

# Minutes

## Beauly District Fishery Board

Project: Board meeting  
Venue: Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly  
Our ref: 113/33  
Date: 3 December 2015  
Present: J. Miller (Chair); F. Spencer-Nairn; M. Spencer-Nairn; G. Purdie; J. Whitbread; P. Pacey (Beauly Angling Club); A. Campbell (Clerk); N. Barker (Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust)

In

Attendance: N. Cameron (Ness DSFB)

Distribution: All Board members

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Description	Action
<b>1 Apologies</b>	
1.1 Apologies were received from Chris Conroy of Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust (NBFT).	
<b>2 Minutes of Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Board Meeting 30 June 2015</b>	
2.1 The minutes of the annual meeting of qualified proprietors and the Board meeting held on 30 June 2015 were approved as an accurate record. The Clerk to arrange for an approved copy to be published on the Board's website	Clerk
2.2 There were no matters arising not otherwise covered on the agenda.	
<b>3 Register of Members' Interest</b>	
3.1 No declarations of interest were made in respect of the agenda for the meeting, with the exception of agenda item 8 – Valuation Roll 2017 Re-valuation. It was noted that this affects all proprietors.	
<b>4 Wild Fisheries Review</b>	
4.1 Proposed conservation measures.	
4.1.1 The Clerk reported that a representative of all Fishery Trusts in Scotland (including NBFT) had been invited to attend a meeting with Marine Scotland in Pitlochry on 15 December. There had been no specific feedback from either Scottish Ministers or Marine Scotland to the Board's recent consultation submission. NBFT had been chasing Marine Scotland for a specific response on the Beauly, but to date none was forthcoming. It was noted that the Ness DSFB were also unhappy with the response received, in particular that Inverness Angling Club appear to have received more detailed response than the Ness Board.	

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4.1.2 Marine Scotland's methodology for assessing conservation limits was discussed. The Board was concerned that Marine Scotland appeared to assume a productive capacity of 13 million eggs for the Beaully catchment. This contrasts with previous estimates of an output of 90,000 smolts which, on best evidence, equates to around 9 million eggs. The basis upon which wetted areas were calculated was discussed. N. Barker confirmed he believed there were grounds for challenging this, particular in relation to "dead" water behind hydro impoundments. The Board's position, as stated in the consultation submission, remains that establishment of conservation limits was ultimately welcome and preferable to a licence quota scheme. However, given the lack of data and grave concerns over methodology, such a scheme required at least 2 or 3 years before being implemented.	
4.1.3 The Clerk to write to Marine Scotland specifically requesting a meeting with the Beaully BDFB and seeking a deferral of the imposition of conservation measures for at least one year. The Clerk also to circulate to the Board the map of wetted areas produced by Marine Scotland.	Clerk
4.2 Proposed Fishery Management Organisations (FMOs)	
4.2.1 The Chairman reported an analysis had been undertaken on the finances of a potential Ness, Beaully and Lochaber FMO. This analysis indicated such a body might have a £150,000 per annum deficit. It was his view that such a proposal did not carry a great deal of logic. Alternative tentative discussions had been held with the Cromarty, Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Boards to establish if an Inner Moray Firth FMO might work. He stated his personal preference was still a joint Ness and Beaully FMO and he invited the Board to approve that a joint working group be set up between the Ness and Beaully Boards. If this did not prove feasible, then a wider Inner Moray Firth FMO might be considered.	
4.2.2 P. Pacey stated the Beaully Angling Club view was that any FMO must include rivers with similar catchments and he was in agreement with the Chairman's proposal.	
4.2.3 N. Cameron expressed the view that a Ness, Beaully and Lochaber FMO might be too big and there were issues with potential funding. It was also unclear where such an organisation might be based given the very large geographical area. He also expressed concern about wider funding of FMOs in future, particularly whether current contributions from SSE, RAFTS etc would continue. Larger FMOs could mean less representation from fishery proprietors who might be outnumbered by statutory agency and other representatives.	
4.2.4 F. Spencer-Nairn agreed and reiterated his previous comments about past history with local Tourist Boards, and the loss of interest and voluntary time that had occurred when these had been amalgamated. He also expressed concern about proposals to pass responsibility for sourcing funding to local FMOs, believing this could make them unpopular in their local area.	

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4.2.5 The Board agreed that a joint working group be set up to consider and draw up proposals for a Ness and Beauly FMO. Beauly DSFB to be represented by the Chairman and F. Spencer-Nairn. Representatives of NBFT also to be involved. N. Cameron confirmed he would report this back to the Ness DSFB meeting to be held on 7 December. It was also agreed the Board would write to ASFB to express the view that 15 FMOs for Scotland was too few and that 26 would be more sensible.

Clerk/Chair

### 5 Bailiff Report

5.1 The Clerk reported on information received from the warranted bailiffs. Not all bailiffs had provided a detailed report and one had not responded. A few minor poaching incidents had been reported. N Barker confirmed that one individual with a known history and criminal record for poaching had been approached earlier in the year, but no arrest or prosecution had resulted. N. Cameron believed that Ness bailiff John McColl had recently been involved in tackling a poaching incident on the Beauly. The Clerk to confirm this with J. McColl. N. Cameron also confirmed that the Ness DSFB bailiff team had recently received funding from SSE for the purchase of night sights and as a joint working approach developed between the Boards, these could well be made available to assist on the Beauly.

