

Beauly District Fishery Board Meeting

Minutes

Date: 4th October 2024

Location: Bidwells, Ness Meeting Room/Teams

Attendees: Alastair Campbell (AC), Tom Waring (TW), Charles McAndrew (CM), Eugenie Haniel (EH), Donald Fraser (DF), Jim Braithwaite (JB), Anthony Watkins (AW), Ali Skinner (AS) and Hamish Hope (HH)

1.0 Apologies

1.1 Victoria Rotheroe (VR) was unable to attend.

1.2 Great thanks was given to Frank Spencer-Nairn and Mike Spencer-Nairn for their time as co-conveners of the board.

2.0 Introduction to Bell Ingram – Clerk

2.1 AC introduced Bell Ingram and HH as the new Clerk as of 1st October 2024.

2.2 TW brought to attention that as Clerk HH is now the point of contact for staff management.

3.0 Register of Interest – Agenda Items

3.1 HH to request fresh declarations of interest from the board.

3.1 The board accounts remain with Bidwells but this may change to Bell Ingram in the new financial year. Currently, HH is liaising with Bidwells accounting team.

4.0 Minutes of Board Meeting 6th June 2024

4.1 VR name was noted to be spelt incorrectly and is to be corrected.

4.2 6.3 of previous meeting has MMS instead of MD, this is to be corrected.

4.3 Minutes were approved.

5.0 Matters Arising

5.1 Reece Paton (seasonal bailiff) will be asked to return next season. It was noted that he has done very well, has passed his exams and was praised for doing a good job.

5.2 FMS provide free courses which Reece and AS will be encouraged to take.

Chartered Surveyors

A list of members is available from our Perth Office.

Bell Ingram LLP Registered Office: Durn, Isla Road, Perth, PH2 7HF.
ISO 9001 Accredited Registered in Scotland No SO303737.

Regulated by RICS.

5.3 WhatsApp groups have been a success. There is to be a Beaulieu WhatsApp group set up for all proprietors.

5.4 Neil Cameron will be invited to board meetings as and when there is a requirement to discuss specific issues.

5.5 New vehicle has still not arrived and is expected to arrive in the coming weeks. Current vehicles are out of contract but we are to continue as we are for now. It was confirmed by staff that two vehicles are required and we are to continue on this basis.

5.6 Ness & Beaulieu Trust Board – TW is still on the board. JB noted that some board members had been on for longer than their allotted time. CM is put his name forward to join. JB is carrying on for the time being until a replacement can be found.

Action: 5.1 AS is to speak with Reece about returning next year.

5.1 AS, AC and HH to meet with Reece.

5.1 HH to email Reece to confirm next season.

5.3 AS to take lead on set up of new group.

5.4 AC to speak with Neil Cameron.

5.6 AC to tell Neil Cameron CM is putting name forward for the Ness & Beaulieu Trust Board.

5.1 FMS Board Nominations

5.1.1 AC asked if anyone on the BDSFB want to be nominated to join the FMS Board as there has been no representative for some time. No one is being put forward.

Action: 5.1.1 AW/HH to ensure CM receives FMS updates

6.0 Strategic Review of Board Priorities – Discussion & Next Steps

6.1 AC, TW and CM had been asked to review the boards key priorities within the Fishery Management Plan (FMP). It has been proposed to have 5 main key priorities with other lower priorities. Input will be required from Ruth Watts once she has returned from maternity leave. In summary, the key priorities need to be in line with the boards objectives and be achievable. At present there is a struggle to achieve all action points within the FMP.

AC has circulated proposed 5 main key priorities and these will be confirmed once Ruth has provided input. In principal these have been agreed. Priorities to be split into separate lists one for what must be done and one for what the board would like to do. Lists are to be adaptable.

6.2 It has been noted that Ross at SSE has shown interest on for a survival study. This is to be discussed at next SSE liaison meeting. It is understood that SSE will fund "very good projects". The board agrees that a survival study would be beneficial and that a detailed plan would be required to discuss funding options with SSE.

7.0 SSE Liaison Meetings – Board Representatives

7.1 AC, CM and HH will represent the board at the SSE liaison meetings alongside staff. TW has previously attended and may continue to do so.

7.2 Frank Spencer-Nairn could be invited to meetings as a proprietor.

7.3 There has been a significant discrepancy of fish numbers between the 2 dams with a low figure at Aigas compared to Kilmorack.

7.4 AW is still awaiting comments from SSE on the hydro-morphology reports.

8.0 Financial Report

8.1 AC presented the accounts to the end of August 2024.

8.2 NatureScot income didn't come due to not having a student.

8.3 The rest of the income is better than what had been budgeted for.

8.3 SSE donation was less.

8.4 Delayed 2023 NEPS payments were received.

8.5 Vehicle expenses are over budget.

8.6 A service agreement is to be discussed with Arnold Clark before delivery of new vehicle.

8.7 Proprietor Levy Invoices will be sent shortly by Bidwells.

9.0 Senior Biologist Report & Bailiffs Report

9.1 AW provided a biologist update.

9.2 The staff manual is not yet complete. It is with an employment solicitor for review.

9.3 It was reported that the seasonal bailiff phone is very slow to respond and may not be appropriate for use.

9.4 A health and safety update was provided, office PAT testing has been complete, AS is booked for a first aid course refresher in November. Reece Paton missed his course due to having covid, this will need to be rearranged for next season. AW raised that there has been an increase of ticks around the Farrar area with a high prevalence of Lyme's disease in the area.

