

**THE CROMARTY FIRTH FISHERY BOARD
MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY GENERAL MEETING**

Held at Torr Achilty on Wednesday 9th January 2019 at 11.00am

Present		In Attendance	
Alastair Campbell (Mandated as Chairman & Upper Fairburn)	AC	Edward Rush (Head Bailiff)	ER
Keith Beaton (SEPA)	KB	Troels Bavnhøj (Strathconon Estate)	TB
Andrew Matheson (Mandated for the CFFT)	AM		
Okain McLennan (Loch Achonachie Angling Club)	OM		
William Paterson (Netsman)	WP		
Christina Pirie (Alness Angling Club)	CP		
Dave Smith (Evanton Angling Club)	DS		
Dr Alistair Stephen (SSE)	AS		
John Urquhart (Dingwall & District Angling Club)	JU		
Roddy d'Anyers Willis (Conon Fishing Syndicate & Mandated for Scatwell Fishings)	RW		
Neil Wright (Clerk)	NW		

1	APOLOGIES	Action
	The Earl of Aylesford (Scatwell Estate) Saunders Campbell (Netsman) Patrick Creasey (Strathvaich Estate) Alex Duncan (Cromarty Firth Fishery Trust Chairman) Ian Duncan (Cromarty Firth Fishery Board Chairman) Neil McInnes (Forestry Commission Scotland)	
2	CONFLICT OF INTEREST	
	No conflicts noted.	
3	MINUTES OF THE MEETING, 26TH OCTOBER 2018	
	Minutes of the meeting were proposed by OM and seconded by RW as being a true and accurate reflection of the previous meeting.	
4	MATTERS ARISING	
	AC conveyed a few words in memory of Simon and asked the members present to stand for a minute's silence. Ian Duncan provided a statement to be read out at the meeting and AC read this on his behalf: "I still find it hard to accept that Simon is no longer with us and that	

	<p>the Board and his family are going to have to move on without him. Personally, I have lost a real friend and, on behalf of the Board, we have lost the best Director we could have wished to have. It will be our collective responsibility to ensure that the family he has left behind is properly cared for and that we locate a new Director to help us restructure the small but effective team to best deliver the projects which Simon had identified for the future, within the resources available to us.</p> <p>We will never be able to replace such a caring, knowledgeable and effective Director as Simon but we must do our best to continue his work out of the respect that we all felt for him I am sad that I am not able to be with you today."</p> <p>AC wished to highlight and thank on behalf of the Board the work being done behind the scenes by NW, AS and ER.</p> <p>OM noted that the LAAC had been successful with their insurance claim for their boats which had been destroyed when they broke free from their moorings in high water.</p> <p>All other matters arising to be covered within the meeting.</p>	
5	FINANCIAL UPDATE	
	<p>NW commented that the Board is within budget, if not slightly under budget, overall. Simon had completed a number of projects and contract work which the Board is in the process of claiming and invoicing. This will give the Board a further £20,800 in the next couple of months and will push income slightly ahead of budget.</p> <p>NW stated that as of today's date there is £85,000 in the Board's account. There may be greater expenditure required which was not budgeted due to the absence of a Director and the ongoing restructuring of the Board; more professional fees may be required.</p> <p>NW commented that a meeting in March will be proposed, mainly to go over and agree the budget for 2019/2020. This will set the assessment rate for the coming year. We will start preparing the budget from mid-February when the figures for the year end are clearer. The Board will also receive capital funds by the end of January amounting to £13,333, which is the first instalment of the sale of Balintore Bothy, the agreed sale price being £40,000.</p> <p>An increase in funding from SSE was mentioned at the October Board meeting, however, a figure was not released as it had not been signed off. The agreement has still to be signed but SSE have provided their word that they will honour the payment so that the Board can budget for the increased income. SSE have agreed to pay £165,000 per annum, index linked. This is an increase from £93,000 this financial year. The increase is not excess money and is allocated. As noted at the October meeting, it was very unlikely that the Board would be able to maintain the level of contract work which is presently £50,000 for the year and SSE have requested that an Assistant Biologist is employed which the increase will cover.</p> <p>AS commented that around February 2018 SSE started to look at the payments being made to fishery boards affected by Hydro. This led</p>	

	<p>to a review of all risk assessments to work out how many hours and days are worked on behalf of SSE. This resulted in a proposed increase to the SSE contribution. After reviewing the work and hours being done by Board staff, it was evident that Simon was carrying out a considerable amount at a higher charge out rate which resulted in the solution of appointing an Assistant Biologist to assist with the SSE work and provide succession.</p>	
6	SIMON MCKELVEY FAMILY ASSISTANCE	
	<p>AC explained that there were two prongs to the proposed assistance to Simon's family. There is a private appeal, with a letter having gone out, and donations now being received - this is a private initiative. AC explained that there has also been a proposal that the Board should make a donation to Simon's family for his 25 years of service. A figure of £20,000 has been mooted which would help Simon's family cover the mortgage payment.</p> <p>NW explained that the Board would fund the £20,000 by using the remainder of Simon's salary, which has already been budgeted to the end of April, and topping this up with capital received from the sale of Balintore bothy. This means the payment would not have an effect on assessments or the budget as it stands.</p> <p>OM stated that he had been mandated by his members to ask a couple of questions, the first being that his understanding is that the Board should have had insurance in place to cover this type of eventuality. NW responded that it is not a legal requirement to have this type of insurance in place and many small to medium sized companies do not carry this type of insurance, however, we are looking at implementing group life insurance for Board employees.</p> <p>JU enquired if Simon had his own life insurance, especially given he was involved with the Board's insurance policy and, secondly, had the Board done something wrong? NW responded that Simon did not have life insurance and the Board has not done anything wrong. JU enquired further to ask why the Board would make a payment if there has been no wrong doing. NW suggested that although there is no wrong doing, Simon's family have lost his income and it was a moral question rather than a legal one. JU wished to know if this would create a precedent. NW responded that it would not as group life insurance will be set up to prevent this. AC confirmed that he agreed there would be no precedent given insurance will now be in place.</p> <p>AM commented that as a previous Chairman of the Board, he felt that the Board has not acted as a good employer by not having the insurance in place and the Board has an obligation to make a payment to assist and make sure insurance is now in place.</p> <p>RW noted that any Board member could have raised the question of insurance and no one did and it is a lesson learnt for the future.</p> <p>AC summarised that the proposal would be to make a payment of £20,000 to Lynn, Simon's widow, and it has been explained where this money is coming from.</p> <p>NW noted that there are 19 Board members and a majority would be</p>	

