

Minutes

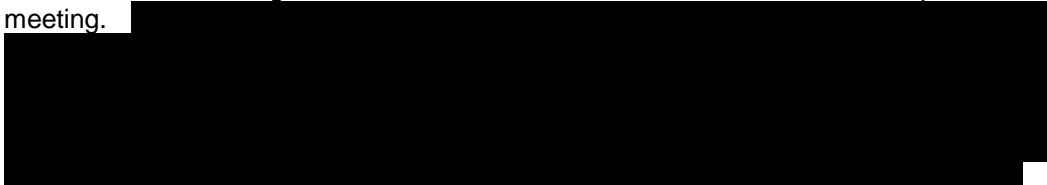
Beauly District Fishery Board

Project: Board Meeting
Venue: Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly
Our ref: 111/33
Date: 28 June 2016
Present: J Miller (Chair); F Spencer-Nairn; Paul Pacey (Beauly Angling Club)
In attendance: C Conroy (Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust); A Campbell (Clerk)
Distribution: All Board Members

Description	Action
1 Apologies	
1.1 Apologies were received from Lady J Whitbread, G Purdie, M Spencer-Nairn and N Barker (Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust).	
2 Minutes of Board Meeting held 3 December 2015	
2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 3 December 2015 were approved as an accurate record. The Clerk to arrange for the approved copy to be published on the Board's website.	Clerk
3 Matters Arising	
3.1 J Miller asked whether there had been any development on item 10.4; the suggestion that a proposal be put to the Board concerning a rotary screw smolt trap at the mouth of the Belladrum burn. C Conroy apologised that he was not up to speed with this and confirmed he would follow this up with N Barker.	NBFT
3.2 River Beauly Conservation Grading. J Miller reported on the recent meeting held with Marine Scotland to discuss revisions to the Beauly Conservation degrading. This meeting had been attended by the Chairman, Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust and by P Pacey representing the angling club. The Clerk, A Campbell had also attended. A summary of the meeting had been circulated to Board members by the Clerk. C Conroy confirmed that he had been in discussions with Marine Scotland since the meeting; access passwords had been provided to Marine Scotland's mapping system and agreement had been reached that the deadline for responses on this could be extended to after 5 July when N Barker returns from holiday. C Conroy also observed there appeared to be a recent shift in attitude from Marine Scotland and that recent discussions had been more productive than when dialogue was first attempted a few months ago. With regard to wetted areas of the system which were unproductive for spawning, it was agreed that all of these should be notified, including areas of bedrock in addition to canalised, still water sections, although Marine Scotland had indicated they would only consider the latter at this stage.	NBFT

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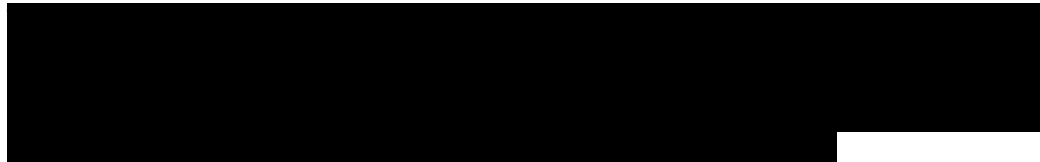
Description	Action
4 Good Governance	
4.1 Register of members' interests. F Spencer-Nairn confirmed that he is on the advisory Board of the Rivers and Lochs Institute at UHI. Mark Coulson of UHI had approached the Board to give a presentation seeking potential funding for a research project. Further details are given below.	
4.2 A Campbell confirmed that no complaints had been received in the previous 12 months.	
5 Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust (NBFT) Report	
5.1 A copy of the Senior Biologist's report had been circulated to Board members prior to the meeting.	
5.2 C Conroy confirmed that the proposed RAFTS invasive non-native species project was still not definite. However, as an update to the report, he confirmed that NBFT had received a good response recently to requests for volunteers to undertake conservation work in this regard.	
5.3 The suggestion that a geomorphologist be asked to investigate options for reinstatement of the burn channel on the Allt Bail A' Chladaich, a tributary of the Upper River Glass at Tomich Village, was discussed. The proposed cost was £800. In light of advice from NBFT that the potential benefit would be an enhanced production of approximately seven smolts, the Board concluded that the benefit from this potential work was too limited to justify this being progressed. Accordingly, the Board agreed that this matter should be removed from the Fishery Management Plan action list.	NBFT
5.4 In relation to the report on scale sampling undertaken in 2015, J Miller requested that such reports be made available more quickly in future years. C Conroy apologised for the delay this year and confirmed that he was seeking to ensure that reports were produced more quickly in future. In response to a query concerning scale samples from the River Glass, C Conroy confirmed that further samples would be helpful. It was agreed that, to ensure full buy in from ghillies, a meeting with ghillies to present the results would be beneficial.	NBFT
6 SSE Liaison Committee Report	
6.1 J Miller confirmed that the Liaison Committee had met with SSE on 16 May 2016, although minutes were still awaited from SSE. The principal item to report was the proposed replacement of the intake gates on both Kilmorack and Aigas dams later this year. An email from SSE relating to this matter had been circulated to Board members prior to the meeting. 	

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6.2



Action

Clerk

The above item not to be included in publically available published minutes.

6.3

J Miller reported on an incident which had occurred at both Kilmorack and Aigas dams since the liaison meeting had been held. SSE had reported discovery of a number of dead smolts found trapped in the intake gate chambers. Total smolt mortality was estimated at between 60 and 100, although it was not possible to be precise. It was believed this had arisen as the river had been running on compensation flow and turbines had been alternately switched on and off. The Board noted with concern that this backed up the previously stated issue of potential smolt mortality at times of low water flow in the spring. It was agreed the Clerk would write to SSE asking what measures they current had in place to reduce smolt mortality during periods of low flow in the middle of the smolt run, and at the same time thanking them for reporting this most recent incident so quickly.

