

Minutes

Client: **Beauly District Fishery Board**
Project: Board Meeting
Venue: Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly
Our ref: 111/33
Date: 4 December 2014
Present: J Miller (Chair); F Spencer-Nairn; M Spencer-Nairn; P Pacey; J Whitbread
Attendees: A Campbell (Clerk); C Conroy and C Daphne (both Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust)

Description	Action
1 Apologies	
1.1 Apologies were received from the following proprietors and potential attendees: C Pease; I Shepherd; M Martin (Ness DSFB).	
2 Minutes of Board Meeting of 5 June 2014	
2.1 The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 5 June 2014 were approved as an accurate record.	
3 Matters Arising	
3.1 In response to a query from Mr P Pacey, the Chairman confirmed that an approach had been made to the Wild Fisheries Review Team to arrange a meeting with representatives of the Board. Following an initial rejection of this request, a meeting was eventually held at short notice and was attended by the Chairman and Mr F Spencer-Nairn.	
3.2 In relation to paragraph 7.5 of the previous Minutes, the Clerk confirmed that SSE fish passes at Kilmorack and Aigas started lifting at the beginning of April in each year.	
3.3 Two or three responses had been received from proprietors concerning the most appropriate time of year for the Annual Meeting, however no clear consensus had arisen. The last week of June or first week of July was suggested as a suitable time.	
4 Register of Members' Interests	
4.1 There were no relevant Declarations of Interest arising in respect of the Agenda for the meeting.	
5 Board Vacancy	
5.1 The Clerk had previously circulated an email and/or letter to proprietors concerning the two vacancies which had arisen on the Board. Although initial enquiries were received from two possible candidates, no firm expressions of interest had arisen and the positions remain vacant.	Clerk

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6 Bailiff Report

6.1 REMOVED - CONFIDENTIAL

6.2 REMOVED - CONFIDENTIAL

6.3 The Cromarty District Salmon Fishery Board patrol boat had been out of action in 2014 as it was awaiting statutory listing by the Maritime Coastguard Agency. Accordingly a refund had been received from the Cromarty Board in relation to the payment made for this service.

7 Financial Report to Date

7.1 The Clerk gave a brief summary of the income and expenditure year to date versus budget. Other than the patrol boat refund mentioned above, he did not expect there to be any significant variation against budget at the financial year end on 31 December.

8 2015 Budget and Fishery Assessment

8.1 The Clerk presented the draft Budget for 2015. This detailed a slight increase in the overall expenditure and consequent increase in the levy upon proprietors, with a proposed rate of 66p per £1 rateable value.

8.2 The Bidwells fee for the services of the Clerk was proposed to increase by £500 to £6,000 per annum to reflect the additional workload arising from new statutory requirements on Boards; also the increase in consultation relating to the Wild Fisheries Review and other matters likely to continue into 2015. In addition, the proposed contribution to the coastal netting moratorium was also now fully included within the Budget; this is expected to continue for another two years minimum.

8.3 Following discussion, the Board approved the proposed Budget and levy upon proprietors.

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

9 Wild Fisheries Review

9.1 The Board agreed it would be beneficial to continue discussions on joint working with Ness District Fishery Board, it being likely that at some point the two Boards may be required to amalgamate as a consequence of the recommendations contained within the Wild Fisheries Review.

9.2 A copy of the response sent to the ASFB consultation on the Review recommendations was circulated to the Board Members. This included comments on the proposals for a tagging system for killing salmon. The position adopted in the Board's response was that any such scheme should have a clear link back to conservation objectives, be subject to review and based upon sound scientific evidence.

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10 Review of 2014 Fish Catches and Fish Pass Counts

- 10.1 The Clerk circulated a summary of the fish catches for 2014. The total reported salmon catch was 572 of which 473 were reported as returned to the river (catch and release); a total of 83%. The total reported sea trout catch was 275.
- 10.2 Mr F Spencer-Nairn reported that the salmon catch for Culligran was in fact 74 and not 73 as previously reported.
- 10.3 The 10 year average catches for comparison against the 2014 catch are 1,235 salmon and 299 sea trout.
- 10.4 The most recent fish pass count figures received from SSE up until the beginning of November were as follows:-

Kilmorack Dam	3,422 (5 year average 3,904)
Aigas Dam	2,889 (5 year average 3,683)
Beannachran Dam	244 (5 year average 306)

- 10.5 It was noted that the annual rod catch of salmon was down by 50% against the five year average whereas the fish pass count figures were only down by around 12%. This confirmed that the very poor catch was significantly related to difficult fishing conditions and not solely as a consequence of the run of fish.
- 10.6 The Clerk was asked to forward the catch statistics details to Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust (NBFT) for them to undertake a rod catch assessment using the NASCO tool.
- 10.7 A discussion followed concerning marine survival and the importance of concentrating resources on research into this. It was noted that electrofishing survey data indicated a healthy stock of juvenile fish within the river district when compared to standard national parameters. Mr C Conroy reported that, although numbers had declined, the average weight of salmon on the River Ness had increased in the last few years and it would be useful to undertake a similar analysis of River Beaully salmon.

