

MINUTES
of the Meeting of the
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
Held at Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart
On Wednesday 22nd April 2015 at 5.30pm

Present

(a) Board Members

Terence Flanagan – Chairman
Duncan Baillie
Jim Davidson
John Galloway
Jonathan Haley
Tom Kenyon
Norrie McIntosh
George McShane
Steve Smith

(b) Attendees

Murdo Crosbie RCHHT
Billy McHarg - Treasurer
Matthew Pumphrey - Clerk

Apologies for absence:-

1. Apologies had been received from Dougal Evans, John Gorman and Jamie Ribbens.

2. Minutes of the Meeting of 11th February 2015

The Chairman mentioned that Board Members should have received a second copy of these Minutes, the first having been drafted by the Clerk and the second having been amended by Jamie Ribbens. Most Board Members had received both copies. The Chairman was happy to recommend acceptance of the amended Minutes save for the amendment under item number 9 as he was anxious to ensure that the Minute recorded what Mr Ribbens had said rather than what he may have intended to say. This was particularly in relation to the 20 year phasing out period. He suggested an alternative wording which he duly read out and this was agreed. The draft Minutes were accordingly amended in accordance with the draft originally prepared with Mr Ribbens' amendments agreed subject to the rewording under the head 'River Management plan' (item 9).

3. Matters arising specifically on the Agenda.

None.

4. Chairman's Report.

He wished to raise just two matters viz:-.

- a) There was some degree of optimism about the forthcoming season as a result of recent catches of spring salmon in the River. It was agreed that the signs were promising and it was at least a good start.
- b) The Chairman referred to a letter in the Galloway Gazette by the President of the Solway Haaf Netters Association which made unflattering reference to the Board. He summarised the letter for those who had not seen it. It was agreed that there would be no point in replying to this letter or reacting in any other way. The letter appeared to miss the point.

5. Treasurer's Report.

The Treasurer handed out an Income and Expenditure Account for the year to 31st March 2015. There had not been much difference with the previous year. He said that levy notices would be going out earlier this year. He also indicated that he had not yet paid the GFT subscription but would be doing so the next day.

There were no questions on the accounts and accordingly these were approved.

6. GFT Report

In the absence of Jamie Ribbens his report had been circulated with the second email sent to all board members for this evening's meeting.

The Chairman referred to the consultation on the next stage of the Solway Tweed River Basin management Plan. Mr. Ribbens had told the Chairman that he would be making representations to SEPA and assured the Chairman that in effect he would be representing the interests of Galloway Rivers including the Cree. He could not however for technical reasons copy the Board in on the representations he would be making. It was agreed that Mr Ribbens should be asked to provide a copy of his representations so that at least the Board would know precisely what was being said.

Steve Smith said that the only way that fishing on the river would be improved would be by getting rid of fish farms and encouraging more hatcheries.

7. RCHHT report.

This had been circulated by Murdo Crosbie. The new incubators in the hatchery seemed to be working well. Netting of pike and perch in the cree had so far yielded 20 pike and approximately 1,000 perch!

8. Bird count.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to all those who had participated in the bird count. Mr. Hayley reported considerable numbers of goosanders (both male and female) and cormorants. It was generally felt that the spring count needed to be done later than it had been this year and that the autumn count should be done earlier.

The Chairman apologised that the application for a licence to shoot had not been submitted but he would do that as soon as possible.

9. River Management plan 2015.

This had been circulated for information only. It was approved.

10. Wild Fisheries review

There had been some problem in the circulation of the Board's draft response to the "licensed killing" consultation, which had been prepared by the sub-committee appointed at the last meeting. Some members who would have expected it to have arrived by email had unfortunately not received it. The Chairman sought approval for the document notwithstanding that it would not be possible to read all of it to the meeting although he tried to concentrate on the salient points. It was agreed, subject to one minor amendment.

There was general disapproval of the way in which the response to the review was being conducted by the ASFB. The "Joint Working Group" set up by ASFB and RAFTS appeared to accept that fishery management organisations (FMOs) would replace Fishery Boards and that any consultation would be not whether this would happen but how it would be financed and various administrative matters arising from the new structure. It was felt by Mr Kenyon among others that proprietors should be represented on the Joint Working Group (JWG). There was a conflict of interest between proprietors and those organisations represented on the JWG.

The Chairman had made representations to Brian Davidson (current President of the ADSFB) and in response Mr Davidson had said that no decisions had yet been taken. The general view was that ASFB were not representing District Salmon Fishery Boards.

It was suggested that contact should be made with other local boards in the region to see what their views were. The Clerk offered to get in touch with the Annan Board, the Nith Board and the Urr Board (subject to the views of Mr Bellamy) and this was agreed.

Mr. Ribbens was on the JWG but had confirmed in correspondence with the Chairman that he had never suggested this board was supportive of any of the recommendations of the WFR.

The Chairman sought and gained approval for the continuation of the sub committee already set up, with authority to deal with issues arising from the review. He also mentioned in response to a question that a possible human rights point about expropriation of property had been detected by the WFR and there would probably be little scope for any legal argument on that point although the bigger organisations might try some legal action.

The Board agreed that all publicity should be handled by Steve Smith on direction from the Chairman and sub committee.

Mr McShane warned that any criticism of fish farms or any attempt to get rid of them or limit them would be strongly opposed by the Scottish Government because of the contribution that fish farms made to the economy. There was publicity in today's press regarding that contribution.

11. Letter to Nicola Sturgeon.

The Chairman reported that he had had a response to his letter from Valerie Lusk from Marine Scotland. Her response was predictable. On the question of sea lice she maintained there was no evidence that sea lice were affecting salmon numbers. Mr Haley (among others) felt that there was ample evidence but the Government were anxious to ignore it. The Chairman would respond to Ms Lusk, pointing out some of the evidence.

12. AOCB

None

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday on 17th June 2015 at 5.30pm.

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Chairman