Clerk

7 Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill – FMO Amalgamations

7.1

J Miller reported that he had recently met with ASFB Chairman Alastair Laing and Andrew Wallace of RAFTS at their request, to discuss potential amalgamation of the Beauly Board with the Ness and Lochaber Boards. ASFB was very keen to press for such a merger and had indicate that Boards to the north and south had also agreed to mergers spreading from the east to west coast. Subsequent to this meeting, J Miller had spoken to the Chairman of other Boards in the area and it was not immediately clear that such measures had yet been agreed. J Miller also reported that he had investigated the potential for an inner Moray Firth FMO with other Boards in the area. At a recent meeting of the Lower Beauly Fishing Syndicate Committee, they had strongly expressed the view that this would be a preferable option. However, it appeared that this would not work as other Boards, particularly the Nairn and Lossie Boards were not keen. C Conroy reported that he understood Scottish Government officials were now becoming more involved in discussions about potential areas and that it was his understanding the Ness, Beauly, Lochaber option was being strongly pushed by them. Officials indicated that they would be minded to enter into discussions with Boards, but ultimately if no agreements could be reached they would force the issue. He confirmed that views amongst Ness Board members were mixed.

Clerk

7.2

P Pacey and F Spencer-Nairn reiterated the arguments previously made that the issues for West Coast Fisheries were sufficiently different that such a merger was not ideal and that the potential loss of local accountability would result in loss of local voluntary interest.

7.3

A Campbell pointed out that the current Beauly levy was considerably lower per rateable pound than most other Boards, including the Ness and that any amalgamations would most likely result in a very significant increase in the levy charges imposed upon Beauly proprietors. This in turn could make some of the fisheries such as the Beauly timeshares financially unsustainable. P Pacey also reported that the angling club would be unable to take such a financial hit.

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7.4 It was agreed that the Clerk would circulate the previous papers produced by C Conroy relating to the potential finances of our Ness/Beauly or Ness/Beauly/Lochaber amalgamation. An extraordinary Board meeting might be required to discuss this further. The option of writing directly to Scottish Government officials on the matter was also mooted.

8 Financial Report Year to date

8.1 The Clerk gave a brief summary of the Board's finances for the year to 31 May. As no levy invoices have been raised, income to date was zero. Total expenditure to that date was £1,333, primarily made up of a subscription to ASFB and insurance premium costs. Total cash at the bank at the end of May 2016 was £21,517.

9 Enforcement and Bailiffing

9.1 The Clerk stated that bailiffs had reported some isolated incidents of illegal fishing on both the Lower and the Middle Beauly beats. Some warnings had been given, but no further action taken. The Clerk also confirmed that the Cromarty DSFB coastal patrol boat was now back in action this year and one initial patrol had been undertaken to date.

10 AOCB

10.1 P Pacey stated that the Beauly Angling Club had some concerns relating to the recommended 100% catch and release for sea trout. He confirmed that the Club's rule on this had now been relaxed to an advisory recommendation. A Campbell confirmed that a considerable number of sea trout had been caught in some weeks in April on the Lower Beauly (over 100 per week in some cases) and he had also received requests from Syndicate members for relaxation of the policy. C Conroy reported that the Ness Board did not have a specific catch and release target but rather recommended that no sea trout over two pounds be taken and that each angler should apply a conservative bag limit where sea trout were concerned. It was agreed that the conservation policy be reviewed prior to the 2017 season once the 2016 catches were available.

11 Date of next meeting

11.1 It was agreed that the next Board meeting should be held at 10.00am on **7 December 2016**.

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12 Presentation by Mark Coulson of UHI

- 12.1 The Board welcomed Mark Coulson of UHI who gave a brief presentation on their project entitled "Assessment of Salmon Stocks – Integrating Genetics". Mark confirmed that this project aimed to establish the methodology for calculating the number of bream fish in any river system by taking DNA samples from juvenile offspring which could then be used to establish the number of parent fish giving rise to that juvenile population. This could in turn be used to inform Fishery Conservation Plans concerning the health of the breeding population. At present the project was seeking to establish a methodology that could in future be used throughout Scotland to provide more accurate assessment of fish stocks than the current methodology being used based upon catches. The initial case studies being used to try to develop this are focusing on the Moray Firth area, not least because there is a reasonable set of data from fish pass counts which can be used to verify initial results. Part of the aim of the initial case study was to establish which optimal genetic markers could be used with a view to minimising the number of these and thereby minimising the cost of the methodology.
- 12.2 UHI is keen to include the Beaully in these initial case studies and would be keen to work with NBFT to produce a sample strategy for the Beaully system, which could potentially start this year. There was some discussion as to whether this could be used to help inform details of number of fish below Aigas dam, as at present Marine Scotland was using this as a dividing line in estimating total number of returning fish within the Beaully system.
- 12.3 It was agreed that NBFT and UHI should draw up a proposal to be presented to the Board, although indications were that the cost of this might be beyond the Board's financial reserves. It was agreed that the project had real potential to assist with future conservation plans, but the maximum that the Board should be prepared to contribute, given current finances, was in the region of £3,000 - £5,000 per annum for two to three years. C Conroy indicated his understanding was the cost of any Beaully case studies would be significantly higher. It was agreed that further consideration would be given to this once a proposal was received from UHI.