

MINUTES
of the Meeting of the
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
Held at The Belted Galloway, Newton Stewart
On Wednesday 10th May 2017 at 5.30pm

Present

(A) Board Members/Mandatory

Terence Flanagan in the Chair

Duncan Baillie
Murdo Crosbie
Gene Fryatt
Jock Galloway
Jamie Hyslop
Tom Kenyon
George McShane
Norrie McIntosh
Iain Service
Steve Smith

(B) Attendees

Billy McHarg (Treasurer)
Jamie Ribbens (GFT)
Matthew Pumphrey (Clerk)

(1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Dougal Evans.

(2) Minutes of the Meeting of 22nd February 2017

These were approved without demur. Norrie Macintosh raised a question about having not been on the list of apologies but this was clarified when the Chairman explained that Johnny Johnstone had attended in his stead.

(3) Matters arising from Minutes of 22nd February 2017

The Chairman mentioned the Upper Minnoch about which he had heard from the Forestry Commission the result of which was that the fishing rights were being taken back by Glentool Estates Limited. This part of the river was to become a conservation area with no fishing being permitted. The Chairman thought this was regrettable because the loss of the rod catch would make it harder for the Cree to retain its Category 1 status. Also, the Board had lost the bailiff who covered that area namely Jim Nichol who had retired through ill health. The lack of anglers' "eyes and ears" made it more likely that the area would be poached.

No meeting had yet been arranged with Lord Granchester.

Mr Baillie pointed out that it was the Forestry Commission who asked the Glentool Estates to take back the fishings and not the other way about.

There was some discussion about who owned the fishings and who occupied them as the Forestry Commission were shown on the Valuation Roll as proprietor and occupier. It was agreed that it was essential that the Board and the Assessor knew who was proprietor and who was a tenant on each particular beat so that rate demands could be addressed appropriately.

So far as the Beaver Consultation was concerned, the Chairman said that the software implications meant that he could not deal with the response to the Consultation and asked the Clerk to deal with it. He would provide a link.

(4) Chairman's Report

The Chairman mentioned that the 2015 figures for the rod catch supplied by Marine Scotland had gone up to 345 which tallied exactly with the figures provided to him by proprietors. Similarly with the 2016 rod catch of 246. The one netting station still operating on the Cree had been given 200 tags by Marine Scotland for the 2017 season.

(5) Financial Report

Billy McHarg said that the levy had remained at the level for the previous year because of the possibility of the introduction of FMOs. Currently the bank balance was £2,088 but with the arrears of payments due to the water bailiffs amounting to £2,100 this would become a debit of £12. As a result of the new rateable values as per the Valuation Rolls a lot of proprietors had achieved lower valuations and thus if the levy stayed the same at 75 pence in the pound the gross income would decrease from around £17,000 to around £14,000. The total shortfall including the bailiffs' payments would be £5,600. It would be necessary accordingly to increase the rate poundage to nearer 90 pence in the pound if expenditure was to be kept at present levels. Mr Kenyon suggested £1 in the pound but this view was not supported.

Mr McIntosh said that the Newton Stewart Angling Association was appealing their rateable value and if they were successful then the shortfall would be greater.

There was a vote as to whether the rate poundage should go up. There was no-one apart from Mr Kenyon against the status quo remaining and no seconder for Mr Kenyon's version that the current rate poundage should be increased. Mr Baillie abstained. Accordingly the rate poundage would remain at 75 pence in the pound.

The Treasurer also mentioned what he described as the "charade" with the attempt to open a bank account. It had been decided to approach the Royal Bank but the Royal Bank had now decided to close its branch in Newton Stewart. Accordingly the Clydesdale had been approached but they wanted to see a copy of the Constitution and Rules and since there was none they declined to take the Board on as customers. The Treasurer would re-open discussions with Bank of Scotland.

(6) GFT Report

Jamie Ribbens had produced a handout which was duly circulated. There were seven separate headings which he addressed in outline and answered questions from Board members in so doing. There was a discussion between Jamie Ribbens and Murdo Crosbie about the Peat Restoration Work where the latter considered that it was largely cosmetic as compared with bigger problems caused by ongoing forestry operations.

