

MINUTES
of the Meeting of the
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
Held at The Belted Galloway, Newton Stewart
On Wednesday, 12th July, 2017 at 5.30 p.m.

Present

(A) Board Members/Mandatories

Terence Flanagan - in the Chair
Murdo Crosbie
Jock Galloway
Jamie Hyslop
George McShane
Norrie McIntosh
Steve Smith

(B) Attendees

Jamie Ribbens (GFT)
Matthew Pumphrey (Clerk)

(1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Duncan Baillie, Dougal Evans, Billy McHarg and Iain Service.

The Chairman read out an email received from Dougal Evans stating that he was resigning from the Board with immediate effect. It was unanimously agreed to minute a vote of thanks to him and that the Chairman should write to Mr Evans expressing gratitude for his lengthy service to the Board.

(2) Minutes of the Meeting of 10th May, 2017

These were approved without demur other than Mr McIntosh asking the Clerk to ensure that his name was spelt correctly (as is now narrated in the Board Members/Mandatories above).

(3) Matters arising from Minutes of 10th May, 2017

The Clerk reported that he had not managed to do anything about the proposed (negative) response about beaver consultation but he would try again, albeit that the time limit for representations may well have passed.

The Chairman reported on the deliberations of the sub-committee consisting of himself, Jamie Hyslop and Gene Fryatt as a result of which representations had been made to FMS in relation to the Fisheries Management Plan Template. He was dismayed to have to report that FMS seemed to be supporting the introduction of the template as if nothing had changed, even though the Scottish Ministers had said they were not going to abolish DSFBs. FMS had not responded to the Board's representations (as put forward by the sub-committee). Messrs. Wallace and Laing (as evidenced by a column in "The Times") appeared to continue to hold the view that Fishery Boards as currently constituted were no longer fit for purpose and that they should be abolished. Consideration would have to be given to leaving FMS next year and not paying their subscription.

The Chairman reported that there was to be a merger of SFCC with FMS, albeit that the nature of this merger was somewhat uncertain in view of the fact the SFCC would still be a separate branch of FMS. Mr Ribbens mentioned that GFT was against the merger. The Chairman said that FMS

more resembled a branch of government than a representative body for Fishery Boards and fishery interests. It was suggested that he write to Alistair Jack but the Chairman was not sure whether this would achieve anything.

The Chairman said that there had been no meeting with Lord Granchester as yet, although requested. He would write to Lord Granchester again.

(4) Chairman's Report

The only matter that the Chairman wished to report was that the fishing was excellent at the moment with very satisfactory rod catches. For some beats, the catch in June 2017 was a multiple of their existing five year average for the month.

(5) Treasurer's Report

In the absence of Billy McHarg there was no report as such, although the Chairman could report progress with the bank mandate forms which were currently in the Treasurer's car but which would be dealt with shortly.

(6) GFT Report

Mr Ribbens circulated a document provided by Marine Scotland on salmon tracking.

He reported that he had attended a meeting on conservation limits where it appeared would be a change in the methods of calculating these limits. It appeared that the Cree would continue to be a "category 1" river in the immediate future.

He reported on perceived problems with the state of fish in Aberdeenshire, particularly on the Spey and the Esk, as reported by the Fish Health Inspector from Aberdeen.

He stated that there was a consultation on the 10 year plan produced by the Forestry Commission in relation to the Loch Trool area. GFT were intent on making representations to ensure that it was consistent with fishing interests in as much as possible. Jamie Hyslop raised a question about representations and Mr Ribbens said that the time limit for comments had been extended until the end of July.

(7) RCHHT Report

Mr Crosbie circulated a paper for the benefit of Board Members. There were seven subheadings and he spoke briefly to each and answered a number of queries under each head. He mentioned that fry destined to be stocked into Linloskin had not yet been put out. He wondered whether it would be appropriate to stock them out as autumn fry. It was agreed that the Chairman would enquire of Marine Scotland to ensure we were not in breach of our licence. On the subject of Japanese Knotweed he said that the problem was huge. Jock Galloway asked whether there were any grants available. SEPA had suggested stem injections but Mr Crosbie thought that this was impracticable because of the size of the stem which was far too small for injection. It was not possible to trim Japanese Knotweed. The best time to tackle it was in September when it was fully in flower. An application had been made for a spraying licence.

He reported that he had been able to keep on top of the Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron.

He had had a lengthy meeting with the Forestry Commission with a view to cutting back Sitka spruce on a number of burns and replanting with native broadleaf trees.

Mr Crosbie emphasised the importance of the school visits and of encouraging the next generation to participate in and enjoy the sport of angling. Mr Hyslop thought that younger people were not as interested in the sport as they were in earlier years – as was evidenced by the average age of the Fishery Board members.

(8) River Management Plan

Mr Flanagan declared a conflict of interest as Secretary of RCHHT and invited Jamie Ribbens to open the discussion.

Mr Ribbens said that as a result of the decrease of the River Cree contribution there would have to be cuts made. GFT had already been running at a loss as had been stated at previous meetings. He therefore invited the Board to suggest what were its priorities so that GFT could decide what to implement and what to cut. He would wish to do as much as possible for the River Cree within the financial constraints that had been imposed.

Steve Smith said that GFT was able to provide assistance for other rivers which despite the cuts in funding from the Cree were still considerably less than the Cree's contribution. Mr Hyslop said that there had been no additional work done to the Cree in the last 5 years. This was contradicted by Mr Ribbens who stated what works had been done and they were always looking for things to do for the River Cree at all times. It was necessary to balance the work out over all the rivers covered. They had always done more electro-fishing for the River Cree than any other river. However, it had to be recognised that GFT had lost money every year since 2012 and they had an office to run.

There were various other comments made as a result of which Mr Hyslop considered that what had been recommended as priorities were conservation limits, the Forestry Plans and the stocking policy document.

Mr Ribbens said GFT would always welcome volunteers from the Board but all the work that had been done and would be done in the future had to be based on sound science.

Mr Smith said that GFT were charging things like £250 for attending Board meetings to which Mr Ribbens said that he did as much work and as much overtime as he could and needed to do and that all fees and charges were reasonable. Mr Smith disputed this.

Mr Hyslop suggested that GFT should not get involved in minor planning matters. However, they should in cases of major works such as sewage works. Mr Crosbie offered the services of RCHHT for some of the work at the stocking sites. Mr Smith thought it was very unfair of GFT to offer to do a third of the work for the same money and ask someone else to do two thirds of it for no money. However, Mr Ribbens considered that Mr Smith was being very naïve and was thankful to Mr Crosbie for his offer.

There would be a sub-committee to consider this matter further, that sub-committee consisting of Jamie Hyslop, Murdo Crosbie and the Chairman, Terence Flanagan. This was agreed. Mr Ribbens mentioned that the river could be categorised as low as 3 if the work was not done on the Cree to an acceptable standard.

(9) AOCB

There was none.

(10) Date of Next Meeting

This would be held on Wednesday, 6th September, 2017 at The Belted Galloway at 5.30 p.m.

The meeting closed at 7.25 p.m.