

TAY DISTRICT SALMON FISHERIES BOARD

Minutes of the Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board meeting held at the Kelt Reconditioning Unit and Hatchery, Almondbank on Tuesday, 3rd June 2014.

Present: William Jack (Chairman)
John Wood
William Jackson
Stephen Mannion
Simon Furniss
John Apthorp
David Brown
William Lindsay

In Attendance: Dr. David Summers – Fisheries Director
Inga McGown - Clerk
Jack Coburn – P&KC

Apologies: Gavin Clark – SNH
Brian Roxburgh – SEPA
Alastair Riddell
Thomas Steuart Fotheringham
David Godfrey
John Young

Declaration of Interests:

There were no new declarations of interest.

Minutes of Board Meeting of 15th April 2014:

The Minutes were taken as read, approved unanimously and signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising:

Smolt Tagging Project:

DS asked that we leave this issue until Item 12 on the agenda – Staffing Update.

Staff Update:

IMcG informed the Board that the replacement bailiff would be joining the team on Monday, 30th June, and that, as he did not reside locally, he is to be put on a temporary contract on the understanding that he moves to the district within the next year, which he has willingly agreed to do.

Trackers on Bailiff Vehicles:

IMcG gave a brief summary on the tracking devices that had been investigated. The Chairman stated that not only do we require trackers for Health & Safety purposes, but that he had sought to cut fuel bills by 10% this year, and had seen no evidence that this had happened.

ACTION: IMcG to look into trackers which cover our Health & Safety remit as well as track mileage, and report back to next meeting with the view to making a Board decision.

Stronuich Counter:

DS has been advised by SSE that the counter is now working, but the fish don't tend to migrate until July, and therefore we would have a better understanding of its functionality later in the year.

Road Maintenance:

The state of the road is now causing concern, and work needs to be undertaken in the near future. The Operations Manager is looking into quotations for the work to be carried out.

ACTION: Tayside Contracts, DG and Operations Manager to provide quotes

Financial Report:

Cash Account to 16th May 2014:

As at 16th May 2014, the Accounts were showing an increase of £48,735, and the overall bank balance stood at £325,650, of which £150,000 was being invested to generate further income.

The Chairman asked where this was being invested, to which IMcG replied that it was with the Bank of Scotland investment team.

Income

The Assessment payments were 48% paid to date (although up to 70% by the end of May), and a summary of all outstanding payments for 2012 and 2013 assessments was included, along with a list of actions taken.

As can be evinced from the report, a further £3,873.49 from prior year's assessments is awaiting payment, and these are being chased vigorously.

There are a few persistent late payers, and they will now be charged an admin fee to cover both Condis and Board costs in chasing payment, in the hope that this will deter future late payments.

To date, we have paid a rebate to the Crown Estate for £736.95, which just missed inclusion in this cash account, but will be included in the next. The Valuation Assessor has advised that he has no rebate applications pending as of 28th May 2014.

Expenditure

Regarding salaries, a saving of just over £4k will be made, as our new bailiff was budgeted to join us on 1st May, but will now be commencing 30th June, saving two month's salary costs.

There is a further £2k saving on salaries due to the Government's new Employment Allowance scheme, which effectively reduces the National Insurance bill by £2k.

To date, the Kelt Reconditioning Hatchery has cost £22,268, which includes salary costs of £6,817. A heating oil charge of £8580 is included in this figure. SF pointed out that oil is now cheaper and if more oil is required, we should be thinking about buying now to take advantage of the good prices.

ACTION: IMcG to look into fuel requirements and order as necessary

The New Offices have cost £2,531 this year to date, and we have been quoted a further £7k to completion. However, we can cut this to around £4k if we utilize the bailiffs to finish the welding on the fire escape stairs. The builders are awaiting confirmation from planning as to fire regulations on the stairs before they will recommence work. We are still awaiting a new reception door, window in the Fishery Director's office, and a replacement window in the meeting room.

As stated earlier in the meeting, we are about to receive quotes for works to the road, as some parts are becoming particularly uneven, and have £20k budgeted for this year.

The bank now charges our account for cheque receipts and payments, which should amount to no more than £300 for the year. However, we are trying to encourage online payments and receipts to minimize costs.

Health & Safety:

There were no Health & Safety issues to report since the last Board Meeting.

The Board decided that the Operations Manager should be responsible for Health and Safety on an operational level, and to this end, should go on a course to familiarise himself with health and safety procedures and issues.

