

MINUTES
of the Meeting of the
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board
Held at Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart
On Wednesday 27th January 2016 at 5.30pm

Present

(A) Board Members/mandatories

Terence Flanagan – Chairman
Duncan Baillie
Murdo Crosbie
Jim Davidson
John Galloway
Jamie Hyslop
Norrie McIntosh
George McShane
Steve Smith
Gene Fryatt

(B) Attendees

Gene Fryatt
Billy McHarg – Treasurer
Matthew Pumphrey – Clerk
Jamie Ribbens – GFT

(C) Members of the public

There was one member of the public also in attendance.

1. Apologies for absence

None had been intimated.

2. Minutes of Meeting of 21st October 2015

These were approved without demur.

3. Consideration of Minutes of AGM and APM on 18th November 2015

These were approved without demur.

4. Matters arising not specifically on the Agenda.

The Chairman asked Board Members to submit their declarations of interest as it was a statutory requirement to do so. Jim Davidson confirmed that he was a mandatory for Lynne Rae. Jamie Hyslop's declaration of interest was given to the Clerk.

5. Chairman's Report

a) 2015 had been an extremely successful spawning season but the recent flooding had put a slight dampener on that. The Chairman said that in consequence he was extremely pleased that the River had a hatchery.

b) The hatchery was proposing to present a trophy for the first salmon caught in the season. He thought that this could provide some good publicity for the river. There would have to be a witness to the fish caught and a photograph taken.

6. Treasurer's Report

There had been a problem with Glentrool Estate. There had also been difficulty in obtaining the levy from the Crown Estate as they had changed their payment arrangements but the Treasurer thought that he had now sorted this out with them and was hopeful that payment would be made soon.

He reported that unpaid levies amounted to £8681.35. He wondered whether there might be any mileage in warning the offending proprietors that they might lose the right to vote if they did not pay their subscription. The Chairman however said that there was no provision in the legislation to enable the Board to take this step. The Treasurer said that he was left with little alternative but to send warning letters followed by Court action if the warnings were not heeded.

7. GFT Report

Jamie Ribbens duly circulated a handout and went through the various headings namely

Forest Design plans

Water sampling

Glenhead Burn Project

Conservation limits and mandatory catch and release

Penninghame Pond outflow

Castleburn A714 road bridge

He turned to the question of Conservation limits and mandatory catch and release as this was the current topical issue. He then circulated a separate handout on Conservation limits and spoke to this.

Steve Smith thought that the figure for the number of grilse in the River Cree for 2014 as per the handout was wrong. There were more grilse in 2014 than in 2010. Jamie Ribbens said that although the model was sound the execution of it was flawed by the mistaken figures provided.

Mr Ribbens made it clear that the release mortality was in the region of 10% - caused often by inexperienced or ignorant fishermen failing to correctly and safely detach a fish from the hook that had caught it. This was backed up by a research paper which indicated that the release period of fish caught was often much too long and that resulted in the fish dying when they were finally returned to the water.

Jamie Ribbens said that the River Cree was in Grade 3 and it would be unlikely even if there were a bumper year in 2016 that it would go up to Grade 2 for some time, since the good year of 2010 would drop out of the five year average.

The Chairman said, without demur from other Board members, that it must be a requirement for all fishermen to keep records of fish caught and fishing effort during the season.

Jamie Hyslop said that unless accurate records were kept and produced it might be possible to manipulate the figures to record an unrealistic amount of fish caught and returned and thus

improve the grade of the River. Steve Smith said that he was highly suspicious of the figures produced for the River Tweed.

Mr Ribbens said that there was a huge difference between rivers with syndicates and rivers with angling clubs.

Mr. Ribbens explained the "grilse error" mentioned in the calculation of total egg availability as this was a major factor in producing the overall percentages.

There was considerable discussion on the importance of the weight of the fish caught and scale readings, Mr. Ribbens emphasising that the scale readings were very important.

He would email everybody about this subject. Steve Smith emphasised that something had to be done but the Board needed scientific backing to justify the Board's criticism of the code.

