

# Cromarty Fisheries



## THE CROMARTY FIRTH FISHERY BOARD - CARCASS TAGGING UPDATE MEETING – MINUTES

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**Held at Perrins Centre, Alness on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> November 2012 at 7:30pm**

Present		
Chris Blake	CB	Alness Angling Club
John Cameron	JC	
Adam Davidson	AD	
Susan Haslam	SH	
George Pirie	GP	
Jack Saunders	JS	
David Stewart	DS	
Graham Thom	GT	
Scott Ramsey	SR	Dingwall and District Angling Club
John Urquhart	JU	Evanton Angling Club
Angus Craik	AC	
Ian Duncan	ID	Cromarty Firth Fishery Board
Simon McKelvey	SM	
Peter Macallister	PM	
Edward Rush	ER	
Rob Whitson	RW	

1	APOLOGIES	Action
	None	

<b>2</b>	<b>MINUTES OF MEETING,</b>	
	<p>ID opened the meeting and welcomed those present.</p> <p>There being no set agenda for the meeting, the floor was open for anyone to make representations.</p> <p>ID briefed those present on the progress to date with the Marine and Aquaculture Bill, which was presented to Scottish Parliament on 3<sup>rd</sup> October. The clear intention is to make carcass tagging mandatory for all salmon, with a further recommendation that carcass tagging for net caught fish would become law by the 2014 season.</p> <p>ID stated the Kildermorie anglers had experienced no problems with the carcass tagging trial except that, as a result of there being a weak point in the tag, if a fish is carried by the tag the tag may well break. Fish should be carried by the gills, as per accepted practice. GP stated that he had not experienced a broken tag.</p> <p>CB mentioned that there is a perceived problem where club members belong to more than one club, and are therefore receiving multiple tags as a result of those multiple club memberships.</p> <p>SR stated that he was a member of 4 clubs and was therefore issued with 24 tags and 4 log sheets. Whilst he had not retained anything like the number of fish that he had tags for, he suggested that central control would make the issue of log sheets etc easier and reduce the likelihood of abuse.</p> <p>JC mentioned that he had raised this point at the outset.</p> <p>ID suggested that an angler nominate a senior club and questioned whether that might work; thereby issuing 6 tags in the name of the senior club but no further tags for subsequent club memberships.</p>	

JC suggested that the Board get a list of all members for all clubs and issue tags centrally.

SM confirmed that this would not present too onerous a burden, on the basis that tags, etc are already sent out to various individuals and clubs. Names could be checked against a central database and this would prevent the likelihood of issuing more than an individual's entitlement of tags.

JC confirmed that they would require tags for the 1<sup>st</sup> July, which is not an issue. ID asked the question – what happens for late joiners ? JC confirmed for the AAC that they would notify the Board as individuals join the club and he thought that other angling clubs could do likewise.

AC raised the issue of the possibility of abuse through false addresses being supplied and it was generally agreed that any system is open to abuse and much of the success of the programme depended on the honesty of the anglers.

CB asked what the procedure would be for visitor tickets and the likelihood of club members buying visitor tickets and the resulting loss of control. SM stated that he would have hoped that club members would behave honourably.

JC asked whether it would be a requirement to issue a tag with a day ticket and SM confirmed that the tag number would have to correspond with the day ticket number.

JC confirmed that the tickets were harder to control for the clubs than the issue of control over anglers by private owners.

ID suggested that when issuing a day ticket the vendor

should ask for identification. PM confirmed that a number of banned anglers are currently trying to buy tickets and this causes problems for the bailiffs.

JC appreciated the problem, but they do have difficulty in getting i.d. within the outlets and again it was agreed that dishonesty is impossible to completely control.

In terms of catch and release info, SR informed the meeting that other boards ask day ticket anglers to leave a deposit to ensure that data on catch is presented prior to leaving the river. SM at that point suggested that an alternative would be to enter a lottery with returned tags / catch data leading to a potentially good prize.

It was generally accepted that the times when an angler may be on a river may not correspond with the time that the ticket outlets are open and therefore the deposit scheme may be difficult to manage as anglers may have to leave the river after an outlet has closed and, therefore, can't retrieve their deposit.

JC then raised the issue of responses to the tagging pilot from Dingwall and District Club, that there was virtually no comment regarding the tags themselves but taking the record sheet to the river needs addressing.

ID asked the bailiffs why this sheet had to be present on the river bank and SM commented that it helps a bailiff to monitor anglers.

SR suggested a more robust method might be for example, a credit card sized record sheet, or perhaps laminated cardboard.

AC commented that Evanton Angling Club issue a credit card sized record which includes the tag numbers. A discussion then ensued on the benefits of returning unused tags to the club secretaries.

Postage to return tags can cost in the region of £2.60. CD asked what the benefit of collecting tags was. SR confirmed that it did provide a useful cross-check, however, the costs involved made it uneconomical.

Whilst discussing the merits of returning unused tags continued, due to the nature of the tags, they are personal to the individual angler and can't be re-used during a later season or at a different time, so it was regarded as possibly being unnecessary.

Generally the impression that has been received by the Board is that the fish return rate has gone up despite the use of the tag.

The meeting then reverted to the issue of returning day ticket tags unused. ID liked the idea of a deposit scheme, however, CB reminded him again that shop opening hours are not necessarily fishing hours.

AD mentioned the problem of accounting for the deposits within a small business and having to run separate tills or accounting systems.

SM asked what proportion of fish were caught by visitors?

JC confirmed that of the 218 fish caught by Alness Club, only 5 were caught by visitors, equating to 2%. A loss of data at that sort of level, whilst annoying, is not insurmountable. SM confirmed, however, that they would still need a tag in the event that a bailiff appeared on the river to prove their legality.

SR asked whether they could get tags earlier ?

SM confirmed that that was possible.

ID asked when members renewed their membership?

SR commented that it can be a Christmas present and ID confirmed that as long as the information is received by the Board in a timely fashion, there should be no issue as regards the issue of tags.

JC also reminded the meeting that the Board's Catch and Release Policy states that all fish need to be released up until 1<sup>st</sup> July so information of lists of members by angling club received before 1<sup>st</sup> April should be adequate.

ER suggested when joining, members should admit if they are members of other clubs as it would save time when SM does the data check.

ID asked for any other points?

ER stated that it would be helpful if angling clubs could persuade all those who do not support the tagging scheme to get involved now as it will become law in time.

JU stated that because it was a trial, some will fight it until it is mandatory and they can't force the issue.

SR stated that those who do not wish to take part will be written to.

ID reminded the meeting that where members are against the trial, they may be the best help as they are going to be the most critical. SR commented that it was a small minority.

SM stated that the Board has had a good response and everybody was feeling their way through the system.

CB stated that he was surprised how well the trial had gone.

PM commented that the Alness club has generally been positive, with 99% compliance in his experience.

SM then reminded the group that whilst the trial would continue for the coming season, that when tagging becomes law, it will be the netsmen who will be required to tag first.

JC asked about seals coming upstream to the swing bridge. SM requested that he be notified when a rogue seal is present and he will request one of the marksman to go and address the issue.

SR asked who sets open and closed seasons.

SM confirmed that it is a government responsibility and emphasised that they (the government) may well be taking some powers that currently lie with boards away from them and emphasised the possible problems that may come of that, for example extending the netting season.

JP then expressed his thanks to the Board and ID declared the meeting closed.