ACTION: IMcG to liaise with Operations Manager and set up Health & Safety Training Course

ACTION: IMcG/LF to set up refresher First Aid courses for all staff

The Chairman suggested producing a Health & Safety Audit for our next meeting

ACTION: IMcG to liaise with John Handling (P&KC) to produce report

Fisheries Review Update:

DS updated the Board regarding Andrew Thin's latest thinking, from the recent evidence he gave at a rural affairs meeting in the Scottish Parliament. It was evident that a major change in fisheries management was imminent, but the continuing role of DSFBs was not clear. Two

objectives were very prominent namely, a greater degree of Government control over fisheries management and the importance of maintaining voluntary momentum and local effort.

There were likely to be regional structures (perhaps amalgamation), with a central body coordinated by a governmental department of some sort. DS likened the structure to that of the current Scottish University system where “autonomous” universities had to comply with certain conditions to receive central funding, and urged the Board members to make a written reply to the request for information made by Mr.Thin.

The Chairman stressed that it was very important to have a coordinated scientific approach to fisheries management, and that he was concerned this didn't seem to have been considered in any of the literature he had read thus far. He went on to state that the review should focus more on the risks to salmon and therefore, their management, and that Boards should consider all species, but at present could only find funding for salmon.

SM outlined the Southern Irish system, whereby the government has central control, but this is managed through regional boards, which seems to work very well.

DB raised the point that when Andrew Thin met representatives in Glasgow, there seemed to be a consensus that rod licences and tagging were definitely being considered.

Fishing Report:

DS presented his report for the month, stating that March had been one of the best for many years, April was one of the best in the last decade, and May slowed down a little, but should still be around average, somewhere over the 500 mark.

Catches did however improve a little at the end of May, and the next few weeks will be interesting to see if we have experienced an early peaking run, or whether it will continue strongly.

As far as some other rivers are concerned, their spring run has not been as good.

The Chairman asked whether we will have grilse, to which DS replied that there was evidence that grilse were being caught, but that sea trout seemed to be more prevalent.

River Garry Update:

DS explained the situation to the Board as outlined in the last minutes, stressing that the flow trial of two months ago had been largely inconclusive as it had rained during the period. SEPA concurs that another flow trial would be a good idea, but DS has heard nothing from them for the past 5 weeks. The situation is still very perplexing, especially since the First Minister promised a conclusion by the end of March, and we are now in June.

The Chairman suggested writing a letter to the First Minister, SEPA and SSE to express our dismay at the lack of progress.

WJ suggested getting the local riparian owners involved, to which DS replied that they had been and were generally in favour of water being restored to the Garry.

There was a general discussion surrounding our next move and all agreed it would be to our benefit to bring the matter to the fore again.

ACTION: DS to send letter to First Minister, copying in John Swinney, SEPA & SSE to highlight our frustration with the matter and urge its resolution.

Worming:

DS raised the issue on DG's behalf, namely that in autumn, there is widespread worming in lower beats, which clearly flouts the worming recommendations of the Board. Worming is an important consideration for many of his clients, and he would ultimately like to see the decision of the Board reversed to allow worming.

He went on to inform the Board that the recommendation was to not worm in September/October. Prior to this, the recommendation had been to not worm where spring salmon was waiting to spawn in the upper tributaries. This was changed at an AGM some years ago by a vote at the AGM.

There then followed a debate surrounding the issue and it was eventually decided that we should maintain the recommendation as it stands, but with the opportunity to review it at a later date.

Malloch Trophy Update:

JW informed the Board that a deal was about to be signed with FishPal regarding the trophy, and that Savills would host their final presentation for the 2013 winner on Friday, 4th July at the Scone Game Fair. The actual trophy will still reside at House of Bruar, but the future presentation style and location may change.

SF asked if it was a condition of entry that the fish be weighed, to which JW replied it should be encouraged, and the Chairman added that if there was any doubt as to the winner, the weight could be a deciding factor.

(WL left meeting)

Staffing Update:

(DB left meeting)

There then followed a discussion surrounding support for the Hatchery Manager during busy periods.

ACTION: The Chairman/DS to have discussion on Hatchery Manager's terms and conditions.

ACTION: The Chairman/DS to decide what to do in the short term regarding part time help

The Chairman congratulated JA on his CBE on behalf of the Board.

(JA & JC then left the meeting)

AOB:

Potential legal challenge

DS informed the Board that we are potentially facing a legal challenge from a disgruntled angler. This had been brought to the Board's attention some time ago, but it was thought the matter would be resolved fairly quickly. The angler has now appointed a new solicitor and is still pursuing the case.

(DB re entered the meeting)

There was some discussion surrounding the issue, and the consensus of the Board was to await instructions from our insurer's lawyers.

No Other Business was brought up and the Chairman closed the meeting.

Next Meeting: 9:30am Tuesday, 12th August 2014 at our Hatchery in Almondbank