

Cromarty Fisheries



THE CROMARTY FIRTH FISHERY BOARD MINUTES OF THE PROPRIETORS MEETING

Held at Torr Achilty on Friday 7th June 2013 at 11am

Present		In Attendance	
Mr A Matheson (Convenor)	AM	The Lord Nickson (Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust)	DN
Mr I Duncan (Vice Convenor)	ID	Mr S McKelvey (Director)	SM
Mr W Paterson (Netsman)	WP	Mr J Urquhart (Dingwall Angling Club)	JU
Mr A Craik (Evanton Angling Club)	AC	Mr K Beaton (SEPA)	KB
Mr O MacLennan (Loch Achonachie Angling Club)	OM	Mr E Rush (Head Bailiff)	ER
Mrs C Pirie (Alness Angling Club)	CP	Mr R Willis (Conon Fishing Syndicate)	RW
Mr S Campbell (Findon)	SC	Mr R Whitson (Clerk)	RSMW
Dr A Stephen (SSE)	AS		

The Convenor welcomed everyone and declared the meeting open.

I	APOLOGIES	Action
	Apologies were received from; Ronald Munro Ferguson Alastair Campbell Lord Aylsford Angus Kelly Finlay Clark	

	Ian Paterson	
2	MINUTES OF MEETING, 28th September 2012	
	The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and adopted.	
3	MATTERS ARISING	
	<p>RW requested clarification of the 2013 Conservation Policy as to whether the word salmon included grilse as well as salmon (multi sea winter fish). SM confirmed that it did indeed include both.</p> <p>Whilst on the subject of the Conservation Policy, AM suggested a number of other changes to the policy, as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To remove reference to other rivers within the policy. • To place a statement within the conservation policy to the effect that all coloured fish must be returned <p>ER emphasised the need to stop the use of treble hooks and the introduction of doubles (ideally barbless) as a maximum. This is due to the numbers of early fish that have been caught and kept using the excuse that they are bleeding from the gills or that the hook has damaged them to the extent that they would die if they returned to the water. It was noted that such fish should be returned to the water, in any event.</p> <p>JU emphasised the fact that the use of tags should control the desire to keep coloured fish on the basis that anglers have a limited number of tags for the season and wouldn't waste one of their tags on a poor fish.</p> <p>CP commented that within the Alness Club, they had assumed that trebles had been banned a few years ago and they have introduced rules within the club to ensure maximum of a double hook.</p> <p>A further comment was made regarding treble hooks, to the effect, once anglers had become accustomed to doubles and in particular barbless doubles, they are in fact a perfectly adequate means of landing fish.</p> <p>DN raised the issue of spinning and treble hooks on spinners and it was clarified that spinners should also have a maximum of a double hook on them.</p>	

