

Subject: Beauly DSFB Board meeting
 Date: 19 March 2024
 Location: Laxford House, Inverness & by video conference
 Present: Frank Spencer-Nairn (FSN); Mike Spencer-Nairn (MSN);
 Gavin Haywood (GH); Jim Braithwaite (JB); Tom Waring
 (TW)
 In attendance: Ali Skinner (AS); Anthony Watkins (AW); Alastair Campbell
 (AC)

MINUTES

ITEM	ACTION OWNER
1.0 Apologies	
1.1 Apologies were received from Neil Cameron; Victoria Rotheroe; Charles McAndrew	
2.0 Register of interest – agenda items	
2.1 There were no declarations of interest concerning the agenda.	
3.0 Minutes of last meeting	
3.1 Minutes from the previous Board meeting held on 7 th December 2023 were reviewed. Other than a correction to the date stated, the minutes were approved. The Clerk to arrange for publication on the Board’s website.	CLERK
4.0 Matters Arising	
4.1 FSN noted with sadness the recent deaths of both Addie Fraser and Hugh Matheson, both of whom had made a significant contribution to the Rivers Glass and Beauly over many years.	
4.2 The successful recruitment of Reece Paton as seasonal bailiff was noted.	
4.3 Staff Appraisals -	
4.4 An appraisal with AS had recently been conducted. There were no concerns reported.	
4.5 NBFT Update – Netting Stations Buyout – A report from Brian Shaw of the Ness Board was read out. Sea Park (Longman) buyout should conclude shortly, but confirmation from Crown Estate Scotland that there is no Crown interest is outstanding.	
4.6 Kincurdie buyout – the family is not currently willing to sell and this purchase not proceeding at present.	
4.7 It was noted that a return of funds ingathered might be required. It was agreed that was a matter for NBFT to determine and confirm with donors.	NC
5.0 Update of 2023 Catches	

- 5.1 AC stated the current reported 2023 catch to be 602 salmon. Five proprietors had still not returned catches. Action – AC to issue a further polite request, failing which consider a statutory demand. **CLERK**
- 6.0 Senior Biologist's Report & Bailiffs Report**
- 6.1 Written reports from both AW and AS had been circulated prior to the meeting.
- 6.2 It was confirmed NEPS programme was not being run in 2024. It might return in 2025. AW indicated other juvenile counts might be undertaken.
- 6.3 The necessity and merits of undertaking juvenile counts with limited staff resources available was discussed. The potential requirement for additional contract staff was noted. The likely outcomes and actions that might arise from survey results was queried.
- 6.4 It was stated that juvenile counts were a useful management tool which most Boards / Trusts undertake. R Watts had been keen to compare counts on the Glass / Farrar on the back of initial hydromorphology studies. The lack of accurate dam counts increased the importance of juvenile population monitoring.
- 6.5 Action – following discussion, it was agreed AW to revert to the Board with a specific plan for juvenile surveys in 2024, either with existing, or additional resources. The Board then to confirm whether to proceed. **AW**
- 6.6 FSN reported that a further year's study under the Farrar genetics project was being considered. This might involve a request to use Board staff, paid for under contract. FSN to revert to the Board for approval. **FSN**
- 6.7 The initial report on the hydromorphology studies undertaken by R Watts had been circulated prior to the meeting. AW reported this was current also with SSE for comment. SEPA had provided initial positive comments.
- 6.8 The Board agreed that any further project arising from the report that might involve relocation of sediment and gravels would require comprehensive analysis of the likely costs / benefits and potential risks and that more detailed studies of any proposals were required.
- 6.9 Predation – Action – in light of recent sightings, AW was asked to chase up SFCC on provision of a seal acoustic deterrent. **AW**
- 6.10 AS reported that R Paton had sat his IFM bailiff exams, had passed Part 1 and was awaiting the result on Part 2. Connor Gilmour and David Crerar (both ghillies on Lower Beaully) had also sat the exam at the same time.
- 6.11 WhatsApp group. Action – AS to follow up and names to be provided to AW by the end of March. **AS / AW**
- 7.0 Financial Report**
- 7.1 It was noted that the budgeted NEPS income of £15,000 would not now be received in 2024. Grant income for a trainee would also not be received, however this was cancelled by expenditure saving. However should a contractor be required for juvenile surveys, or other work, a net additional cost would arise.

