

Subject: Beaulieu DSFB Board meeting
 Date: 06 June 2024
 Location: Laxford House, Ness Meeting Room & by video conference
 Present: Alastair Campbell (AC); Victoria Rotheroe (VR); Tom Waring (TW); Jim Braithwaite (JB); Donald Fraser (DF); Eugenie Haniel (EH); Charles McAndrew (CM);
 In attendance: Hamish Hope (HH); Ali Skinner (AS); Anthony Watkins (AW); Claire Mackay (CM) Neil Cameron (NC);

MINUTES

ITEM	ACTION OWNER
1.0 Apologies	
1.1 There were no apologies. Hamish Hope left the meeting at 3:00 PM.	
2.0 Register of Interest – Agenda Items	
2.1 It was noted that with the election of a new Board, all members should be asked to complete an updated declaration of interest.	CLERK
3.0 Minutes of Board Meeting 19 March 2024	
3.1 Reference previous Minute item 8.5, SSE had indicated to AW that data on water flows during the smolt run should be available, however the format in which this would be provided remained unclear. Further liaison with SSE was required to clarify this.	
3.2 AW had attended Aigas Dam following reports there was an issue with trapped smolts. No rescue had been undertaken and on further examination a day or so later, the smolts appeared to have found their way out of the date slot. However, the Board queried whether a suitable escalation procedure was in place to deal with similar incidents and it was agreed this should be addressed in future years.	
4.0 Matters arising	
4.1 Relationship with SSE	
4.1.1 CMcA suggested a priority for the new board should be a meeting with SSE to reconfirm the Board's priorities and expectations. TW was in favour of a more robust interaction with SSE.	
4.2 Vehicle replacements	
4.2.1 AC reported that the vehicles are both out of their lease contract period and are on hire on a month-to-month basis. One replacement had been ordered over a year ago and was still awaited from Arnold Clark. Bidwells had circulated a cost to the previous Board for purchasing the second vehicle and received no feedback. The cost at that time was £14,750 plus VAT, which the Board cannot reclaim.	

4.2.2 The current rental cost per month is £280 unserviced contract excluding VAT. A new vehicle quote was received from Arnold Clark for over £500 a month.

4.2.3 Noting the ordered replacement vehicle should be delivered soon, and taking into account the Board's projected budget position this year, the Board agreed to carry on with the current month-to-month contract for the second vehicle and defer a decision on new lease / purchase

4.3 Dam fish lifts

4.3.1 Further to item 8.7 in the previous minutes, AC noted that the Board had received representation from the Beaulieu Fishing Syndicate on the timing of fish lifts, with 06:00; 16:30 and 21:30 each day proposed. This had subsequently been considered by the Board (the Syndicate had recused itself from that discussion) and an alternative proposal (07:00; 13:00; 19:30 each day) was currently with the Syndicate for consideration.

4.3.2 In answer to a query on the actual impact of a lunch-time fish lift, TW explained that the fishing 'turns off like a switch' due to the disturbance to fish from the release of the water column in the lift, which can take a few hours to settle back.

4.3.3 It was noted this would need to be discussed further once the Syndicate had responded.

4.4 Seal control

4.4.1 AC asks if there was any update on the problem seal at Kilmorack dam? AW confirmed the seal has returned two weeks ago. The acoustic deterrent was still to be used. Insurance for use of the Syndicate boat and a risk assessment were being finalised.

4.5 Ness & Beaulieu Fisheries Trust / Netting Station Buyout

4.5.1 NC updated the Board on the current situation. The Seapark station purchase had concluded. Rosemarkie was not proceeding at present. As a consequence, NBFT would arrange a partial return of donations where requested. Gift aid had not yet been claimed by NBFT.

4.5.2 NC reported that NBFT was looking for new Board members and invited interest from Beaulieu DSFB.

5.0 Financial Report

5.1 AC summarised the year to date income and expenditure, as at 31 May 2024. Income to date was £108,574 against budget of £107,866, with expenditure to date of £48,880 against budgeted £67,470. AC noted that the stated income included the first tranche of proprietor levy invoices, which were yet to be converted to cash income. Income from SSE's contribution was down on budget due to a fall in inflation since the budget was written, but was still higher at £51,609 than in 2023. Contracting income was above budget, largely due to a deferred payment received for NEPS 2023.

6.0 Senior Biologist's Report & Bailiffs Report

6.1 Written reports had been circulated by both AW and AS prior to the meeting.

- 6.2 AW highlighted recent discussions with SSE concerning the perceived usefulness of continuing with the smolt trapping exercise, given the low numbers trapped once again this spring. A decision on continuing trapping in 2025 was required. Whilst SSE might question the usefulness in establishing smolt run timing, AW noted that trapping would be required if a smolt tracking and survival assessment project was to be undertaken.
- 6.3 AW confirmed adult scale sampling (MMS project) was re-starting in conjunction with Lower Beaully Syndicate ghillies.
- 6.4 The Board was pleased to note Reece Paton had passed the IFM bailiff exam.
- 6.5 AW noted that a request for assistance with e-fishing for the Farrar genetics project had been received from FSN. This was estimated at four days work. This was in addition to the proposed e-fishing for the Board's own records (as referred to in the report). The merit of undertaking annual e-fishing was discussed. AW believed the collection of independent data was important in identifying any potential problems with juvenile numbers. Different areas could be sampled each year. The Board approved the e-fishing proposal for 2024, but asked that contract costs be kept to a minimum, with volunteer assistance if possible. It was agreed that this should not detract from bailiff cover.
- 6.6 AW noted that comments from SSE were awaited on the hydro-morphology report produced by RW in 2023. Were this to be progressed, the next step would be a topographical study to establish suitable gravel translocation areas. The Board queried how this might be funded.
- 6.7 AS confirmed bird count and scaring data had been submitted to aid a licence renewal for predatory bird control.
- 6.8 AW was asked to progress a Whats App group amongst proprietors and ghillies to aid communication on water temperatures etc.
- 6.9 AS noted some recent issues with angling in the Firth. This proved difficult to police as anglers were quick to suggest they were fishing for marine species.
- 6.10 AS expressed concern at the reported reduction in the number of wildlife crime police officers.
- 6.11 The Board agreed that AS should continue to liaise with Ness DSFB on joint operations, but AS to determine best means. A formal arrangement was not favoured.
- 7.0 Date of next meeting**
- 7.1 The next Board meeting was confirmed for 10:00 on Friday 4th October 2024.

AW