

Subject: Beauly District Fishery Board – Board Meeting
Date: 6 December 2017
Location: Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly
Attendees: J Miller (Chair); P Pacey; J Whitbread; G Purdie; N Barker
(NBFT); A Campbell (Clerk)



Distribution: All Board Members

MINUTES

ITEM ACTION OWNER

1.0 Apologies

1.1 Apologies were received from F Spencer-Nairn, M Spencer-Nairn and C Conroy.

2.0 Minutes of Board Meeting held on 6 June 2017.

2.1 The minutes of the last Board meeting held on 6 June 2017 were agreed as an accurate record.

2.2 In relation to 3.1 of that Minute, the Clerk confirmed he had received a response from SEPA to confirm the River Glass water level had not dropped below compensation flow. However it appears SEPA measures this on the basis of total flow per day and not cubic metres per second (cumecs).

2.3 In relation to 3.2 of that Minute, smolt survival through turbines, JM reported that the Atlantic Salmon Trust was shortly to complete a report on smolt survival on the Conon. It was agreed that the matter should be reviewed once this report is available.

2.4 In relation to 3.6 of that Minute, PP and NB reported that the majority of 3/4lb sea trout had been found to be either kelts or over wintered finnock.

2.5 In relation to 5.2 of that Minute, NB reported that no electro-fishing surveys had been possible on Lower Beauly mainstem as water levels had been too high at the appropriate time.

2.6 In relation to 5.4 of that Minute, NB confirmed that the submission of scale samples had been better in 2017, although there is still a lack of samples from later in the season.

2.7 In relation to 5.5. of that Minute, NB confirmed that one of Marine Scotland's tracking receivers had been recovered from the Minister pool, but there had been difficulties retrieving the other from the top of Downie beat. A diver would need to be arranged with Marine Scotland to recover this. Marine Scotland will be responsible for analysing the data gathered and reporting back.

2.8 Turning to the Minute of the meeting of qualified proprietors held on 6 June 2017, and in relation to 4.3 of that Minute, AC and PP confirmed they had checked the figures submitted for sea trout on the Angling Club and Lower Beauly beats and it was unclear why there was still a discrepancy between the Board's figures and Marine Scotland's figures.

3.0 Register of Members' Interests

- 3.1 JM and AC confirmed they had an interest in Lower Beaully Fishings as Syndicate member and managing agent respectively, which could have relevance with respect to discussions surrounding future bailiffing arrangements and revaluation notice appeals.

4.0 Review of 2017 Catches and Dam Counts

- 4.1 AC circulated a note of fish catch returns received from proprietors to date, although some returns remained outstanding and figures were incomplete. The total salmon catch reported so far was 756, with an amended figure of 494 sea trout reported. Although some returns were still awaited, the Board agreed that the total catch looked like being disappointingly low once again. However, it was also noted that the Kilmorack dam fish count figures were slightly above five-year average and indicated that fish continued to enter the system in reasonably healthy numbers, but for various reasons had proved more difficult to catch. It was also noted that catch figures on the Glass and Farrer had held up well, but catches on the Beaully itself continued to fall.
- 4.2 JM reported that, due to concern amongst members and ghillies over the apparent lack of fish in the Lower Beaully, that Syndicate was looking to do a benchmarking exercise, comparing the Beaully with other local rivers. The Board agreed this would be a sensible exercise to consider whether there are any specific circumstances on the Beaully that might be contributing to a reduced catch.
- 4.3 JW queried whether, in the event that a specific discrepancy between the Beaully and other rivers was established, reopening of a hatchery might be appropriate. NB advised that any approach to Marine Scotland for brood stock collection would likely be refused, unless there was specific evidence that fish were unable to spawn in the river system.

5.0 Update on Fisheries Management Plan / NBFT Report

- 5.1 NB spoke to the biologist's report circulated prior to the meeting.
- 5.2 It was agreed that the invasive non-native species programme instigated by NBFT had been a success and this should be more widely recognised. NB confirmed he was to produce a final report on this programme and once produced, this should be circulated to proprietors etc. **NB**
- 5.3 It was also noted that the revised education programme put in place by NBFT had been very well received by local schools and NB and CC should be congratulated on this.
- 5.4 In relation to the fisheries management plan action checklist, the following was noted:-
- 5.4.1 NB reported that he had not received a positive response from ghillies to requests for assistance with sawbill duck counts and as a result this had been undertaken by him and C Daphne over one day in late April. It was thought this was a contributory factor to the poor licence received for the 2017/2018 control period. The Board expressed disappointment in this situation. It was agreed that NB would co-ordinate a date for 2018 count and approach ghillies, proprietors and the Angling Club for assistance. **NB**

