



**THE CROMARTY FIRTH FISHERY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD AND
QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS**

Held at Torr Achilty on Friday 27th April 2012 at 11am

Present		In Attendance	
Mr A Matheson	AM	The Lord Nickson	DN
Mr I Duncan	ID	Mr S McKelvey	SM
The Earl of Aylesford	EA	Mr J Urquhart	JU
Mr G Skinner	GS	Mr P Cumberledge	PC
Mr C Blake	CB	Mrs S A Cumberledge	SC
Dr A Stephen	AS	Mr R Willis	RW
Lady E Leslie Melville	ELM	Mr W Skinner	WS
Lt Col P Hingston	PH	Mr R Fyfe (SEPA)	RF
Mr S Campbell	SC	Mr R Whitson (Clerk)	RSMW
Mr R Munro Ferguson	RMF		
Maj A Campbell	AC		
Mr R Page	RP		
Mr A Craik	AC		

The Convener declared the meeting open. The Convener welcomed three people to the meeting; Chris Blake, Bill Skinner and Richard Fyfe from SEPA.

1	APOLOGIES	Action
	Apologies were received from;	

	<p>Mr G Hamilton Mr W Paterson Mr I Paterson Mr P Grant Tycope Limited The Crown Estate Mr B Leyshon</p> <p>Changes to Board membership;</p> <p>Mr Chris Blake replaces Mrs Christine Pirie as a Board Member</p>	Action
2	MINUTES OF MEETING, 7TH OCTOBER 2011	
	<p>The minutes of the previous meeting were circulated and adopted with one qualification:</p> <p>The Convener informed the Board that there should be an addition to the last minute. Within the section on Carcass Tagging, the Conservation Policy had not been included - this is to remain unchanged throughout the coming season.</p>	RW
3	MATTERS ARISING	
	These would be dealt with during the course of the meeting.	
4	FINANCE	
	<p>Financial reports were handed out. ID discussed the accounting anomaly – specifically that the Board’s financial year ends at the end of April, hence finalised accounts were not available for the meeting. Next years meeting would be re-scheduled to allow for the year end accounts to be presented.</p> <p>Specific items:</p> <p>1. Donations were up for the year.</p>	

	<p>2. The hatchery expenses were higher than budgeted.</p> <p>3. Depreciation is not included in the figures and when the accounts are finalised at the end of April, the year end will close almost exactly to budget.</p> <p>The outline budget was discussed for next year. ID emphasised that our budget is relatively predictable with increments for inflation principally. The outline budget reflects a small deficit but it is hoped that we may break even without having to change the assessments.</p> <p>The budget was proposed and adopted and assessment rate poundage to remain at £1.10 in the pound.</p> <p>AS asked whether Hydro income would be better received in portions. It was generally accepted that this would make little difference overall.</p> <p>Investments and bank accounts were then discussed, £28,000 in the Clydesdale account and £39,000 in the HSBC account. Money will be placed from the Trust in the HSBC account to return the balance to its target of £50,000.</p> <p>During the year the Board bought Gilts to the value of £50,000 which will mature in 2016. The aggregate holding was purchased for £100,000 and now has a value of £106,000.</p>	Action
5	DIRECTOR'S REPORT	
	<p>SM gave a slide show explaining the river fly partnership and the angling diary. There were some questions from the floor regarding the angling diary project and the benefits of it to anglers.</p> <p>RW asked whether there had been any evidence of spawning as a result of the Orrin river bank clearance</p>	

	<p>project. SM confirmed that it has been successful and there was evidence there.</p> <p>AS referred to the first graph on the report and discussed the increase in multi sea winter fish over grilse and in the second graph, the corresponding increase in eggs produced by larger fish. There had been a drop in males, however there had been no drop in productivity.</p> <p>AM raised the issue of the extension to the fishing season on the Conon by two weeks. The results of the three year project have been analysed.</p> <p>SM discussed varying levels of effort relating to the number of fish per hour caught. There had only been one fish caught per year that was not coloured, therefore there is no evidence of a run of clean fish later in the year unlike on the Alness.</p> <p>AM stated that there is no justification to extend the season on the basis of the sampling.</p> <p>PH mentioned that although the grilse run three years ago was late, recently it had reverted to more normal lines.</p> <p>Scottish Government would need evidence before changing closed season dates.</p>	Action
6	HYDRO REPORT	
	<p>AS gave a brief report.</p> <p>All fish passes have been checked and maintained.</p> <p>PIT Tagging equipment at Tor Achilty has been maintained and checked and the problems on the Meig have been reported.</p> <p>The hatchery is going to be refurbished but he is not sure when.</p>	

	<p>A civil audit is due to take place and we expect a staged refurbishment over 2-3 years subsequently.</p> <p>The first River Basin Plan planning application to change flows on the Black Water has been submitted, with a decision due by the end of this year/early next year. RF agreed that it would be early 2013.</p>	
7	TRUST REPORT	
	<p>DN gave a summary of the Trust to date.</p> <p>The Trust was formed in 1999, since when, a whole network of Trusts have formed, strengthened through the creation of RAFTS, all working to support Boards. The support is provided in different ways and the works are now widely accepted as being part of the system of management structure of Scottish Fisheries approved by the Scottish Government. The existence of the trust attracts funds for research.</p> <p>The Trust finances are healthy with assets in excess of £250,000 growing year by year.</p> <p>Historically the Trust has been under distributing and, as a result, it is financially liquid. Currently the majority of SM's salary is funded by the Board and perhaps some of The Trust's funds could be distributed more widely to support the work of SM over the year. A contribution from the Trust to SM's wages would be only for the work he is doing on Trust funded projects.</p> <p>The wish in the near future is to expand to increase education projects and encourage young members, etc.</p>	Action
8 & 9	CONSERVATION POLICY AND CATCH AND RELEASE POLICY AND CARCASS TAGGING	
	AM lead the discussion on the fish carcass tagging experiment being undertaken across the Board's catchment.	

