

**Present:-**

<b>Chairman</b>	Brian Doran	Craigellachie Fishings
<b>Proprietors</b>	Peter Graham Toby Metcalfe Sir Edward Mountain, Bt Alan Williams	Roths and Laggan Crown Estate Delfur Fishings Carron Fishings
<b>Co-Optees</b>	Mel McDonald	River Spey Angling Association
<b>In Attendance</b>	Roger Knight Gavin Clark Brian Shaw Grahame Newman William Cowie	Director SNH Biologist SEPA Clerk
<b>Public Attendees</b>	None	

**1. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES**

Apologies were noted from James Carr, Angus Gordon-Lennox, Peter Millar, Grant Mortimer, Oliver Russell, Dr Catherine Wills, and Douglas Ross.

**2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

2.1 Minutes of Meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2014.

There were no comments as to accuracy and the acceptance of the Minutes was proposed by Mel McDonald and seconded by Toby Metcalfe.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES**

8.1 Off Shore Wind Farms

Sir Edward Mountain raised concerns regarding the apparent exclusion of local District Fishery Boards from the ASFB approach. The Director indicated that he had raised the matter with the ASFB who had denied that the local Fishery Boards were being excluded from the process and this was supported by the experience of Alan Williams.

#### **4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

The Director's Report presented at the meeting was as attached but the following additional points arose using numbering in the Director's Report:-

2                    **Water Abstraction**

2.1                Rio Tinto Alcan

Photographs of the "Heck" on the River Markie had been provided in the Annual Report.

3                    **Salmon and Grilse rod catches**

The numbers caught in 2014 amounted to 4,563 with a 92% release rate, compared to an 88% release rate in 2013.

4                    **Sea Trout rod catches**

The numbers caught in 2014 amounted to 2,511 with an 81% release rate up from 76% the previous year.

5                    **Habitat management**

It was noted that the Board were the main driver for the whole of the Spey Catchment Initiative and had coordinated the various sponsors involved.

The Director also reported that a visit to the Allt Bhran by a Professor who could provide specialist advice in sediment management was now to proceed, having been funded by SEPA.

11                  **Seal Management**

The Director reported that the quota had been reduced from 60 grey and 10 common seals to 40 grey and 5 common. This was principally as a result of the failure of some other Boards in the Moray Firth to fulfil quotas and was very disappointing. The view of the Director was that if this continued it would be difficult to justify a case for controlling predators if participating Boards did not fulfil quotas. The Director advised that a meeting between the

various Boards was about to be arranged at which the importance of fulfilling quotas would be stressed.

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### **Ranunculus**

In response to enquiry, Gavin Clark of SNH advised that there were issues in conducting a trial of Roundup Pro-biactive and Topfilm on an SAC river and there might have to be a trial under laboratory conditions before a trial took place on the main river.

Gavin Clark was pressed to confirm whether laboratory trials would now start immediately, but in response he advised there were various issues to be addressed, including the cost of the trial. He reported that the various rivers involved had decided to review the trial on the River Don in the first instance to judge the efficacy of the treatment. The Biologist felt that it was important to move towards trials on the Spey. It was encouraging that the matter was now proceeding and there was a possibility that, given the right conditions, a trial would take place on the Spey in due course.

Board Members felt that it was important that the Scottish Government should also contribute to the cost of the trials. The Biologist indicated that it was likely that before any full scale trial took place on the Spey there would require to be a toxicity test, but only once the efficacy of the mixture had been proven.

### **Questions**

The Director then invited any questions on his report. The following arose:-

- Sir Edward Mountain enquired whether discussion of the ASFB would take place within this meeting or the Closed Session and it was decided to discuss this within the Closed Session.
- Alan Williams raised the question of sediment management at Spey Dam and it was noted that the Professor who was to visit the Allt Bhran was an expert in sediment and his visit would be an important start. He again noted that funding had been provided from SEPA for this to proceed.
- Net fisheries – it was noted that USAN had recently pleaded guilty to all offences at a recent trial and that this would not have taken place without the Board's involvement. It was therefore important to continue vigilance to ensure that netting operations complied with their obligations.

- SSE – Peter Graham enquired whether there was any feeling from the Director as to what direction SEPA might now take, given that the original proposal had been withdrawn.

