Cameron and Brian Shaw to be mandated as authorised users.

Resolution 2

Michael Martin and Christopher Conway as currently mandated signatories for the business account held with Clydesdale Bank PLC to mandate Neil Cameron and Brian Shaw as authorised signatories and to remove Michael Martin, Christopher Conroy and Andrew Duncan as authorised signatories.