<p>JU queried the issue of making various catch and release issues compulsory, that their club have tried to impose rules, but have problems imposing compulsory measures, unless they are imposed by proprietors as a condition of a lease.</p> <p>It was agreed that when the Highland Council renew the lease over the water currently occupied by Dingwall Angling Club, that we ask them to make it a condition of the lease that the club, it's members and the permit holders comply with the board's conservation policy.</p> <p>ID confirmed that the policy issued for 2013 would remain extant for this year; however, the aspiration was to amend and introduce these new aspects into the policy for 2014.</p> <p>OM requested that Loch Achonachie have the opportunity to discuss these proposals at the next meeting and that it should be made an agenda point for the next proprietors meeting prior to making it an accepted rule across the fishery. This was agreed.</p> <p>AM was very pleased that the clubs have been supportive of the board's catch and release policy with good dialogue between the board and the clubs themselves and it was agreed that we would formally discuss these issues at the next meeting prior to potentially introducing the measures later in the year for 2014 season.</p> <p>RW queried the washing of nets in the board area. AM confirmed that this was not happening at Fairburn. KB however stated that there had been applications to wash nets elsewhere in the catchment and that he would follow this up and report back to SM.</p> <p>The catch comparison between the Alness and Conon systems was issued to all present.</p> <p>WP expressed concerns about the allocation of seal licences and asked whether there was a possibility of an increment to the seal cull. SM stated that this would not be possible. Further discussion would take place outside the meeting.</p> <p>WP further stated that there was concern that through Freedom of Information (FOI), the risk that shooters details could be made public and there could be reprisals from animal</p>	<p>SM/KB</p> <p>RSMW/SM</p>
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	welfare groups. Others noted that they believed such personal information would not be made public.	
4	ACCOUNTS	
	<p>ID presented the accounts for financial year 2012/13. A good, clear set of accounts have been produced by Iain Rathbone, CKD Galbraith, for which ID expressed his thanks.</p> <p>His main emphasis was the loss, albeit a budgeted loss over the year. This is the third year in succession that the board has reported a loss and now risks depleting board funds. He emphasised the value placed on the nettings in the accounts at £160,000 and the policy to write down that value when the financial position allowed.</p> <p>Within the Profit and Loss account there was nothing unusual; he did, however, mention legal fees incurred for the Ballintore Bothy ownership investigations. Confirming ownership of the bothy is proving more complicated than we first thought. The registration of the bothy is underway and, when concluded, the value of the bothy will thereafter be brought into the accounts, enabling the value of the nets to be written down by an equivalent figure.</p> <p>Questions were asked about Sundry creditors. These were described as normal trade creditors.</p> <p>ID went on further to discuss assessments and handed out a historical record of the assessments over the last 6 years, a copy of which is appended to these minutes.</p> <p>ID took the board through the years 2008 – 2013 with an in depth description of how costs had increased over the period; in particular, motor expenses, which have increased 87% over the 6 year period.</p> <p>The board had worked hard to run a tight ship, with particular emphasis on SM's cost control. ID reminded the meeting that over the last few years there had been discussions regarding the fact that assessments must increase in time and to break-even would have to increase by circa 20p in the pound, which in the current difficult economic times would be hard to accept by many proprietors.</p> <p>At the date of the meeting, the budget was 14% adrift for the year 2013/2014 and it was therefore proposed that when the</p>	

<p>next assessments are issued (April 2014) that an increment of 10p in the £ would be added.</p> <p>Even with this increase, the board would still have to draw down some of its reserves of money that are currently invested. £50,000 of gilts are due to mature soon, much of which is committed to ongoing board capital and revenue expenditure. Notwithstanding this sum, the aspiration must be to return to break even point, so therefore, it is proposed to further review the assessment in 1 years time (April 2015 assessments), with the likelihood that we would need to further increase to £1.20 in the £ to cover ongoing expenditure.</p> <p>AC asked whether given the RV is set for 5 years, it is possible to increase by say, 5% per annum compound. There was a discussion about the compounding effect and the small effective increase this would achieve over 5 years, especially as expenses would be subject to ongoing inflation.</p> <p>RW asked whether it was worth leasing as opposed to buying vehicles to achieve cost savings. It was determined that the vehicles are worked hard at the end of a lease hire period the board would be faced with substantial penalties from the lessor; therefore there is no benefit in that means of taking on a vehicle.</p> <p>DN asked whether it was possible to get some figures of what boards elsewhere are paying in the £1.</p> <p>AC then went on to ask whether we should re-value the freehold property to adjust the netting values. ID confirmed that we intend to do this once we have the Balintore bothy registered and valued, such that all property would then be at a current value in the accounts; he cautioned, however, that it would be a non-cash gain.</p> <p>The discussion closed with ID proposing an increment of 10p which was seconded by AM. OM asked whether it was possible to discuss with their clubs and then be discussed as a specific agenda point at the AGM. This was agreed.</p> <p>ID finished by stating the cash holdings in the bank accounts:</p> <p>Clydesdale Bank - £33,162.86 HSBC - £13,487.07</p>	<p>SM/RSMW</p>
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5	DIRECTOR'S REPORT	
	<p>SM gave a very thorough and interesting presentation on the board's activities throughout the year, involving the bailiffs and other staff and covering the end of the first phase of the Cromarty Firth Management Plan.</p> <p>There are 50 project headings within the management plan and all are progressing, which is some achievement.</p> <p>SM emphasised the progress that has been made from sea to the spawning grounds, starting with controlling illegal coastal netting, the extent of progress removing obstacles to migratory fish and went on to look at the potential future upper catchment restoration projects.</p> <p>AM gave thanks from all the board members for the hugely successful work done to date, not only work done by SM but from his entire team. They have made incredible progress over the recent years.</p> <p>AC then asked whether it was possible to monitor planting in the Allt Graad and to carry out electro fishing. This was confirmed by SM.</p> <p>AS asked about rhododendron monitoring. SM and ER confirmed that the rhododendrons that had been cleared are regularly visited and sprayed and get at least 3 days per year effort. This will be ongoing until they are all dealt with.</p>	
6	HYDRO REPORT	
	<p>AS gave a brief report to the board. The plans for the hatchery are funded over the next 3 – 4 years, with work being carried out in phases.</p> <p>Flow alterations at Glascarnach – discussions are ongoing and have been for 6 or 7 years. They should be reaching a conclusion in the next 6 months or so. KB confirmed this.</p> <p>The fish counters are all working. There have been unusual runs of fish elsewhere such as Pitlochry, where only 100 fish had come over the counter by mid May which is a very low figure. With the changes in temperature and water levels, the counter levels are now over 2000 fish in a fortnight.</p>	