Clerk

### 6 Financial Report – Year to Date

6.1 The Clerk reported on the Board's finances. A couple of proprietor levies were still being chased (*subsequent to the meeting it was confirmed that these have been received and that all levies are now paid*). A second contribution remained due to NBFT and further expenditure was expected prior to the year-end on Bidwells' fees for the services of the Clerk and a contribution towards night watchman costs. The total expenditure as at 31 October 2015 was £21,736 against an overall budget of £39,100. Total cash and reserves as at 31 October 2015 were £39,991. It was expected this would reduce to around £25,000 by the end of the financial year.

6.2 The Board agreed that, due to the additional time and work involved in the various consultation responses and analysis surrounding the Wild Fisheries Review, an additional fee be paid to Bidwells for the Clerk's time up to a limit of £2,000.

### 7 2016 Budget and Fishery Assessment

7.1 A draft budget for 2016 had been circulated prior to the meeting



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7.2 The proposed budget and annual levy on proprietors of 64p per £1 rateable value was approved.

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<b>8 Valuation Roll 2017 Re-Valuation</b>	
8.1 The Clerk had received a letter from the Highlands and Western Isles Joint Board requesting confirmation whether the Board wished a re-assessment in 2017 of the Valuation Roll entry for each fishery. Re-valuation of fisheries is at the discretion of each DSFB; all other non-domestic premises entered on the Valuation Roll are to be re-valued in 2017. ASFB had specifically recommended the all Boards consider re-valuation in light of the proposed new FMOs. The Chairman confirmed the last revaluation of the Beaully District had been in 2005, the Board having declined a re-valuation in 2010.	
8.2 The Board agreed that a re-valuation should be undertaken. The Clerk to confirm to the Valuation Joint Board	Clerk
<i>At this point the meeting was opened to members of the public. Three members of the public joined the meeting.</i>	
<b>9 Review of 2015 Catches and Dam Counts</b>	
9.1 Unfortunately the Clerk had not received catch returns from all proprietors prior to the meeting. <i>Subsequent to the meeting further information was received from proprietors bringing the total to 877 salmon, of which 741 were released (84%) and 351 sea trout.</i>	
9.2 Most recent fish pass count figures received from SSE were reported as: Kimorack – 4,149 (25 October); Aigas – 3,583 (25 October); and Beannachran – 227 (11 October).	
9.3 F. Spencer-Nairn expressed surprise at the low Beannachran count in relation to the other two dams. The Board noted that the numbers at Kilmorack and Aigas were above the 5-year average and healthy in the context of the last 10 to 20 years. This contrasted with the reported catches, indicating once again that water flows and temperatures, potentially coupled with fishing effort, had inhibited fish catches. This was of concern given Marine Scotland's approach to setting conservation limits based on catches alone.	
<b>10 Ness and Beaully Fisheries Trust Report</b>	
10.1 A report from NBFT had been circulated prior to the meeting. N. Barker summarised a number of items contained therein.	
10.2 2015 Electro – Fishing Surveys: -	

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<p>10.2.1 A number of burns have been affected by the severe flooding in March with significant changes noted in Belladrum, Breaich and Culligran Burns. As a consequence, fry numbers were significantly lower in these locations due to either displacement of redds, or mortality. N. Barker confirmed he was keeping an eye on the build-up of gravel at the mouth of the Culligran Burn but did not consider action required at present. It was noted that trout fry had been found in the Culburnie Burn above the barrier eased in 2014. Overall, N. Barker confirmed that numbers of fry and parr were within historical ranges with the exception of a few sites. He was slightly concerned about the results in the Fly pool on the Lower Beauly, but this could be a result of significant gravel movement in this area. A considerable increase in the fry numbers had been found at the survey site at Cruives. He was in contact with the Forestry Commission to obtain a key for locked gates which had prevented access to the upper site on the Breaich Burn in 2015.</p>	
<p>10.3 On other matters: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- A report on sediment flows and impacts within coastal burns will be produced in spring 2016 following site surveys. P. Pacey asked if further surveys would be undertaken in the Tomich Burn to assess whether the work done to clear blockages had been successful. N. Barker confirmed this burn would be walked again.</li><li>- NBFT is in discussion with SEPA concerning the potential removal and re-grading of a small burn at Tomich Village above Fasnakyle, where a 500m stretch of the bed of the burn had historically been altered with cobble stones. SEPA has concerns about potential flooding impacts if this is undertaken. The Chairman questioned whether this project was worth doing, given the small area affected and limited impact on fish populations. N. Barker confirmed that the cost should be minimal as the local landowner had offered a contribution in kind.</li><li>- NBFT has obtained approval in principle from the landowner on the northern bank of the river Cannich to remove the small weir which is preventing movement of brown trout. An application will be submitted to the Habitat Restoration Fund in due course.</li><li>- NBFT has still to receive reports back from gillies of any floy tags being used or recaptured. A large number of scales had been received for sampling, validation is ongoing and a report will follow. Results will be presented at the Board's public meeting in June.</li></ul>	
<p>10.4 The Chairman asked whether a rotary screw trap for smolts would be beneficial in assisting establishment of conservation limits. N. Barker confirmed he was interested in attempting this at the mouth of the Belladrum Burn. However, operation of such traps is very labour intensive and NBFT currently has a trap in operation on the River Garry. Each trap costs around £6,000. NBFT was asked to put a proposal to the Board concerning this matter.</p>	NBFT
<p>10.5 The Chairman suggested that all anglers should be encouraged to report sightings of sawbills to NBFT in order that a much clearer picture could be built up of numbers on the river. Board members were asked to pass this on to anglers. The Clerk to raise this with all proprietors.</p>	Clerk

