

Subject: Beauly District Fishery Board – Board Meeting
 Date: 7 December 2016
 Location: Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly
 Attendees: J Miller (Chair); F Spencer-Nairn; P Pacey (Beauly Angling Club); G Purdie; M Spencer-Nairn;
 In Attendance: A Campbell (Clerk); N Barker (Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust); C Conroy (Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust); N McAndrew (Glass Syndicate)
 Distribution: All Board Members

MINUTES

ITEM	ACTION OWNER
1.0 Apologies	
1.1 Apologies were received from Lady J Whitbread.	
2.0 Minutes of Board Meeting and Meeting of Qualified Proprietors held on 28 June 2016	
2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting and the meeting of Qualified Proprietors held on the above date were both approved as an accurate record. The Clerk to arrange for the approved copies to be published on the Board's website.	CLERK
3.0 Matters Arising	
3.1 With regard to item 10.4 of the minutes of the Board meeting of 3 December 2015, JM asked whether there was any update on a potential rotary screw trap for smolts. N Barker replied that a lack of resources (both financial and time) had meant this had not progressed further. It was suggested this matter be kept under view.	
3.2 AC confirmed that two weeks additional bailiffing had been provided by the Lower Beauly night watchman as a consequence of the works to the Kilmorack dam. AC to raise this with SSE with a view to potential reimbursement.	CLERK
4.0 Register of the Members' Interests	
4.1 F Spencer-Nairn confirmed that he remained on the advisory board of the Rivers and Lochs Institute at UHI. A proposal from the RLI for funding a research project is referred to below.	
5.0 Review of 2016 Catches and Dam Counts	
5.1 AC confirmed that at the time of the meeting a total catch of 868 salmon had been reported to him by proprietors, with two proprietors yet to return figures. It therefore looked like the catch would be at similar levels to 2015, but below the 10 year average of 1,123. The total sea trout catch reported was 1,135, very significantly higher than the long term average of 370.	
5.2 It was noted that the last four years of salmon catches were all lower than the long term average. AC presented a graph detailing the catch split between Rivers Beauly, Glass and	

Farrer since 2007. This shows that catches on the Beaully and Glass have fallen in recent years, but the Farrer has remained reasonably static or slightly improving over this same period. Water levels in late season were considered to be a significant factor in this.

- 5.3 The most recent fish pass counts for Kilmorack, Aigas and Beannachran dams were considered. These were 4,358; 4,169 and 291 respectively. It was noted that the main grilse run was earlier than in 2015. It was also noted that the count difference between Kilmorack and Aigas dams was considerably lower than in 2015.

6.0 2017 Salmon and Sea Trout Conservation Policy

- 6.1 The Board noted that the Beaully Conservation grading for 2017 was Category 2, an improvement on the Category 3 grading in 2016.

- 6.2 In light of this, the Board agreed that the conservation policy for salmon should be rewritten along the following lines:-

- Before 1 April – no salmon may be kept under existing statutory regulations.
- From 1 April to 30 June – recommended 100% catch and release to protect spring stocks. This is an extension of one month from the previous policy in 2015 and is based on advice from NBFT following scale sampling results.
- From 1 July to end of season all fish over 7lbs (multi sea winter fish) be returned; otherwise only one fish per angler per week or a total of three fish per season to be kept; any bleeding fish or dead fish to be handed to NBFT for scientific analysis.

- 6.3 The following conservation proposals were agreed for sea trout:-

- To retain only one fish per angler per day with a total bag limit of two fish per week or six fish per season.
- To release all coloured or unseasonable fish.

- 6.4 JM reported that a number of anglers were still strongly of the view that sea trout in the river were predated upon juvenile salmon. He asked whether NBFT would be able to undertake an analysis of stomach contents of a sample of sea trout to establish if this theory had merit. N Barker replied that a sample size of at least 30 fish would be required and proposed that as a first step a literature review be undertaken to confirm any previous studies. It was agreed that this should be undertaken prior to the next Board meeting in June.

N BARKER

7.0 Bailiff Report – **REDACTED**

8.0 Wild Fisheries Bill and FMOs

8.1 JM confirmed that the ASFB initiative to create blueprint FMOs was currently in limbo due to various difficulties around the country. It is expected that legislation might be brought forward by Government in 2017.

8.2 A discussion took place amongst Board members concerning the merits and potential downsides of becoming involved in a pilot FMO. The Board had previously rejected this suggestion, but it was suggested this should be reconsidered as it might be better to be involved. CC reported that the Ness DSFB had agreed to a pilot FMO with Lochaber DSFB as a least worst case option.

8.3 It remained unclear how such pilot FMOs would be funded and what the model would look like; however, the Board agreed that it would co-operate with a pilot Ness/Beauly/Lochaber FMO provided Scottish Government paid for it and on the premise that if the pilot showed that such an FMO could not work, the Beauly Board could walk away.