	<p>Glasa Hydro scheme on Kildermorie is moving ahead.</p> <p>KB gave a brief report from SEPA, it had been a relatively quiet year from SEPA's point of view.</p>	
7	TRUST REPORT	
	<p>DN gave a brief recap of the history of the trust and confirmed assets are currently £275,000 with an income of about £11,000 pa. Last years trust expenditure is in the region of £49,000 with £32,000 coming from rafts and £16,000 coming from trust money. He felt that the trust and board relationship was very good and went on to remind the board that he is retiring as Chairman of the Trustees at the next meeting; AM will take over as Chair. OM has been asked whether he would consider becoming a trustee of the trust.</p> <p>RW asked whether any money had been made available from wind farms yet and could the money go to the board or the trust. SM had applied recently but had been rejected. AS commented that SSE policy is to set up community systems to look at employment/apprenticeships to encourage people to stay in the Highlands with various projects coming on line.</p> <p>CP mentioned that the Alness club had received money from wind farms for fly-tying classes through the community council, which was a good result.</p>	
8	TAGGING UPDATE	
	<p>AM referred to the meeting between the board and clubs in November 2012 and was delighted at how successful the meeting had been. The system appears to be working well and has been improved through dialogue. SM was grateful also for the help from the clubs and also from all the staff within the board.</p>	
9	AQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES BILL UPDATE	
a	<p>The law has now been passed and will be enacted, we think, in August. A summary, which is appended, was passed around those present, emphasising some changes brought about by the legislation.</p>	

10	WEBSITE	
	SM emphasised that all should spend time visiting the website for regular updates and that it was a useful means of communicating information.	
11	CONVENOR'S SUCCESSION	
	<p>The Convenor is due to retire at the next meeting. ID has been elected take over.</p> <p>The Vice Convenor position – Alastair Campbell agreed to stand as Vice Convenor. He was therefore proposed by ID and unanimously elected.</p>	
12	AOCB	
	<p>CP gave thanks to the board for the restocking last year within the Alness catchment. SM confirmed that stocking will take place until work is satisfactorily concluded by Highland Council on the road culvert that is stopping migration of fish.</p> <p>CP also mentioned the Anisakis parasite, which is present in the river and she is passing information on to members. Guidance was passed to RSMW for inclusion in the minutes (attached).</p> <p>RW mentioned that a fish killed recently on the Brahan Syndicate water had tape worm.</p> <p>SC discussed problems with the Peffery and Council flood defence repair works. The Council will not do anything to prevent potential flooding within the catchment. They (The Council) seem more concerned with the road scheme than the risk of flooding that will likely be caused with the works being undertaken.</p> <p>ID mentioned the Aquaculture and Fishery Bill will require boards to be more open and accountable with meetings being open to the public taking place and board accounts, etc, being made available for public scrutiny. A Board register of interests will have to be put together, which will be done over the coming 12 months.</p> <p>AC raised the issue of work ongoing on the Allt Graad river in an uncoordinated manner and expressed a desire that where possible work could be co-ordinated with feedback to the various angling clubs etc.</p>	SM and KB potentially to discuss.

13	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
	<p data-bbox="321 237 1133 342">Friday 27th September 2013 After note: the meeting date has subsequently been changed to 4th October 2013. It will be the Board's first Public Meeting, venue tbc.</p> <p data-bbox="321 384 1133 489">It was further agreed that the meeting of baliffs would take place before the start of next season with a date being determined at the next meeting.</p>	
	The Convenor declared the meeting closed.	