

Subject: Beauly District Fishery Board Meeting
 Date: 4th December 2018
 Location: The Lovat Arms Hotel, Beauly
 Present: J Miller, F Spencer-Nairn, M Spencer-Nairn, V Morley, G Purdie, P Pacey (Beauly Angling Club), N Cameron, C Conroy & D Del Villar (Ness & Beauly Fisheries Trust), A Campbell (Clerk),
 Apologies: None

MINUTES

ITEM	ACTION OWNER
1.0 Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 12th June 2018	
1.1 The Chairman welcomed those present, in particular Victoria Morley, who was attending for the first time. He proposed a vote of thanks to Lady Jane Whitbread for her service on the Board over many years.	
1.2 The minutes of the last Board meeting and meeting of Qualified Proprietors of 12th June 2018 were agreed as an accurate record and approved for publication.	Clerk
2.0 Matters Arising	
2.1 <u>Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.</u> In relation to Item 6.1 of the previous minute, the Chair requested the date for next Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors be amended to 18 June 2019.	Board
2.2 <u>Board Meeting</u> In relation to Item 2.2 of the previous minute, C Conroy to forward a copy of the MS Armadale tracking project report.	CC/Clerk
2.3 In relation to Item 2.5 of the previous minute, the Lower Beauly Fishing Syndicate to be approached with a view to the new ghillie being enrolled in a seal management course.	Clerk
2.4 In relation to Item 5.1 of the previous minute, the Clerk confirmed that he and the team from NBFT had recently attended a meeting with SSE regarding the new fish counter download software. It was agreed that from 2019, the Clerk to download unvalidated count data monthly and circulate to proprietors. NBFT staff will validate the counts on a regular basis and provide validated count data to the Board on at least a quarterly basis.	Clerk / NBFT
3.0 Register of Members Interests	
3.1 The Clerk to re-circulate the register of interests sheet to all Board members for completion.	Clerk
4.0 Review of 2018 Catches & Dam Counts	
4.1 The Clerk reported on 2018 catch statistics received to date. Returns were still awaited from four proprietors. A total catch around 600 salmon was anticipated. 478 sea trout had been reported.	

- 4.2 The following dam count figures to mid-November 2018 (unvalidated) had been downloaded from SSE's portal: -
- | | |
|-------------|------|
| Kilmorack | 2798 |
| Aigas | 2170 |
| Beannachran | 212 |

5.0 Update on Fisheries Management Plan / Ness & Beaully Fisheries Trust Report

- 5.1 The current Fisheries Management Plan expires in April 2020. C Conroy confirmed work on an updated Plan would commence in 2019, following the template set out by Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS). **NBFT**
- 5.2 In response to a query concerning items in the Plan which had not been actioned, C Conroy recommended these continue to be included, it being important to identify aspirations, even if available resources had affected progress to date.
- 5.3 The invasive non-native species (INNS) plan has been implemented, hence is marked as complete. However, further eradication work will be required in future. NBFT staff have recently been involved in training local volunteers in this work.
- 5.4 The provisions in the Plan concerning genetic marking were discussed. It was generally felt this should not continue to be pursued, due to cost and lack of clarity on potential outcomes and objectives. D Del Villar recommended that 'life tables', rather than genetics, were a better way to assess smolt production and population survival.
- 5.5 A written report from NBFT had been circulated the day before. The Chair requested this be finalised and circulated earlier before future meetings. **NBFT**
- 5.6 In response to the written report, P Pacey enquired if the electro-fishing undertaken on behalf of Marine Scotland corresponded to sites previously assessed annually by the Trust. C Conroy confirmed they did not, as the parameters differed. The sites had been selected by Marine Scotland. The historic sites were not assessed in 2018. C Conroy stated that he thought it important to follow the national approach in future.
- 5.7 In respect of the report on 2017 scale sampling, C Conroy to check if this was completed by Nick Barker and forward the report to the Clerk. **NBFT / Clerk**
- 5.8 A significant improvement in the permitted cull under the annual bird licence had been achieved in 2018 / 19, following detailed count and reporting work undertaken by NBFT staff and ghillies on the river.