	<p>Tags and log books have been issued and have been generally well accepted as being a positive measure, and are being well managed by individuals.</p> <p>CB emphasised the administrative burden placed on the Alness club due to the short notice period between receiving information and passing it on to the membership. He then went on to ask questions regarding the number of tags available to anglers, how tags would be administered and whether there is potential for anglers to catch unlimited numbers of fish on day permits.</p> <p>He continued, that the angling club is pushing to increase catch and release with all fish being released up to July and thereafter all fish over 10lbs. In 2006 club records showed 25% catch release, and by 2011 it was 66%. He is worried that by issuing six tags, there is a perception that catch and release will decline as people may take the opportunity to kill all six fish.</p> <p>AM emphasised that this was a trial and there was much to learn. He apologised for the perceived short notice, but explained that the decision was taken at the October meeting, which should have allowed enough notice to inform members.</p> <p>He then went on to explain that although six tags were issued per angler, there is no obligation to kill six fish that the intention was that a maximum of six fish may be killed by any one person in any given season across the catchment.</p> <p>Tags are individually numbered and colours will change annually. It will be immediately apparent if an angler is attempting to circumnavigate the system.</p> <p>There is a delicate balance between enjoying angling and killing excess numbers of salmon and he hoped that the</p>	<p>Action</p>
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<p>shift in mindset regarding the killing of fish would, over time mean that anglers would indeed be happy with the limits set to conserve fish stocks.</p> <p>ID mentioned that with regard to the day ticket situation much would depend on the integrity of the angler, however there would be records of those who have taken more than six fish when the catch returns are collated at the end of the season.</p> <p>JU emphasised that Dingwall Angling Club had had similar problems but also mentioned that bailiffs had been repeatedly approaching the same anglers and asking for tags and record books. This was creating animosity between anglers and bailiffs.</p> <p>JU was also concerned about the situation regarding the issuing of six tickets per angler for the whole catchment which is was causing them concern as they were worried that it would reduce the number of members in the club.</p> <p>SM emphasised the difficult job that the bailiffs have and the delicate balance within the job of conducting sufficient checks and over bailiffing.</p> <p>RMF mentioned that the way the Alness fishings are let, the issuing and management of tags is causing difficulties.</p> <p>Further exchanges took place regarding the tags and individual clubs and anglers perceptions with regard to the possible effect on tourism amongst other issues.</p> <p>It was agreed that all the relevant points would be taken on board that there would be a review at the end of the season. The findings will be presented to the Board at the next meeting to discuss the way forward.</p> <p>AM closed the subject thanking everyone for a full and frank exchange and emphasised that whilst conserving</p>	<p>SM/RSMW</p>
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	salmon we are also trying to protect the industry/sport and trying to ensure a common approach across the Board.	
10	NEW BOARD LOGO	Action
	<p>AM discussed the Board logo.</p> <p>With the advances in electronic media, the new board logo was proposed. AM sought the Board's authority to spend £100 developing it. This was approved.</p> <p>He also mentioned at this point the request by The ASFB to post information pertaining to the Board on a special page on the ASFB website. He envisages posting monthly reports, minutes to Board Meetings, Management Committee Meetings, etc.</p>	SM/RSMW
11	ACQUACULTURE AND FISHERIES BILL UPDATE	
	<p>AM mentioned that the Board's response had gone to the Scottish Government. SM emphasised that our response was designed to cover wider fishery management issues, including the fishery trust network, management and conservation.</p> <p>AS emphasised that much of the bill is designed for fish farms but there is a perceived need within Government to modernise boards.</p>	
12	AOCB	
	<p>CB asked about the structure of the Board's Management Committee and the fact that clubs don't receive paperwork from these meetings. He asked whether a club representative could be present at Management Committee meetings.</p> <p>AM explained that the Committee was started to help feed advice from the Board to the Clerk and Director.</p>	

	<p>The Management Committee currently comprised AM, ID, DN, AS, SM and RW. It is a procedural group and is designed to assist the streamlining of Board meetings. AM emphasised it had been set up with Board approval and no decisions were taken at Management Committee meetings. Items are discussed with a view to seeking Board approval.</p> <p>JU raised the issue of Dingwall Angling Club and the Lower Conon Fishings. There was a brief discussion regarding the fishings and it was agreed that the Board and DAA would have a further meeting to discuss the way forward.</p> <p>A subsequent meeting took place at which agreement was reached and a lease has now been entered into and the rent for the first period has been received.</p> <p>RW asked whether the contributions to the Orrin project were to continue as before, AM responded that it would.</p> <p>AM explained his intention to give up Convenors role in the autumn of 2013 and he invited suggestions for a successor.</p>	Action
13	DATE OF NEXT MEETING	
	Friday 28 th September 2012	
	The meeting was subsequently closed.	