Mr Ribbens explained the way in which the percentages and other data were presented on the first page of his handout under "Conservation Limits Update". It was emphasised that every proprietor should keep an accurate record of fishing effort. The very dry period at the moment could be prejudicial to the categorisation of the River if records were inaccurate or absent.

In addition to the proposed electrofishing sites for the coming season, it was accepted that sites on the Penkiln Burn should also be included.

(7) RCHHT Report

Murdo Crosbie circulated his report. Under "Hatchery" he explained that the presence of the algae on the stones was caused when the water was very low (as it was at the moment). The River was full of smolts. He spoke about school visits. Mr Kenyon took the opportunity of thanking Mr Crosbie about the visits the Probus Club had made to the hatchery and how much the Probus members had enjoyed it. On the subject of Fish-Eating Birds Mr Crosbie said that he had not seen as many birds recently since the intensive scaring had dispersed them. The licence allowed for the shooting of five goosanders and four cormorants. There would be further counts later in the year.

(8) River Management Plan

The Chairman mentioned first a consultation request received earlier in the day from FMS. They were requesting comments on a template for a Fisheries Management Plan which it was assumed all DSFBs would be required to complete, though there was as yet no proposed legislation that would require it. This was a leftover from Wild Fisheries Reform. The template was originally designed for FMOs and had been re-jigged for DSFBs. The Chairman felt that the information required as set out in the template was absurdly detailed and that the rates would have to be doubled to pay for all the work that would be required to provide the information required. He felt that FMS was potentially dangerous and was inventing work for itself and DSFBs. The consultation document would have to be answered by Wednesday 31st May. He looked for volunteers for a sub-committee and Jamie Hyslop and Gene Fryatt offered to be on the sub-committee.

The Chairman then went through the River Cree Management Plan from April 2016 and various amendments which he proposed. All the proposed amendments were agreed. The new Management Plan would be posted on the website.

(9) Funding for GFT and RCHHT

It was noted that because the Board had voted for a reduction in income expenditure would have to be reduced because otherwise the Board would operate in overdraft and no Bank would accept that.

The initial proposal put by Duncan Baillie was that the contributions to GFT and RCHHT should be reduced pro rata. However Iain Service among others did not think that the contribution to the RCHHT should be reduced and therefore the whole reduction should be borne by GFT. Steve Smith agreed with this point of view. This was echoed to some extent by Jamie Hyslop. Gene Fryatt proposed that each of the two organisations should get an equal distribution which would be in the region of £4,500 each. Jamie Hyslop referred to the letter from Lord Granchester to the Chairman sent that afternoon. In it Lord Granchester had said that if there was any reduction in the contribution to GFT then Glentrool Estates would consider refusal for granting permissions for broodstock collection in the entire Minnoch system which fell under their control. Jamie Hyslop thought that this was blackmail. He said that if the continuation of £4,500 to the GFT was to be agreed then Lord Granchester's threat must be withdrawn.

Mr Ribbens expressed some displeasure at the discussion so far and indicated that Lord

Granchester's letter was neither known to him before the meeting nor as far as he was aware known to anyone in GFT. Lord Granchester had no connection, personally, with GFT. He indicated that GFT was now running at an £11,000 loss and there were employees to pay for and an office to run. Without the full contribution of the Cree Board it was unlikely that GFT could afford to do all the work that they had done in the past on the River Cree.

After some further discussion, which continued to be heated, Gene Fryatt proposed her original motion without the rider proposed by Jamie Hyslop and this was carried by ten votes to three. This included those members who were mandatories for other proprietors. It was agreed also that the Chairman should write to Lord Granchester to seek an urgent meeting and that the amounts paid to GFT and RCHHT respectively should be paid by monthly instalments and to be reviewed from time to time.

(10) Revaluation 2017

This had already been discussed.

(11) AOCB

As there was insufficient time to discuss any other business in any detail there was no proper discussion of such other business as members might have wanted to discuss.

(12) Date of Next Meeting

This would be held on 12th July 2017 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm