

MINUTE OF MEETING OF THE SPEY DISTRICT FISHERY BOARD IN OPEN SESSION held at the Craigellachie Hotel, Craigellachie commencing at 10.00 a. m. on Thursday 11th August, 2016

Present:-

Chairman	Brian Doran	Craigellachie Fishings
Proprietors	Peter Graham Angus Gordon Lennox William Mountain Toby Metcalfe Dr CMH Wills Alan Williams	Roths & Aikenway and Laggan Brae Water Trust Delfur Fishings Crown Estate Knockando Carron Fishings
Co-Optees	None	
Invitees	Jen Heatley Graeme Henderson	SNH SEPA
In Attendance	Roger Knight Brian Shaw William Cowie	Director Biologist Clerk
Public Attendees	None	

1. INTRODUCTIONS AND APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Peter Millar, Oliver Russell, Grant Mortimer, Craig Mackay and Douglas Ross.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

2.1 Minutes of the Open Session Meeting held on Friday, 13th May, 2016 were tabled. There were no comments as to accuracy and the Minute was proposed by Peter Graham and seconded by William Mountain.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES

3.1 There were none.

4. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Director's Report was as attached to the Minute but the following particular points arose using the numbering in the Directors Report:-

1.1 Catches

It was noted that the salmon catch from February to June had been significantly up from the previous year and a Press Release was to be issued. The overall release rate was 94% for salmon and grilse. As far as sea trout was concerned, the catch was down from the previous year but this may have been the result of reduced angler effort.

It was noted that the Parliamentary Motion promoted by Douglas Ross would result in greater recognition of the Board and, whilst it could not be confirmed, it was believed that there was cross party support for the Motion which would celebrate the efforts made by the Board in the conservation and protection of Atlantic Salmon and Sea Trout stocks.

2 Enforcement

In answer to enquiry, the Director confirmed his view that if our coastal patrols ceased, there would be many more nets.

3 Wild Fisheries Reform

The Scottish Government was continuing its analysis of responses to the last public consultation and the reform process generally had been in limbo for the last six months.

The Board noted that Roseanna Cunningham was now the Minister in charge and there were three particular considerations on which progress was required in order to move the legislation forward, which were:-

- Geographical areas
- Finance
- Parliamentary timetable

4 Association of Salmon Fishery Boards

Other than as noted in the Director's Report, it was reported that Alan Wells would likely be the new CEO of the Association of Fishery Management Organisations.

5.1 Rio Tinto Alcan

The Board had noted significant anomalies in the Rio Tinto Alcan Annual Report to SEPA, which had further concentrated the Board's efforts to ensure that both the fish pass and the broader water regime be closely scrutinised.

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Predator Management

6.1 Sawbill Licence – the Director confirmed that he had again coordinated a Moray Firth-wide application.

6.2 Sea Management – the Board were made aware of the significant frustrations felt by the Director in connection with the seal management licence.

Alan Williams enquired whether a licence had been granted for any common seals anywhere on the east coast of Scotland and in response, Jen Heatley of SNH advised she was not aware personally, but would find out.

7

Ranunculus

It was reported that Hugh Dignon, from the Scottish Government's wildlife management department, would be the official leading on Ranunculus meetings. The Board mandated the Director to refer the issue to Europe if he judged that progress was not forthcoming, rather than having to wait to report further when the Board met in November.

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Catchment Initiative

The Director reported that at a forthcoming Steering Group meeting to be held in Edinburgh, he would press for completion of the Aviemore and Delagyle backwater projects and for these to be funded from an underspend in the Pearls in Peril Project.

He then invited questions:-

Q: Angus Gordon Lennox asked whether the Spey Catchment Initiative also addressed invasive species issues such as Ranunculus and other issues that concerned the Board and he encouraged it to do so.

A: The Director agreed to look in to this.

Q: Alan Williams enquired in connection with the Aviemore and Delagyle projects, whether it was possible for flood alleviation funding to be available.

A: In response, Jen Heatley advised that there was some SRDP funding that may be available which could be explored.

Board Members reiterated their view that the Spey Catchment Initiative should broaden its scope to include issues, such as invasive species control, which were of concern to the Board.

Q: Angus Gordon Lennox enquired as to the level of use of the patrol boat for other rivers.

A: It was reported that patrols were conducted for other rivers and we charged for the provision of these services.

Discussion followed on whether the Board should increase the charge to other Boards and this would be looked at in more detail.

Q: Angus Gordon Lennox enquired whether the Spey Catchment Initiative would have enforcement powers in the future in connection with Ranunculus and other matters.

