

Subject: Beauly District Fishery Board – Board Meeting
 Date: 6 June 2017
 Location: Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly
 Attendees: J Miller (Chair); M Spencer-Nairn; G Purdie; F Spencer-Nairn
 Present: P Pacey (Beauly Angling Club); N Barker and C Conroy (Ness
 & Beauly Fisheries Trust); A Campbell (Clerk)
 In attendance
 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 held on 7 December 2016

2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting on the above date were approved as an accurate record.

3.0 Matters Arising

3.1 The Clerk confirmed he had written to SEPA requesting confirmation that compensation flow had been maintained at all times in the River Glass during the last two years, but had received no response. He was asked to send a chaser to SEPA. **AC**

3.2 The Clerk was asked to circulate to the Board a copy of email correspondence with Alastair Stephen at SSE relating to SSE's revised generation procedures aimed at protecting smolts passing down through the turbines. **AC**

3.3 Following discussion at the previous Board meeting that the Board might be interested in participating in the proposed Rivers and Lochs Institute research project on numbers of breeding salmon, the Clerk had written to Mark Coulson at RLI requesting clarification on the proposed project cost and funding contribution, together with the expected lifespan of the research. A response was awaited. The Clerk was asked to chase this up. **AC**

3.4 The Chairman reported that representation had been received from the Upper Beauly Fishing Syndicate Committee concerning the 2017 conservation policy. These concerns related to the potential impact on early season fishermen of recommended 100% catch and release to 30 June and a perceived inequality between these provisions and the recommendations pertaining to later season fishing, which potentially allow for the retention of a limited number of fish. The Chairman reported he had been in correspondence with the Chairman of Upper Beauly Fishing Syndicate James Holt, and had offered to meet him when he was next on the river in June. A response to this invitation was awaited. The Chairman also reported that the advice note prepared by Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust in relation to the conversation policy had been forwarded to Mr Holt.

3.5 The Clerk stated that he had a potential conflict of interest in relation to this matter, as he also acts as a managing agent for the Upper Beaulay Fishing Syndicate.

3.6 P Pacey reported that at the Club's AGM, a number of Beaulay Angling Club members had queried the conservation policy relating to sea trout. A request had been made to reconsider the lower weight limit below which sea trout should be returned, currently stated as 1lb. A suggestion had been made by some Club members that this be reduced to three quarters of a pound. This was in part due to anecdotal evidence from Club members that the majority of fish caught were finnock below 1lb. It was agreed that this issue would be discussed again at the Board meeting in December at which point the 2018 conservation policy would be discussed. In the meantime N Barker confirmed he had a number of sea trout scale samples from Club members and an analysis of age and weight could be undertaken to inform this discussion.

NB

4.0 Register of the Members' Interests

4.1 F Spencer-Nairn confirmed he remained on the advisory board of the Rivers and Lochs Institute. A proposal from the RLI for funding a research project is referred to above.

5.0 Ness and Beaulay Fisheries Trust Report

5.1 An update briefing from NBFT on current activities was circulated. A copy is attached to this minute.

5.2 In response to concerns that had been expressed by members of the Lower Beaulay Syndicate in relation to a perceived lack of electro-fishing effort on the main stem Lower Beaulay, N Barker confirmed that surveys had been undertaken on two sites on the Lower Beaulay. He reiterated that surveying such a large water body was always less predictable and more variable than a small water course and that the manner in which juvenile fish utilise habitat will inevitably change through time. He also reiterated that it is often not possible to see juvenile fish when wading, even when they are present, and only when electro-fishing is undertaken will the density become apparent. It was suggested that any surveys undertaken in 2017 be notified to the Lower Beaulay ghillies, with an invitation that they participate; alternatively a suggestion was made that the surveys are videoed in order that results can be circulated.

NB/AC

5.3 N Barker confirmed that an initial offer had been received from the Landfill Communities Fund towards further Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) control from 2017 onwards. There remain one or two small items to be clarified / provided in order to draw down this funding, but the receipt of a formal offer was considered very welcome.

5.4 In relation to scale sampling effort, N Barker confirmed that the results for 2016 had been disappointing with too few samples collected to provide meaningful analysis. So far in 2017 the submission of samples had been better. Discussion took place concerning collection of samples from the upper reaches of the Beaulay system. N Barker was asked to contact Denis Ross and Adie Fraser to seek their assistance with this. N Barker confirmed that the aim should be to collect at least ten samples per month throughout the season.