In response, the Director replied that there was no indication yet on which direction SEPA would go, although Alan Williams had heard that the Chair of the Tay Board was confident that there would be an agreement to re-water the River Garry. The positive aspect was that the whole issue had encouraged SEPA to take a much closer look at all water abstraction issues and they were to adopt a more holistic view. It was possible that if there was acceptance to allow re-watering of the Bhran then there would not also be a re-watering of the Tromie but in terms of the flow overall the result should be equal. In the meantime, it was a question of waiting to see what direction SSE would take.

- Pollution incident – Toby Metcalfe enquired whether there had been any recent pollution incidents.

In response, the Director advised that there had been some indications of relatively high phosphate levels affecting water quality in small areas, but no recent pollution incidents.

- Rio Tinto abstraction – Peter Graham raised the possibility of a financial buyout of the Rio Tinto abstraction if it could be given a value. This may be something for the Board to consider if negotiations did not proceed satisfactorily.
- Seal Licence – the Biologist expressed extreme frustration that the quotas had not been met by other rivers within the system and was concerned that seal numbers, even in small quantities, could decimate fisheries. It was suggested that each Board should revise their list of Nominated Marksmen and a higher priority afforded to this issue by each Board, although it was recognised that in some areas rivers passed through areas of dense human population which restricted shooting. The Director confirmed that all of these issues would be addressed at the forthcoming seal management meeting.
- Predatory Birds – Mel McDonald expressed the view that the numbers counted for predatory birds were well below their real level, but it was recognised that the staff could only provide the numbers of birds on the days that counting actually took place. The Director advised that the position adopted by the authorities was a policy of shooting to scare, but including limited lethal control.

## **5. Spey Foundation Report**

Peter Graham outlined the principal areas that had been discussed at the meeting the previous morning as follows:-

### **5.1 Constitution**

It was noted that the constitution would be adjusted and that Sandy Smith had now retired and a vote of thanks had been recorded. Simon Crozier had been assumed to the Committee and would provide very useful contributions.

### **5.2 Biologist's Report**

There were a number of reports which had been presented to the Committee Meeting which the Foundation Committee Members recognised were very important and should be disseminated widely. In particular, there was a report on the incidence of the number of spates and their increasing ferocity. This has been corroborated by Alistair Stephen in a report on the operation of dams within the SSE network. In addition, the NASCO salmon assessment tool was beginning to demonstrate transition between later year stocks and spring stocks when read in conjunction with historical catch data.

There was considerable discussion on the difference between the in-river and marine environment, which was opportune given the proposed offshore wind farm proposals. The Committee recognised that it was important to increase focus on the marine environment, which was where the majority of the issues lay.

### **5.3 Summary**

The Committee had recognised the need to have the important information circulated to as wide an audience as possible and this may involve convening a conference to publicise and focus on some of the reports. In addition, the emphasis of the Foundation's research would increasingly be on the marine environment.

This approach was supported by Board Members and in particular Toby Metcalfe noted that the marine environment appeared not to be sufficiently regarded by the Scottish Government. Alan Williams anticipated that the marine environment would be a fundamental part of the new legislation also.

Toby Metcalfe suggested that not only should there be a conference and wider distribution of the briefings, but the Committee should consider other more modern methods of publicity such as social media to demonstrate that the Foundation is focusing on the key issues of material concern which are largely being ignored by the Scottish Government. Peter Graham agreed and one of the

aims would be to ensure that members of the Scottish Government were invited to the conference along with other interested groups such as Scottish Game Keepers Association etc.

Edward Mountain raised the idea of a Road Show in Edinburgh with a “meet and greet” evening at the Scottish Parliament with cross party invitees. He would be happy to arrange and prepare this.

Peter Graham thanked Board Members for their input and ideas.

## **6. Association of Salmon Fishery Boards**

This item would be discussed in the Closed Session.

## **7. AOCB**

### **7.1 Pollution Events**

Grahame Newman confirmed that Procurator Fiscal reports for the pollution incidents had been submitted and a decision was now awaited. There was a discussion about an approach to principal members of CORD but, given that no charges had yet been made, it was agreed that this may be premature.

## **8. Dates 2015 meetings**

The next meetings were scheduled for:-

- Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May, 2015
- Friday 28<sup>th</sup> August, 2015
- Friday 20<sup>th</sup> November, 2015

The Open Session then closed at 11.30 a.m.