	<p>required for approval. A show of hands in favour of making a payment of £20,000 to Simon's family was requested; 11 votes in favour were received, which included mandates. A majority was achieved and the payment approved. Only one member abstained.</p>	
7	PRIORITISATION OF WORK	
	<p>AS commented that he was aware of the majority of work being undertaken by Simon. A review of work and priorities was assessed and a number of projects are still ongoing with Glasgow University and others. The intention is to make sure the Board can continue but it will be in a slightly constrained form until a new Director is in place. There is no intention of taking away from the work started by Simon.</p> <p>There is a tree nursery and riparian planting project being worked on at the moment and the University of the Highlands and Islands would be keen to assist with this. It will be discussed in greater detail later in January.</p> <p>Angling development is also being progressed and Fishery Management Scotland are assisting with this going forward and various funding streams are being looked at.</p> <p>A PhD student is also looking to carry out a smolt tracking project on the River Alness and a meeting has been arranged at Galbraith to go over this in more detail with the student. There had been initial concerns that this might involve a lot of Board staff time but that looks unlikely.</p> <p>The SISI project is also continuing.</p> <p>The Meig smolt trapping project has been causing some concern due to all the licences and contractors required. SSE will undertake the operation of this trap this year so that the Board's staff are not taken away from the Achanalt smolt trap. Further meetings have been planned in January to progress this project.</p> <p>Having reviewed the staffing requirements and resources with NW, the Board will be able to continue with the existing and proposed projects as outlined.</p>	
8	RECRUITMENT	
	<p>AC commented that a job specification is currently being drawn up for a new Fisheries Director position and the advert will likely be posted at the start of February, with interviews in March and appointment in May or June. An assistant Biologist would then be advertised after the new Director is in place so that they have an input. As a result of the change, the Management Committee is taking the opportunity to look at the structure of the Board and staffing holistically, including the roles of ER and his team which will be re-examined as part of this process.</p> <p>RW enquired if more than one person will be required to fill Simon's position? AC responded that the Board is taking it one step at a time and reviewing what Simon used to do and what would be expected of a new Director. There is no intention to replicate what Simon did.</p>	

9	HATCHERY & PROJECT WORK UPDATE	
	<p>ER commented that last year was a very dry summer and the number of fish at Loch na Croic were few and far between. A total of 592 fish were eventually caught, which was more than anticipated. The big difference between this year and last was the number of cock fish.</p> <p>The hen fish were slightly up on 2017 and the number of multi sea wintered fish were also up, with 23 more salmon than last year, which boosted the egg total. Fish are getting bigger with more eggs being produced per fish caught. There is now 1 million eggs in the hatchery. The number of grilse continue to decline and it was almost 50/50 on sea winter and multi sea wintered fish.</p> <p>When comparing the measurement figures from 1997, which was the first year fish were measured, the single sea wintered fish were on average around 570–670mm in length, whereas now it is either very small grilse or very big multi sea wintered fish.</p> <p>AS commented that the same appears to be happening on the River Spey.</p>	
10	AOCB	
	<p>TB enquired about the Meig project and funding. NW commented that the Trust had agreed to pay £10,000 towards the track and smolt channel with Kirkbi Estate agreeing to pay the remaining £10,000. A quote of £16,000 was received for the work but as there is more work required than originally anticipated, we have estimated £20,000.</p> <p>AS commented that SSE are in the process of building the smolt trap that will sit in the lade. A spare trap will also be built as a reserve. Further meetings with the manufacturer of the acoustic barrier are planned for January.</p> <p>JU enquired if the 2019 assessments would be invoiced as one or in two parts. NW responded that the intention is to invoice it as one. The only reason the assessments were split previously was to allow rateable appeals to proceed. It was the Board's wish to return to invoicing once a year which will improve cash flow and reduce the amount of arrears that can build up.</p> <p>KB enquired about the possibility of a conflict of interest with AS assisting the Board on CAR licences that SSE are involved with. NW responded that a consultation would be reviewed with the assistance of another fishery board in order to prevent a conflict of interest occurring. KB commented that if this was to happen then it should be noted in the response that independent advice has been sought, which would satisfy SEPA.</p> <p>WP commented that he is glad to see the generosity of the Board. WP further commented that the Scottish Government has not been as generous and netting is not likely to be allowed for another 7 years. The Government is only willing to offer compensation of £1,000 a year. The Government is also not willing to look at the seal</p>	

	<p>population and the amount of fish that they eat.</p> <p>RW wished to thank everyone involved with keeping the Board going, including NW, AS and ER.</p> <p>AC wished to thank everyone who attended the meeting and commented that it is important to look forward and not back.</p>	
11	DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS	
	11am Friday 29th March at Torr Achilty Power Station.	