

MINUTES
of the Meeting of the
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
Held at Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart
On Wednesday 9th September 2015 at 5.30pm

Present

(a) Board Members

Terence Flanagan – Chairman
Duncan Baillie
Jim Davidson
Dougal Evans
John Galloway
Tom Kenyon
Gene Pryatt (for Peter Jones)
Steven Smith

(b) Attendees

Murdo Crosbie (RCHHT)
Jamie Ribbens (GFT)
Matthew Pumphrey (Clerk)

1. Apologies for absence

An apology had been received from Billy McHarg.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 17th June 2015 and 15th July 2015

The Chairman said that the Minutes of the meeting of 17th June had already been approved at the hastily arranged meeting on 15th July and only those members who had not attended the meeting on 15th July would have got the Minutes of 17th June as they had been tabled at that meeting rather than sent out.

The Chairman further explained that, unfortunately, the original draft Minutes as prepared by the Clerk had been circulated for the meeting on 15th July rather than the Minutes as corrected by him. The Clerk apologised that this had indeed happened. The Chairman briefly summarised the changes that he had made to the original draft. He had thought that his changes would have been incorporated in the draft which was circulated for today's meeting. Accordingly the amended draft would be sent out and Board members could then approve either the original draft or the amended draft or a mixture of the two or (presumably) some other version.

Dougal Evans strongly stressed the view that the question of conflict of interest and the meeting generally (on 15th July) had been very badly handled. He indicated that the question of conflict of interest had been blown out of all proportion.

Duncan Baillie said that he was not happy at the apparently restricted interpretation of the legislation, either.

3. Matters arising not specifically on the Minutes

The Chairman advised that Jonathan Haley had resigned from the Board. He thought that the Board would like to express its thanks for the good work and contributions that Jonathan had made while being a Board member. This was agreed.

Dougal Evans wondered if the Minutes correctly stated the financial status of the Annan and Nith Boards. There was some discussion, but the Chairman considered that the figures in the Minutes were in fact correct.

4. Chairman's Report

He had nothing to report apart from saying that despite the recent dry spell the fishing was following a reasonably satisfactory trajectory.

5. Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Billy McHarg, there was reported a trickle of income coming in from levies.

6. GFT Report

Mr Ribbens circulated a report for the benefit of members and spoke briefly to it. He was particularly pleased with the numbers of fry.

Murdo Crosbie said that so far as red vent was concerned, such was always present. However Mr Ribbens said that red vent had not existed prior to 2003.

7. RCHHT Report

Mr Crosbie circulated a Report including final numbers of fry stocked. He said that it was largely self explanatory. The Report contained photographs which he thought were indicative of the work that was being done and the improvements that were being made. There was still work to be done. He was particularly concerned about some very dense patches of Himalayan balsam.

8. Wild Fisheries Review

The Chairman said that this was now known as Wild Fisheries Reform and that was what we would have to call it henceforth. He said that the response to the latest consultation on licensed killing of salmon had been dispatched in the terms of the draft which had previously been approved. The government had indicated that a "tagging" scheme would be introduced, but no details had so far emerged.

Mr Ribbens said that there was still going to be a second consultation. He indicated that the most important thing for the Scottish Government and the ASFB was the financial aspect and that if it could be shown that there would be financial implications for the Government then this would be a strong deterrent to take any action which would provoke this.

Duncan Baillie thought that the proposed Licence fee was unfair. Murdo Crosbie mentioned that it would benefit an angler to put small fish back in the hope of catching a larger fish because the fee payable would be the same for both.

There was considerable discussion on the question of whether Alasdair Laing and Andrew Wallace from ASFB should be invited to speak to the Board. Brian Davidson had not offered, himself, to attend.

The Chairman stated that he had had a meeting with the Chairman of the Annan Board and also the Clerk and Director of the Nith Board.

Mr Evans said that it would be helpful to have the meeting in order to get some more information about what was happening and when it would happen. It was also necessary to scotch the proposal that the FMO would include all the Rivers in Ayrshire and the River Clyde as well as the Solway Rivers.

Mr Evans suggested that the views of Board Members were not necessarily the views of the proprietors and therefore there should be an open meeting involving not only Board Members and Trustees but also proprietors. There was some discussion as to whether this was correct inasmuch as Board Members were elected to represent the views of the proprietors. The Chairman said that if people thought that Board Members did not properly represent the views of proprietors then this was a misunderstanding of the duties and responsibilities of Board Members. Mr Kenyon agreed with this view as did Steve Smith who said that the whole point was that Board Members did represent the proprietors. The general view appeared to be that roadshows were generally disastrous.

It was observed that the email addresses of proprietors were not generally available and if proprietors were written to then this would be an expensive exercise as well as being time consuming.

It was agreed that the meeting with Alasdair Laing and Andrew Wallace should be with Board Members and GFT only.

Mr Ribbens mentioned that it would be at some time before the bill became law. It would probably be in the region of two years at the least.

9. Application for Licence to Kill Fish-Eating Birds

This matter was still not finalised due to SNH needing to know more about the damage to Fisheries caused by these birds. The Chairman asked the Board to bear with him on this subject for another three months or so. The Board agreed to defer further discussion on this subject.

10. Arrangements for Triennial Elections and AGM

The Chairman said that the Triennial Elections needed to take place before the AGM and after some discussion about possible dates, 21st October 2015 was chosen as the date of the Meeting for the Triennial Elections. The wording of the Notice and the circulation of it would be dealt with by the Chairman and Billy McHarg the Treasurer. The Notice would go on the website as well as in the Galloway Gazette.

The annual public meeting and general AGM would take place on 18th November 2015. Again the notice calling this meeting and the advertising of it would be dealt with by the Chairman in conjunction with Billy McHarg.

11. Flood Prevention Scheme

Norrie McIntosh expressed concern that a proposed flood prevention scheme may adversely affect fisheries on the lower river. It was agreed that the Board should keep the matter under review and consider it afresh if any mitigation schemes appeared to be close to fruition.

12. Revaluation 2017

The Clerk said that he had received emails from both the Ayrshire Joint Valuation Board and Dumfries & Galloway Council asking, in both cases, whether we would like a revaluation done. Mr Evans thought that there would be little point as there had been very few changes in proprietorship on either sections of the River (Ayrshire and Dumfries & Galloway) and in any case there would be changes in collection and delivery if and when FMOs came in to effect. The Board agreed that the two valuation authorities should be informed that there was no need to carry out a revaluation.

13. Stocking Policy Document

After some discussion on the document, the Board agreed to authorise Murdo Crosbie, the Chairman and Jamie Ribbens to agree any necessary changes. It was thought that the Palnure Burn could usefully be stocked, but the presence of freshwater pearl mussels made it unlikely that consent would be forthcoming from SNH and Marine Scotland.

14. AOCB

(a) Bailiffing. Because there had been a relatively good year there would be more bailiffing required generally and particularly on the Minnoch.

(b) Catch Returns. The Chairman asked that proprietors let him have their catch returns for the season in time for the AGM. Steve Smith asked why there had been a sea trout explosion. Mr Ribbens thought that the numbers of Sea Trout had been about normal.

15. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 21st October 2015, immediately following the triennial elections.

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Chairman