9.5 AW expressed thanks to Steve North, who has been a great volunteer by assisting with all the Farrar genetics project survey work and invasive plant control work in 2024. Board wishes AW to pass on their thanks for all his work.

9.6 Trudi continued plant and mink control work along with AW and AS and many volunteers (e.g Beauly balsam bashers) in 2024.

9.7 One proprietor wants updates on dam counts when received.

9.8 FMS have gifted new biosecurity signage and disinfectant.

9.9 Beauly catchment remains Grade 1/good status due to 5 year average. However, for 2023, the percentage chance of meeting egg target is low. AW has queried this and awaiting response. AW to brief Ruth on her return.

9.10 Smolt monitoring report is still to be written up but is expected to be completed by AW before he leaves at end of November.

9.11 Smolt protocol is to be updated shortly, AW has spoken to Naveed at SSE about this about how it can be improved. We are still awaiting data from SSE who are unable to share the full data due to commercial confidentiality concerns.

9.12 Latest dam fish counts are: 3175 at Kilmorack, 1519 at Aigas and 205 at Beannacharan. The difference between Kilmorack and Aigas needs to be investigated.

9.13 AW has not seen any preliminary rod catch data.

9.14 The Farrar genetic sampling study completed in August 2024, it had been funded by Frank Spencer-Nairn. Only 8 other sites had been electro-fished in the summer of 2024. High flow in September hampered doing mainstream surveys so smaller burns were targeted. TW suggested that we have a programme of electrofishing covering the when's, whys and where's and queried if it should be done inline with NEPS payments. Data still being analysed and will be reported on shortly.

9.15 Hydro-morphology reports were sent to SSE in March for review. Awaiting comments and this has been chased multiple times.

9.16 Seal sighting have picked up since August with multiple sighting reported including at the fish pass at the dam. Acoustic Deterrent Devices (ADD) have been used in attempts to scare but this has seen little success. Sightings are continuing to be reported on the FMS seal reporting app by ghillies and bailiffs. NatureScot have been contacted for advice regarding beavers as they are in the same areas that ADD are being used. No response yet. TW thanked AS and AW for their monitoring efforts.

9.17 Lower Beauly Fishing Syndicate (LBFS) have requesting increased seal monitoring which is now being done on a daily basis since 19/09/2024.

9.18 No sawbills have been sighted in on the lower Beauly over the summer months by BFB staff.

9.19 LBFS ghillies have carried out sampling for the 2024 Adult fish sampling project between June and September. Payments for previous years are being processed. A report covering years 2021 – 2023 is being prepared by MSS which will eventually be used to feed into the conservation grading.

9.20 Temperature monitoring is to continue by AW and AS. The third logger at Cruives on the lower Beauly seems to have disappeared, needs a more thorough search for it soon. Manual data collection has been carried out in early September 2024.

9.21 Invasive control work within the catchment continues to be carried out, funded through SISI (Phase 2, 2023 – 2026 being funded by the Nature Restoration Fund).

9.22 AMW Arboreal Ltd. Returned in 2024 for 2nd year Japanese Knotweed treatment on the lower Beauly which completed on 20/09/2024. AW and Trudi involved in tendering process and scoping new sites.

9.23 No pink salmon sightings in 2024 within the catchment area.

9.24 AS reported that this years set up has been good. He has requested that LBFS ghillie provide names for fishers. A lower side WhatsApp is to be set up. The more information available aids AS.

9.25 Local poachers have been deterred and there have been no nets in the Beauly Firth.

9.26 Wildlife Crime Officers have decreased from 6 to 2 and has the potential to decrease more in the future.

Action: 9.2 HH to chase for completed staff manual.

9.3 HH to arrange for a different phone for next season.

9.4 HH to ensure Reece has the relevant first aid training for next season.

9.5 AW to thank Steve North on boards behalf.

9.12 AW and Ruth Watts to meet with SSE to discuss this along other things prior to the next liaison meeting in early November.

9.13 HH to collate any rod catchment data from proprietors.

10.0 Operational Matters

10.1 Seal application being prepared. There is not currently a marksmen course being run.

10.2 The vehicle on order has still not been received. Vehicles to continue as they are until further notice.

10.3 Dam fish counts had been noted to be discussed. This was discussed as per point 9.12.

10.4 Bird Control Licence has been issued but for AC as previous Clerk.

Action: 10.1 AW to continue preparing application.

10.1 HH to approach potential marksmen.

10.4 HH to have bird control licence updated to reflect his details.

11.0 AOCB

11.1 The board expressed their great thanks to AW for his time as Senior Biologist whilst Ruth has been on maternity leave.

12.0 Date of Next Meeting & Date of Annual Public Meeting

12.1 Date of next meeting is Tuesday 10th December at 10am at Bidwells Ness Meeting Room/Teams.

12.2 The Annual Public Meeting in 2023 had no public attendees. The board would like to defer the meeting until June 2025 to be in line with the annual report.

Action: 12.1 HH to send invite for next meeting.

12.2 HH to arrange.