7.2 AC had circulated an updated budget, taking account of the above and of other updates, including new vehicle deposit(s) and a slightly lower SSE contribution due to the recent fall in inflation rate. This resulted in an increase in forecast deficit to £17,300 before any capital spend. This was noted with concern; whilst the Board has sufficient reserves to cover this for 2024, it was considered unsustainable in the longer term. It was agreed not to increase the proprietor levy beyond the previously budgeted increase and this should remain at £1.24 / £1RV for 2024.

8.0 Report on BDFB/SSE Liaison Group Meeting 12 March 2024

8.1 AW confirmed the smolt trap plan for 2024 was agreed and this would be run from start April to end May.

8.2 As noted in AW's report, SSE had been unable to provide any accurate fish lift count figures. However, they have provided the following which can be regarded as a minimum (Kilmorack: 2691; Aigas: 2834). The Board was dismayed at this further set-back, noting it was now several years since accurate figures had been received.

8.3 An update on known outages in 2024 had been provided as follows: -
2024 indicative dates for SSER outages (subject to change): -
Culligran 16-18 September
Deanie 11-13 August

It was reported that significant outages might occur in 2025 as a result of works to the electricity networks.

8.4 Action – FSN to pass contact details for SSEN to AC.

FSN

8.5 In response to a further request for a formal review / report on the smolt protocol outcomes each season, SSE had indicated they might consider providing additional information on generation flows, subject to an NDA. SSE was to consider and revert. The Board confirmed an NDA would be acceptable. Action – AW to chase SSE for a response.

AW

8.6 It was agreed more frequent access was required for Board staff to review smolt numbers in the dam gate slots. Action – AW / AS to chase SSE for this.

AW / AS

8.7 TW informed the Board that the trial period of three daily lifts at Kilmorack Dam was coming to an end. TW reminded the Board that the long-standing policy over many years was for there to be two lifts daily. TW pointed out that LBFS was not consulted when the current three daily lifts experiment was instigated by the Board, which at the time resulted in considerable ill-feeling. TW pointed out that the fish lifts have long been regarded as detrimental to fishing activities on the Falls beat – which was not accepted by AW. TW asked AW if he had any first hand experience of the Kilmorack fish lift during angling periods and if he had spoken to the ghillies and long-standing anglers on the LBFS to gain their feedback. A heated discussion took place. TW expressed frustration that the angling interests of the LBFS were again not being given due consideration by the Board and that before three lifts is confirmed to continue there should be proper consultation with LBFS with a view to mitigate the impact of the lifts on LBFS angling. No resolution was reached at the meeting.

8.8 The next SSE liaison meeting to take place on 6 November 2024.

9.0 Preview – Triennial Elections and Board Objectives and Priorities

9.1 AC noted that triennial elections to the Board were due to be held in June. Ahead of that, representation had been received from the Lower Beaulieu Syndicate to review the Board's current work programme and priorities and for the whole Board, not just the operational group, to play a more active part in setting priorities.

9.2 It was noted that the amended financial position outlined earlier and consideration of what could be afforded, made this more pressing. It was agreed that objectives should be set from the top-down.

9.3 Action – It was agreed that all Board members should consider priorities and objectives prior to the Annual Meeting of Proprietors and election of a new Board in June.

ALL

10.0 AOCB

10.1 FSN suggested another ghillies / bailiffs meeting should be arranged. Action – FSN to discuss with AS and G Armstrong.

FSN

10.2 The poor turnout at the annual public meeting (nil non-Board members of the public) was raised. It was agreed that better public engagement was required.

11.0 Date of Next Meeting

11.1 Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors, **6 June 2024 at 2pm**, to be followed by a meeting of the newly elected Board.