6.0 2019 Conservation Policy

- 6.1 The amendment to Grade 1 conservation categorisation by Marine Scotland was noted. A draft conservation policy had been circulated prior to the meeting. This was based on the policy from 2017, when the District had been categorised as Grade 2 by Marine Scotland.
- 6.2 The Chairman reported on comments from the Lower Beaully Syndicate committee. A query had been raised concerning the differing recommended policy before and after 30 June and whether this was based on any formal stock assessment. A suggestion had also been made to raise the weight limit on any retained cock to maximum 10lb.
- 6.3 C Conroy confirmed the proposed differentiation before / after 30 June was a result of previous scale sample analysis, suggesting spring fish were still entering the system in June. **NBFT**

However, it was suggested NBFT re-run the NASCO stock assessment, which had previously been done prior to statutory conservation grading.

6.4 Following further advice from NBFT, the Board to agree the policy prior to 11 February 2019. **Clerk / Board**

7.0 SSE Liaison Group Report

7.1 The Chairman reported on the liaison group meeting held on 1 November 2018 and subsequent email correspondence.

7.2 SSE had been unable to fit the proposed smolt barrier brushes to the intake gates when these had been removed from Aigas dam for maintenance. As a result, both sets of brushes (Aigas & Kilmorack) would be fitted by divers, ideally by end February 2019. One generator on each dam would be done this year.

7.3 It was reported by SSE that SEPA had requested further information from SSE on their current flow management regime for the District.

7.4 Progress on the proposed desk-top review of literature on smolt survival through turbines, agreed at the joint meeting with SEPA in October, had been discussed with SSE. SSE had been unable to confirm a time-table for this, citing the complexity of identifying unpublished data, obtaining consent for its use, and coordinating analysis. Members of the Board expressed disappointment with this. C Conroy offered to seek a meeting with SSE to discuss the proposed scope and timetable. **CC**

7.5 The Chairman had recently received a letter from SSE, offering to contribute a mitigation payment of [REDACTED] (*redacted – commercially sensitive*) per annum to the Board. This would be tied to a Minute of Agreement covering items such as bailiffing and biological monitoring. SSE had stated this sum needed to be matched by Beaully DSFB. A proposal had been put forward by Ness DSFB for a joint operating team covering both rivers.

7.6 It was agreed that the Chairman and Clerk should meet SSE to progress matters further, before reporting back to the Board. Following this, further consideration could be made of the Ness DSFB proposal. *Subsequent to the meeting, it was agreed that F Spencer-Nairn and M Spencer-Nairn, both part of the SSE liaison group, should also attend discussions with SSE.* **SSE Liaison Group**

8.0 Enforcement and Bailiffing

8.1 [REDACTED] **Clerk**

8.2 [REDACTED] *Redacted – sensitive information*

9.0 2019 Budget & Levy on Proprietors

9.1 A draft budget had been circulated prior to the meeting, along with two alternative scenarios; these dependent on the outcome of discussions with SSE concerning additional funding and the implication of this for direct or indirect employment of a fisheries officer.

- 9.2 The Board concluded it was not in a position to agree a final budget and levy on proprietors until the outcome of discussions with SSE was known.
- 9.3 N Cameron reported that the budgeted payment towards a moratorium on netting in the Firth may not be required. This is due to the potential that the netsmen may fish once again, following revision of the conservation grading of both the Ness & Beaully Districts. The Board expressed grave concern over this potential, given the continued emphasis on minimising impacts on returning fish and on angler catch and release.

10.0 Any Other Business

10.1 The Chairman had received an approach from the Lower Beaully Syndicate Committee, proposing that a member of that committee, Nick Jackson, be co-opted to the Board in light of his knowledge of fish hatchery and smolt screen technologies. It was suggested this would be of benefit to discussions with SSE concerning mitigation of impacts on smolts.

10.2 Following advice obtained from Fisheries Management Scotland, the Board agreed that an offer of co-option on an observer basis be made, reviewable annually.

Chair

11.0 Date of Next Board Meeting

11.1 As stated at 2.1 above, it was agreed that the next Board meeting would be held on 18th June 2019, along with an Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.

Board