- 5.4.2 In light of SNH's decision to cease trapping and control of beavers temporarily, it was agreed the Board should write to SNH seeking confirmation of their proposed plan of action on this subject. **CLERK**
- 5.4.3 It was agreed the Board should approach Lower Beaully Syndicate and request that [REDACTED] undertake a seal control training course, for which the Board would be willing to pay the cost. It was noted that [REDACTED] was now the only nominated marksman for seal control on the Beaully system. NB undertook to follow up on the Moray Firth Seal Management Plan meeting which took place earlier in 2017 and confirm what actions had been identified to improve licencing for seal control. **NB**
- 5.4.4 AC confirmed that Lower Beaully ghillies continued to undertake clearance of tributary burns for fish passage.
- 5.4.5 JM asked what progress was being made with proposed removal of a weir on the Black Burn. NB confirmed the next stage would be to review the upstream habitat and provide a report to SEPA to inform any decision on removal. NB confirmed that the Black Burn was a sea trout burn and not suitable for salmon. **NB**
- 5.4.6 NB confirmed he had been speaking to farmers on the Belladrum burn and he intends to apply to SSE Highland Sustainability fund to replicate pearl mussel work carried out on the Moriston to the River Beaully and Glass. A second tranche of this is to use monies (if successful) to upgrade riparian fencing on the Belladrum. A similar approach could be adopted on the River Glass and it was agreed that NBFT should pursue this. **NB**
- 5.4.7 NB confirmed he was in consultation with SEPA concerning a new round of river basin management plans and water body classification.
- 6.0 SSE Liaison Meeting 24 October 2017**
- 6.1 JW reported that anglers on the Glass had complained that fluctuations in waterflows were far greater than in the past and speed of water rises much more dramatic, giving concern to angler safety. It was agreed that SSE should be asked to limit the speed of any water rises. **CLERK**
- 6.2 JW also reported some significant damage to banks around the Fasnakyle power station area. AC stated this may be due to testing of a safety valve on Fasnakyle power station that SSE had reported carrying out in 2017. AC to provide further details of this report to J Wotherspoon, Glass Syndicate Secretary. **AC**
- 6.3 It was confirmed that, in light of the problems with the new Aigas dam counter, the Board was to write formally to SSE and reiterate how important that counter is to monitoring fish movement on the Beaully system. **CLERK**
- 6.4 In response to a query from PP, AC confirmed SSE had written in March 2017 in relation to generation during the smolt run. For reference the response from SSE was: -
"We will not split the load and use two machines unless there is more water than one machine can cope with. We will not switch from one machine to another unnecessarily – this was one of the reasons why we ended up trapping smolts in the intake gate slots last year. Both these restrictions should maximise the likelihood of smolts exiting successfully from the lower Beaully in lower flows."

7.0 Bailiff Report

7.1 AC confirmed his understanding that [REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

7.2 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

7.3 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

7.4 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

7.5 The Board confirmed their previous agreement that increased liaison between the Ness Fishery Board Bailiff Team and the Beaully Bailiffs would be beneficial and this should be pursued. **CHAIR / CLERK**

8.0 2018 Conservation Policy and Salmon Conservation Regulations

8.1 NB confirmed that it was expected the 2018 conservation regulations would be signed and published in February.

8.2 JM confirmed that the Board had received no response from Marine Scotland to their request for a meeting to discuss the proposed Grade 3 conservation grading. (*Subsequent to this, a response was finally received from Marine Scotland on 14 December and a telephone conference call arranged*).

8.3 PP confirmed that Beaully Angling Club was minded to write to local politicians expressing their concern at the proposed regulations. The Board confirmed it would be in support of this. Depending on the response this received, the Board agreed that consideration be given to a letter being sent by the Board to local MSPs.

8.4 In relation to the concerns over spawning habitat area figures used by MSS, NB confirmed that the aerial survey used on the River Moriston had been extremely useful. A similar exercise could be employed on the Beaully, particularly the Lower Beaully, however the estimated cost of this was between £8,000 and £10,000. The Board agreed this would potentially be beneficial, but it was important to ensure that any survey results would be accepted by Marine Scotland to inform the conservation grading calculations.

8.5 The 2018 conservation policy was discussed. In light of the proposed salmon conservation grading, it was agreed that any decisions on amendments to the conservation policy be deferred until it was clear what the regulatory position would be. As far as sea trout was concerned, it was agreed that the 1lb limit, below which all fish should be returned, should be reduced to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound. **CLERK**

9.0 Valuation Roll Re-valuation Update

- 9.1 AC reported that all proprietors should have received a revaluation notice in August or September 2017. As a result of the revaluation, the rateable value of the river system as a whole had increased from £59,725 to £82,800. It was noted the previous valuation had been undertaken with a 2005 reference date. The new valuation had a 2015 reference date.
- 9.2 AC asked that any proprietors who were appealing their valuation let him know in order that he could keep track of any potential amendments to the new valuations.

10.0 2018 Budget and Fishery Assessment

- 10.1 A draft budget for 2018 was circulated by the Clerk. As drafted this showed anticipated expenditure of £40,762, including a £2,000 increase in contribution to bailiff costs. Based upon the revised rateable value noted above, this would result in a levy of 49p per £1 rateable value.
- 10.2 The draft budget was approved.

11.0 Any Other Business

- 11.1 AC reported he had received a response from UHI Rivers and Lochs Institute concerning the potential analysis of numbers of breeding salmon using genetic sampling. RLI had confirmed that the total cost of the project was £13,000 and if the Board contributed £6,500 (as previously agreed), this would leave a funding shortfall of £6,500. JM confirmed that [REDACTED] had offered to contribute £1,500 personally, leaving a £5,000 deficit. The Board agreed that an approach should be made to SSE to request a contribution.

CLERK

12.0 Date of Next Meeting

- 12.1 It was proposed that the annual meeting of qualified proprietors and next Board meeting should be held on **12 June 2018**. AC noted that a triennial election of Board members would fall due on that date.