A: It was felt likely that such powers would remain centralised. It was also noted that in terms of the Ministerial Briefs, Fergus Ewing would have responsibility for sea fisheries and aquaculture and Roseanna Cunningham for recreational fisheries.

10. Fishery Management Areas

The Director then sought Board Members' clear direction on Fishery Management Areas and in particular he wished to gauge opinion with regard to the Spey remaining on its own at all costs, or whether there was scope for amalgamation.

Discussion and debate followed and Toby Metcalfe summarised the Board Members' position that we must remain as a single entity until we were shown there was persuasive argument to the contrary.

The Chairman concurred with this and said that until Government demonstrated how it proposed to organise its Central Unit and the Fishery Management Organisations, there was no point in having further discussion on amalgamation. The Board should remain a single entity until sensible proposals had been devised and published and the replacement structures had been made clear.

Peter Graham noted that 650 responses had been given to the latest Wild Fisheries Reform Consultation and 200 had come from the Spey, which reinforced the view that the Spey was in a primary position to influence deliberations.

5. Spey Foundation Report

The Foundation meeting held the day before had concentrated on a number of particular areas and were summarised to the Board as follows:-

5.1 Electro Fishing Results

Adverse weather had prevented the team from accomplishing as much as they would have liked, but what Electro Fishing had taken place had shown a significant decrease in fry numbers. Parr numbers however were good. In particular, there was an issue with low juvenile fish numbers on the Avon and it was noted that this would need to be carefully presented.

5.2 Spey Dam

The Foundation discussed at length the science behind the Spey Dam issue, rather than the politics and was concerned about the proposal to install an acoustic counter at the top end of the fish pass, which would delay progress even further.

Alastair Stephen had recommended going ahead with the genetic survey above the dam because it would produce a very good reference tool for the future and the Foundation had agreed to proceed with this.

It was noted that this did not mean the Foundation were abandoning their other work regarding Spey Dam.

5.3 Conservation Limits

The Foundation felt that it was not their role to be carrying out work on behalf of the government, but there was still a need to introduce and develop fishery Conservation Limits.

It was accepted that the Foundation would require to press ahead with its research and that there would be a need to inform the government of the outcome of that research.

Brian Shaw had undertaken a huge amount of work on “wetted areas” which would be invaluable with regard to informing the work on Conservation Limits.

5.4 RSPB Insh Marshes

It was reported that the Foundation had met with, and were positively engaging with, the RSPB.

5.5 Conservation Policy

This had been discussed at length and the recommendation from the Foundation was that this was working well and should remain the same for the ensuing season.

One particular remaining issue was returning dead fish to the river up to the end of March. It was recognised, though, that this was a Scottish Government requirement and, despite anglers' feelings, they would have to comply.

5.6 Stocking Sub-Committee

It was noted that a consensus had been reached that 230,000 young fish in the hatchery would be "fin clipped" and the recommendation to the Board was that following numbers be planted out in the undernoted locations.

The progeny from the lower mainstem would have 15,000 planted in to the Burn of Rothes and the remaining 20,000 to the lower mainstem river.

80,000 from the Fiddich would go in to the lower mainstem between Craigellachie and Arndilly and 5,000 would go in to the Dullan.

From the Avon broodstock, 35,000 would go to the Tommore Burn and 25,000 to the River Avon.

And finally, 25,000 would go to the Batten Burn.

It was noted that there may be an issue the following year if there was a large catch and yet the Board still sought a licence to catch broodstock fish for the hatchery. There was an intention to harvest 320,000 eggs this year, with the intention to release approximately 280,000 fed fry in September next year.

Peter Graham, as Chairman of the Foundation, then sought Board approval for maintaining the Conservation and Stocking policies as proposed and this was agreed.

He then invited questions.

Angus Gordon Lennox asked that the reporting of "fin clipped" fish be more widely advertised and this was agreed.

He also noted concern about publicity on parr numbers and that any message should have a positive aspect and incorporate the historical context.

Brain Shaw in response noted that every east coast river in Scotland had experienced this decline in fry numbers and this would certainly be emphasised in any publicity.

6. AOCB

- 6.1 Toby Metcalfe enquired regarding monofilament nets and whether there were many fish caught in them when they were removed.

In response, the Director indicated that he was not aware but would find out and report back.

- 6.2 Angus Gordon Lennox requested that both Jen Heatley and Graeme Henderson note the particular impact that dualling of the A96 may have on the catchment.

Both duly noted the Board's concern.

7 Close of Meeting and Date of next meeting

The date of the next Board Meeting was fixed for Tuesday, 15th November, 2016 commencing at 9.30 a.m.

The Open Session then closed at 11.45 a.m.