

Subject: Beaully District Fishery Board Meeting
Date: 5 December 2019
Location: The Lovat Arms Hotel, Beaully
Present: Jock Miller (Chair), Neil Cameron, George Purdie, Paul Pacey (Beaully Angling Club), Victoria Rotheroe, Frank Spencer Nairn, Michael Spencer Nairn Alastair Campbell (Clerk)

MINUTES

ITEM	ACTION OWNER
1.0 Apologies	
1.1 Apologies were received from Simon Lovat.	
2.0 Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising	
2.1 The minutes of the Board meeting held on 5 September 2019 were agreed as an accurate record.	
2.2 In respect of item 3.1 of the previous minute, the Clerk was asked to chase up any outstanding registration of interest submissions.	CLERK
2.3 In respect of item 3.2 of the previous minute (Fisheries Management Plan) it was agreed that renewal of the plan would need to await the appointment of new staff to the Board, or alternatively a decision should be made to outsource this. It was agreed that in respect of the latter, confirmation of availability and potential costs should be sought from both the Ness Board and Kyle of Sutherland Boards. The Clerk was asked to check what stipulation on fishery management plans was contained within the Code of Good Governance for District Fishery Boards.	CLERK/JM
2.4 In respect of item 3.5 of the previous minute, the Clerk confirmed that a report on Marine Scotland's tagging programme of adult fish had yet to be issued. This is expected in spring 2020.	
2.5 In respect of item 4.1 of the previous minute, the Chair confirmed that Simon Lovat's appointment to the Board as a co-optee had been confirmed.	
3.0 Register of members' interests	
3.1 No declarations were made by members present in respect of agenda items.	
4.0 Review of 2019 catches and dam counts	
4.1 The Clerk reported that to date he had received confirmation of catches from most members, though one or two were still outstanding. The total salmon catch reported to date was 786 of which 757 had been returned. Additionally 925 sea trout had been reported (including finnock).	

4.2 JM reported that the Beaully Fishing Syndicate members and Committee had increasing concerns about the potential of sea trout out-competing salmon and that the river was becoming a sea trout river rather than a salmon river. NC reported the Ness bailiffs had commented the Beaully Firth was full of sea trout, though they do not appear to migrate up the River Ness to any great extent.

4.3 The Clerk reported that no update on SSE dam counters had been posted on the online portal since 13 September. The Board expressed increasing frustration at the lack of regular reports and ability to demonstrate fish passage. The last figures reported through the dams were as follows:

Kilmorack 2,316, Aigas 1,703. No figures were available for Beannachran.

5.0 SSE liaison meeting 28 October 2019 – report

5.1 JM confirmed he had seen a draft report prepared by SSE in relation to the 2019 smolt entrapment in the dam gate slots. Once this had been confirmed as final a copy would be circulated to the Board. He confirmed that he and the Clerk were meeting both SSE and SEPA that afternoon to consider the report and discuss what further remedial action was required.

CLERK

5.2 In summary the report confirmed that around 1,000 smolts had been found within the two dams. Many were in poor shape. In total 100 had been recorded as dead on site. SSE has proposed within the report that they will run higher flows at night during the smolt run in future years. The Board agreed it was important to aim to have this endorsed in the CAR licence if at all possible.

5.3 It was noted that there also remained an issue with the reporting of kelt build up behind the dams and this would be raised with SSE and SEPA.

5.4 Following discussion the Board agreed that they wished to invite SSE to attend full board meetings, it was felt this would be of particular benefit in the event that SSE was contributing to the Board financially and that the Board would also benefit from direct input from SSE given their knowledge and experience of the wide number of different Boards.

JM

6.0 Financial report and 2020 budget and fishery assessment

6.1 JM reported that SSE was now requesting a task-based business plan before making a final decision on any additional funding that had been requested. It was understood that the initial £20,000 offered remained on the table. The Board agreed that Keith Williams of Kyle of Sutherland Board should be asked if he might be able to assist with preparation of such a plan, or provide an example.

JM

6.2 The Clerk had circulated a revised draft budget for 2020, allowing for the employment of two full time staff, plus a seasonal bailiff. This draft budget also proposed a funding contribution from SSE of £40,000pa. With this funding contribution, the net expenditure of the Board would still rise from around £42,000pa to around £115,000pa, with a corresponding 75% increase in proprietor levy.

6.3 The Board agreed that in principle they would wish to proceed with the recruitment of both a fisheries biologist and a fisheries officer, with the emphasis of the latter being on bailiffing and fisheries protection. However it was agreed to leave the budget in draft at present until the situation with SSE funding became clearer as this was critical to the potential recruitment to these roles. In the meantime, it was agreed that the draft paper prepared by JM providing update to proprietors on the situation should be circulated.

CLERK

6.4 The Board also discussed potential accommodation (offices, stores) for any employees. JM reported he had raised this matter with the Beaulieu Fishing Syndicate Committee who had indicated that in principle an agreement might be reached with respect to the Corff building, where Ness & Beaulieu Fisheries Trust currently has an office. The view was expressed that these facilities need upgrading and that a full survey of the buildings was required. Other considerations were parking and potential replacement of the existing asbestos cement sheet roof. A temporary portacabin office was suggested if required in the short term. It was agreed that JM should progress these discussions with Beaulieu Fishing Syndicate as and when the funding and employment situation became clear. A copy of the property title will be required.

JM

7.0 Bailiffing report *(to be redacted from public minute)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8.0 2020 Conservation policy

8.1 The Board discussed the draft conservation policy for 2020. It was agreed to retain the 2019 policy statements on salmon, but state more clearly that the Board promotes the idea of 100% catch and release where possible.

CLERK

8.2 The issue of sea trout conservation was discussed at some length, reflecting the concerns raised by the Beaulieu Fishing Syndicate. Following discussion, the Board agreed to retain the existing policy statement unaltered, the view being that further conservation advice was required before reviewing this and that this required the input of fisheries biologist.

CLERK

9.0 Any other business

9.1 It was reported that the Ness and Beaulieu Fisheries Trust had offered to sell the Mitsubishi pick up truck to the Board for a sum in the region of £[REDACTED]. The truck's estimated trade value was around £[REDACTED]. Following discussion, the Board decided that the timing for this was not appropriate as no final decision had been made on employment.

9.2 It was reported that data, reports etc. held by Ness and Beaulieu Fisheries Trust in respect of the River Beaulieu were currently held with SFCC. JM also has a hard disk with items stored on it.

- 9.3 MSN reported that there had been increased evidence of active beavers around Struy in recent months.
- 9.4 It was agreed that the next Board meeting should be scheduled for 19 March 2020 at 10.00am. It was suggested that the Board should aim to conduct recruitment interviews in the period 9-18 March prior to the next meeting. It was noted that the next annual meeting of qualified proprietors was scheduled for 4 June 2020 at 2.00pm.

ALL