8.4 JM/AC to draft a letter to ASFB.

JM/CLERK

8.5 JM reported that at the recent ASFB AGM it had been agreed to merge with RAFTS and form a new organisation, Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS). The new organisation would have a managing Board comprising six representatives of District Fishery Boards and three representatives of Fisheries Trusts plus additional co-optees. Nominations for Board representatives had been invited. It was agreed that the Clerk should nominate JM on behalf of Beauly DFBSB.

CLERK

9.0 SSE Liaison Meeting Report

9.1 AC and JM updated the Board on the meeting with SSE held on 26 October 2016. The main item for discussion had been the works at Deanie power station between March 2017 and April 2018 and further works at Fasnakyle power station between May 2017 and August 2017. A copy of the draft minutes from the meeting with SSE had been circulated to the Board.

- 9.2 Further discussion took place concerning water levels in the River Glass in recent years. Concern was again expressed that this was affecting income from fishing lets and ultimately would impact on capital values, particularly in light of the further works proposed in 2017.
- 9.3 The Clerk was asked to write to SEPA for confirmation that compensation levels had been met at all times during the last two years. He was also asked to write to SSE to request that a marker post be installed below Fasnakyle dam showing the water level at compensation and above. **CLERK**
- 9.4 NB pointed out a correction to the draft SSE Liaison minutes under Section 3.3, relating to a small burn in Strathfarrar affected by a culvert installed as part of the hydroelectric scheme. NB stated that this matter should be kept under review.
- 9.5 PP queried whether SSE had provided a written protocol for water flows during drier periods in spring, with a view to mitigating smolt loss. The Clerk was asked to chase this. **CLERK**
- 10.0 Financial Report Year to Date**
- 10.1 AC gave a brief summary of the Board's finances for the year. Income from levies had all been received, totalling £38,300. Expenditure was expected to be slightly below budget as a consequence of no payment being made for coastal boat patrols (£1,500). The closing bank balance at the end of the year was expected to be in the region of £30,000.
- 11.0 2017 Budget and Fishery Assessment**
- 11.1 A proposed budget for 2017 had been circulated prior to the meeting. This budget showed a total levy of £38,300, in line with 2016. As a consequence, the levy assessment would remain at £64 per pound rateable value, based on extant valuation role entries. The proposal budget and levy on proprietors was approved.
- 11.2 AC had sought a recent update from the Assessor's Office on the 2017 revaluation and had been informed that this was still to be undertaken, although it should be in place by April 2017. AC asked that any proprietors who intended to appeal the revaluation notice let him know, as ultimately this could have an impact on the share of levy charged to proprietors.
- 12.0 Report from Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust**
- 12.1 A summary report from NBFT had been circulated to the Board prior to the meeting.
- 12.2 Commenting on this, NB confirmed that electrofishing surveys in 2016 had been more limited than previous years due to staff absences and other time constraints from external contract work. It was noted that there remained a slight concern over juvenile salmon numbers in the Belladrum burn, although 2016 had seen a slight improvement. The survey results for the Culburnie burn had shown an interesting increase in salmon.
- 12.3 Commenting on the higher sea trout catch in 2016, NB stated that the Trust was awaiting analysis of scale samples collected by Beaully Angling Club. It was speculated that the sea trout caught in early spring were potentially over wintered finnock, rather than freshly run fish.
- 12.4 With regard to collection of salmon scale samples, NB commented that efforts in 2016 had declined slightly, with a poorer response in particular from the Beaully. It was agreed that a pre-season meeting should be held with all ghillies concerned in order to encourage them to maintain this worthwhile exercise. **NB/CLERK**

13.0 Any Other Business

- 13.1 A project proposal had been received from the Rivers and Lochs Institute at UHI, with proposals for a scientific assessment of numbers of breeding salmon in the Beaully catchment based on genetic markers. This proposal would form part of a wider study of rivers around the Moray Firth area. The proposed project cost would be £13,000. It was not immediately clear how much of this the Board would be asked to contribute, although CC stated his understanding was this would be 50% and payment would be staggered over the course of the initial year.
- 13.2 The Board had various comments concerning the proposal, principally whether it would provide worthwhile results that could be used in improving assessment of conservation grading. CC stated that his discussions with Marine Scotland Science to date indicated they were not yet willing to accept potential results, although ultimately in his opinion studies of this type would be hugely beneficial in assessing conservation status. There could be additional benefits beyond this in assessing overall genetic diversity within the population.
- 13.3 The Board agreed that it would be worthwhile to investigate the project further with a view to a contribution of 50%, but reassurance was needed on project delivery and the likelihood of a conclusive result. The Clerk to write to the project team in this regard.
- 13.4 JM reported on current initiatives by Atlantic Salmon Trust to improve studies of the marine stage of salmon life cycle. He suggested that the Board should be willing to support these projects. It was agreed that in the first instance project flyers should be distributed to proprietors to bring this to their attention.
- 13.5 FSN reported that the 2017 Salmon Festival would be held in Inverness between 29 August and 2 September. He also reported that there would be a fundraising dinner held for the benefit of the Rivers and Lochs Institute on 3 April 2017.
- 13.6 It was agreed that the next Board meeting and the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors would be held on **6 June 2017**.

CLERK

JM/CLERK