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10.6 The Clerk referred to an email from Roger Knight of Spey DSFB concerning the seal cull quota under the Moray Firth Seal Management Plan. At present the Boards within the plan were in danger of falling well short of the quota, making it very difficult to sustain this in future years. It was reported that members of Beauly Angling Club had seen seals with in the Club waters this year. Discussion took place on how best to ensure a swift response when seals were spotted in the river. The Clerk to discuss with nominated marksmen and to send a copy of the Management Plan map to Beauly Angling Club. It was also suggested that additional marksmen should be put forward, although these would need to undertake the requisite training and have their firearms licences amended. P. Pacey undertook to establish if any members of the Angling Club would be interested in this. N. Cameron suggested the C. Conroy and J. McColl should also be included in the list for the River Beauly.	Clerk
10.7 The Chairman asked that any future updates on the Beauly Management Action Plan are colour coded to show those items which have been completed, are in progress, or which have not been started.	NBFT
<b>11 SSE Liaison Meeting 5 November 2015</b>	
11.1 A liaison meeting between Board representatives and SSE had taken place on 5 November 2015.	
11.2 J. Whitbread raised concerns about the water levels in the River Glass in 2015. The Chairman confirmed this had been raised with SSE who subsequent to the liaison meeting had come back with data showing the output from generators at Fasnakyle during June to October 2015. SSE had refuted that there had been a problem with low flows during this period. They also confirmed that a compensation flow generator had been installed at Fasnakyle a number of years ago which resulted in potentially lower flows being passed than had historically been the case prior to its installation. It was confirmed that the issues with low flow were primarily related to September and October. SSE had suggested this was entirely due to the lack of natural run off and was still higher than would have been the case without the hydro schemes. M. Spencer-Nairn expressed concern that fisherman booked fishing on the basis of historical catches and water levels and that continued problems with water flows would have a knock on effect on fisheries.	
11.3 The Clerk was asked to write to SEPA and confirm that compensation flows were met at all times during 2015.	Clerk
11.4 Alastair Stephen of SSE had proposed that Mark Coulson from Rivers and Lochs Institute at UHI give a representation on their proposed project on fish genetics to the Boards public meeting in June. F. Spencer-Nairn confirmed that he had been invited to join the Advisory Committee of Rivers and Lochs Institute.	Clerk

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<b>12 2016 Conservation Policy</b>	
12.1 It was noted that, as matters presently stood, a grade 3 allocation from Marine Scotland would mean mandatory catch and release of all salmon. If the grading was successfully re-assessed to grade 2, then a revised Conservation Policy would need to be proposed to Marine Scotland for approval. The Board concluded that it was currently unable to confirm the Conservation Policy for salmon at present.	
12.2 Concerns from anglers regarding the 100% catch and release of sea trout were raised again. The view amongst many anglers and ghillies was that sea trout (both adults and juveniles) could impact on salmon populations either through direct predation or by competition for resources. This was refuted by N. Barker who suggested that any potential impact primarily rested with ferrox brown trout and not sea trout. The Board agreed that the sea trout Conservation Policy should remain unchanged.	Clerk
<b>13 Moray Firth Trout Initiative</b>	
13.1 The Chairman reported that a request had been received from MFTI for a renewal of past funding commitments. This was approved by the Board.	Clerk
<b>14 Any Other Business</b>	
14.1 A consultation request had been received from Highland Council on the revised planning application for the proposed Druim Ba Wind Farm. A draft response had been prepared by NBFT and circulated prior to the meeting. This was approved by the Board and the Clerk was asked to submit a similar response directly on behalf of the Board.	Clerk
14.2 P. Pacey reported that, at a recent Beauly Angling Club committee meeting, it had been suggested the water level between Kilmorack and Aigas Dams was higher than had historically been the case; possibly by as much as 8-10 feet. It had been suggested that areas of bank previously wadeable were no longer accessible. The concern was that more static water might have an impact on water quality below the dam.	
14.3 The basis for this suggestion was questioned as changes in water levels had not been noted by others. In addition, Aigas and Kilmorack Dams were reactive and simply passed through any water that flowed to them. They were not designed or used as impoundment reservoirs. However, it was agreed that the question would be raised at the next SSE Liaison Meeting.	Chair
14.4 It was confirmed that the next Board Meeting and Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors would be held on 28 June 2016.	All