At this point the Chairman indicated that he was about to go on a lengthy period of absence and if anything happened about the Conservation code or indeed about any important matter affecting the Board then Murdo Crosbie would act in his stead and would be empowered to call meetings and conduct them in his absence.

8. RCHHT Report

Murdo Crosbie circulated a handout and spoke to its content. Steve Smith asked about the proportion of grilse to salmon in the broodstock figures. Murdo Crosbie thought that the majority would be grilse – even as much as 80% - but could not be certain. Steve Smith agreed that that would be likely.

The results of broodstock capture from the Minnoch and the Penkiln were good with the Cree being less so.

There was some discussion of the effectiveness of the hatchery and some discussion about Lord Grantchester's understanding of how contributions were made to it. These were duly noted but it was felt that as this meeting was already going over time more detailed discussion should await another day.

9. Wild Fisheries Review

It had already been noted that the River Cree had achieved Category 3. The Regulations had not been finally enacted.

The Chairman had indicated what he considered the Board's Conservation Code might be.

The proposed Conservation Code would be:-

- (a) No worm fishing.
- (b) For bladed spinners just a single hook.
- (c) For any other spinners a maximum of one treble hook.
- (d) Restrictions on taking sea trout: such should be restricted to sea trout of less than 2lb in weight otherwise they would be returned.

On (a) there was some discussion and some were against the restriction on worm fishing because it might put off youngsters. However by a majority it was decided that there should be no worm fishing.

There was no contrary views expressed on (b), (c) and (d) and it was agreed that so far as (d) was concerned the number of less than 2lb sea trout that could be caught would be two per angler per day and four per angler per week.

The member of the public who was present asked about the Board's policy on the catching of other fish e.g. pike or perch. The Chairman said that perch were not native fish to the Cree and could be destroyed and in his view should be; he accepted that there were scientific views about pike. There were no contrary views expressed.

10. Fish-eating birds.

The Chairman was pleased to announce that he had obtained a Licence from SNH to kill (in the course of scaring) up to 12 Goosanders and 3 Cormorants. He could appoint Agents and he had appointed Jamie Hyslop, Murdo Crosbie and John ("Jock") Galloway to be his Agents. The permissible months were February to April 2016 inclusive. He thanked all those who had helped in the bird counts which were a pre-requisite to the grant of the Licence. He asked that Murdo Crosbie who had done all the organisation for the previous counts repeat the exercise and asked that another walk should be done in late April. He felt he could apply for another Licence in late Autumn but there would need to be another count in early autumn. The application form was not an easy one and he took the opportunity of thanking Murdo Crosbie also for assistance in completing it and despatching it.

11. Water Bailiffs.

The general feeling was that there should be another water bailiff appointed to better enforce the Board's conservation code and the legal requirement for catch and release. Murdo Crosbie was prepared to be appointed and it was agreed to appoint him as an additional bailiff subject to him passing the bailiff's examination.

It was reported that the Irvine Board had obtained a £15,000 grant for water bailiffing equipment. The Board felt that following the Irvine's example, the Cree Board should apply for £10,000. The Treasurer agreed to make the grant application.

12. Rating re-valuation.

The Chairman reminded the Board that this had been discussed at a previous meeting and it had been decided that the Board would not request a revaluation in 2017. Louise Adams of the Dumfries & Galloway Valuation Board had been in touch with him to say that she had not heard from us about the matter and asked whether the Board wanted a revaluation. Both the Nith and Annan Boards had indicated that they did wish a revaluation. She thought it might be in the interest of proprietors if there was a revaluation for the Cree as well.

After due consideration the Chairman felt that there should be a revaluation and recommended that the Board change its decision to this effect. The Board unanimously agreed that there should be a revaluation and the Clerk was asked to so intimate both to Louise Adams at Dumfries & Galloway Council and to the Ayrshire Joint Valuation Board.

13. AOCB

There was none.

14. Date of next meeting.

The date of the next meeting would be 13th April 2016 at 5.30pm at The Bruce Hotel.

The meeting closed at 7.50pm.

(signed)

T Flanagan
Chairman