NB

- 5.5 C Conroy reported that a request had been received from Marine Scotland seeking NBFT's involvement in a salmon tracking project being undertaken by MS. In summary, the project proposal involves netting of salmon, returning to the north coast of Scotland at Strathy Point, the fitting of radio tags to the salmon, before re-releasing them to continue their journey to natal rivers. The aim was to install radio receivers in a large number of Scottish rivers in order to gain more information on the migration of fish from the north coast of Scotland to natal rivers and the potential impact of mixed - stock netting stations.

C Conroy asked for approval of the Board for the installation of two receivers on the River Beaully. It was suggested the best locations would be on the Lower Beaully beat, either side of the high tide limit. N Barker suggested Minster pool and Fly pool. C Conroy undertook to forward details to A Campbell, who would contact the Lower Beaully Syndicate Committee for their approval as proprietors.

- 5.6 N Barker confirmed he was currently in consultation in relation to various proposed developments or engineering works that affected water courses in the catchment, including works in the Black Burn and Culburnie Burns and also repairs to the Struy Bridge over the River Farrar.
- 5.7 A Campbell asked if there was any update on the previous reported survey works in the Redcastle Burn, which had been undertaken with a view to potential remediation works in this area. N Barker confirmed that the survey had found the cost of remedial works was considered to outweigh any potential benefit as the burn was so heavily modified. As a consequence this project was not being taken forward.

6.0 SSE Liaison Committee Report

- 6.1 A copy of the draft minutes of the most recent meeting with SSE, held in May 2017, was circulated. Concerns over the very low level of the reservoirs in the catchment was discussed. The Clerk confirmed that he had received a call from Alastair Stephen of SSE stating that although water levels were very low, and this was likely to mean low water flows for most of the summer, the Beaully system was not considered to be at most risk of failing to meet compensation water levels. However, A Stephen had confirmed that rainfall was desperately needed in order to bolster reservoir levels.
- 6.2 A Stephen had also reported the most recent dam count levels as at 22 May 2017. These were as follows:

Kilmorack	225
Aigas	97
Beannachran	0

7.0 Enforcement and Bailiffing

- 7.1 REDACTED

7.2 C Conroy strongly recommended that the Board give greater consideration to the direct employment of a bailiff or bailiffs, whether full time or seasonal. A discussion occurred in relation to this with options considered being direct employment, or revisiting a potential joint Ness and Beaully Bailiff team option and the financial implications of these options. In the short term, it was agreed that any joint practical measures that could be introduced now should be investigated and progressed.

8.0 Proposed Fishery Management Plans

8.1 The Clerk referred to an email circulated in May 2017 concerning draft fishery management plan template that had been prepared by Marine Scotland, with input from the joint working group set up by Marine Scotland and Fisheries Management Scotland. An extension to the response period had been sought as a consequence of the Board meeting on 6 June.

8.2 C Conroy expressed concern about the proposal for a statutory basis to such plans and it was agreed by those present that such a move was undesirable, not least as the cost implications were unclear. It was feared that a requirement to develop such plans would divert precious resources from active conservation and enforcement work for no real net gain.

8.3 Members also expressed the view that the existing Beaully Catchment Management Plan was sufficient; it was noted this had been based on an original Marine Scotland template and had previously been submitted to Marine Scotland. It was therefore felt unnecessary that these plans be radically revisited and that the proposed template was too academic and not practical enough.

8.4 The Clerk was asked to respond to Fishery Management Scotland confirming that the Board fully supported and was committed to the production of a Fishery Management Plan, but did not agree with the format and template proposed for the reasons outlined above. It was noted that the existing Fishery Management Plan was due for review in 2018 and it was agreed this should be considered further at the Board's meeting in December 2017.

AC

9.0 Any Other Competent Business

9.1 N Barker requested Board approval for the payment of £130 towards the cost of scale sample analysis. This was agreed.

9.2 N Barker reported that NBFT was involved in a netting demonstration project as part of the Markinch Nature Reserve open day on Saturday 10 June. He asked that a formal letter of consent be issued by the Board to permit this netting and confirmed that any fish caught would immediately be returned. This was approved.

AC

9.3 F Spencer-Nairn reported that the Scotland Salmon Festival would once again be held in 2017 and that the proposed dates were between 29 August and 2 September. The festival will include a conference in relation to salmon conservation; a casting competition; various lectures; and a film on conservation measures at sea. Further details are available on the festival website. www.scotlandsalmonfestival.org

9.4 The Chairman reported that a recent email had been circulated amongst Moray Firth Boards concerning a meeting to review and update the Moray Firth seal management plan. It was confirmed that either A Campbell or J Miller would attend.

10.0 Date of Next Meeting

10.1 It was agreed that the next Board meeting would be held on **6 December 2017**.