Clerk

11 Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust Report

- 11.1 A brief report from Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust (NBFT) had been circulated prior to the meeting.
- 11.2 Mr C Daphne commented further on the juvenile electrofishing results. He reported that parr numbers appeared to be stable across most sites and fry numbers were excellent in a number of places. In response to a question whether it was known how many parr reached smolting stage, Mr Daphne and Mr Conroy reported that this could be gauged through the use of smolt traps, although there were practical difficulties with these, or alternatively a less accurate indication could be given by assessing the age of parr: the greater number of older parr, the more were likely to survive to smolt.

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11.3 Discussion took place regarding the benefits of scale sampling. NBFT remains keen to undertake more scale sampling of Beauly fish, in particular smaller salmon which may be currently classified as grilse but are in fact multi-sea-winter fish. NBFT to be provided with ghillie contact details in order to arrange a meeting with ghillies throughout the system and take this forward.	ALL
11.4 A request was made for more volunteers to assist with mink raft monitoring and trapping as there was a shortage in the Beauly area. It was felt that this would be a suitable activity for ghillies to become involved in.	ALL
11.5 The 2014 – 2020 Fisheries Management Action Plan was reviewed. It was agreed that half-yearly updates on action points would be beneficial.	NBFT
11.6 Mr C Conroy confirmed that NBFT intended to increase the number of counts of sawbill birds to obtain more effective data to back up any licence applications. More assistance was required for this and again it was suggested that liaison with ghillies would be beneficial.	NBFT/ALL
11.7 In relation to control of seals, it was agreed that more effective liaison was required between Angling Club members and NBFT/nominated marksmen. It was confirmed that the nominated marksmen for the Beauly area were Willie and John Matheson but that Chris Conroy and John MacColl also held the appropriate licences.	PP/NBFT
11.8 Mr C Conroy reported that there was currently some research being undertaken on the Spey into the impact of dolphins on the salmon population and it would be beneficial at some stage for this to be extended to the Ness and Beauly area given the extensive presence of dolphins around Chanonry Point.	
11.9 The Chairman confirmed that he had arranged a meeting with John Parrot, the Project Leader charged with undertaking the survey and treatment of non-native plant species within the catchment. A recent newsletter had been received from the Project Team and this is available to view on the Board's website.	
11.10 NBFT staff had inspected the concrete structure on the river bed at Tomich near Fasnakyle and that this had been reported to SEPA as a potential barrier to fish passage. Further investigation would be undertaken with a view to potential removal/remediation.	NBFT
12 SSE Liaison Meeting 5 November 2014	
12.1 A draft Minute of the Liaison Meeting held with SSE representatives on 5 November 2014 had been circulated to Board Members.	
12.2 SSE had confirmed that during 2014 there had been works undertaken at Deanie Power Station in Glen Strathfarrar which had resulted in alterations to the flow regime in the River Farrar.	
12.3 The Chairman confirmed that he had requested SSE confirm the extent of any down time in the fish pass counters with a view to establishing if this explained some of the discrepancy between the Kilmorack and Aigas Dam figures over various years.	

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12.4 An extensive discussion had taken place with SSE concerning smolt survival through the turbines at Aigas and Kilmorack. Further details on this discussion were contained within the Liaison Meeting minutes, but in summary it had been concluded there was very little that could practically be done to improve the current situation and in most operating conditions smolt survival was very high.

13 2015 Conservation Policy

13.1 Mr P Pacey reported that Beauly Angling Club wished to propose a variation to the existing Conservation Policy to the extent that each angler be allowed to take 1 fish per week up to a maximum of 5 fish per annum. Mr Pacey was asked to review the Angling Club catches and provide an estimate of the effect this proposal might have on the rate of catch and release. The general view of the Board was that they expected the catch and release rate to be maintained if not improved.

13.2 The Clerk was asked to amend the existing Conservation Policy to include the new statutory requirement to return all fish before 1 April. Other than that, the Board approved the existing Conservation Policy for the 2015 season.

Clerk

14 Date of Next Meeting

14.1 It was proposed that the next Board Meeting be held on 30 June 2015 immediately following the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and thereafter a further Board Meeting be held on 3 December 2015.