

MINUTES  
of the Meeting of the  
River Cree District Salmon Fishery Board  
Held at Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart  
On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> February 2015 at 5.30pm

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Present

(a) Board Members

Terence Flanagan – Chairman  
Duncan Baillie  
Dougal Evans  
John Galloway  
Jonathan Haley  
Norrie McIntosh  
Steve Smith

(b) Attendees

Matthew Pumphrey - Clerk  
Jamie Ribbens - GFT

The Chairman opened up by expressing his sincere regret at the untimely death of Christine Welsh who had been the SNH representative. She had attended meetings for the past five years. The Board expressed regret and shock at her sudden untimely demise.

SNH had been contacted and it appeared that Jonathan Hudson may be the new representative. He was the SNH representative on the River Bladnoch board. It was known that he had received the papers for this meeting albeit that he was not present.

Apologies for absence:-

1. Apologies had been received from Murdo Crosbie, Jim Davidson, Peter Jones, Tom Kenyon and Billy McHarg. Peter Jones had appointed Steve Smith as his mandatory.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2014.

These were approved without demur.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes not specifically on the Agenda.

a) The declarations of interest were now mentioned on the website.

b) The figure of 168 under the heading "Catch Returns" at the top of page 2 of the Minutes should be amended to 200 as a result of information subsequently received.

c) The Chairman mentioned that it was not all "doom and gloom" inasmuch as some parts of the River showed good numbers of fish after the season ended, particularly the Minnoch and Penkiln Burn.

#### 4. Chairman's Report.

- a) He reported that he had been trying to get the agreement of RSPB for certain works to be carried out on burns in the Wood of Cree, but the RSPB said that they would do it themselves.
- b) Jamie Ribbens had been sending him reports for Forestry plantation works. The Chairman was wondering whether he should be circulating these reports to other members of the Board. Mr. Ribbens said that the Forestry works would be mentioned in his reports.
- c) Bailiffs conference.

It was agreed that the Bailiffs who attended the conference should be reimbursed for the cost of the conference and the hotel (the conference was in Inverness) together with travelling expenses.

#### 5. Treasurer's Report.

As Billy McHarg had intimated his apologies there was no report to give.

#### 6. GFT Report

Mr Ribbens provided a handout and spoke briefly to the points raised upon it. In relation to the Rowantree Burn he indicated in answer to questions put to him by members of the Board that both the low pH and high Aluminium concentrations appear to be a problem in the lower burn but further monitoring is required to confirm this.

In answer to the question as to what the Forestry Commission were proposing to do to address this problem Mr Ribbens said that if it was proven that these problems did occur and that they were linked to the forestry, then GFT would be requesting for the restructuring plans to go further than the usual opening up of the riparian zones and instead significantly reduce the amount of conifers across this sub-catchment. FCS have undertaken similar actions in places where it has been shown that the forestry is causing significant impacts but this would need to be backed up with robust data.

Steve Smith queried the absence of electro-fishing data for the High Cree liming sites for 2014. Mr Ribbens said that EF surveys would be carried out this year.

#### 7. RCHHT report.

In the absence of Murdo Crosbie, the Chairman circulated a handout prepared by Murdo and spoke briefly to it.

Dougal Evans asked about the cost of the fencing on the Challoch Burn and whether the farmers on whose land the fences were erected would have to contribute to repair and maintenance in the future. The chairman advised that the whole works (including the bridge and gravel addition) cost around £25,000. Some of it was

funded by a grant from the European Fisheries Fund and the remainder by RCCHT. The farmers would not be liable for repair or maintenance.

#### 8. Results of bird count and date of next one.

The bird count had taken place but somewhat disappointingly only a small number of fish eating birds had been evidenced on the date of the count.

If the Board wished to apply for a Licence to shoot fish eating birds then such application would need to be in by the end of March in order to be effective for the 2015 season. There would have to be another bird count to ensure that the Board had the right data to proceed with the application.

Certain Board members volunteered to participate in the proposed next count on the 21<sup>st</sup> or 22<sup>nd</sup> of March.

#### 9. River Management plan.

The Chairman circulated the River Cree Management Plan dated February 2014. He suggested certain amendments which were agreed by the Board. These amendments largely took into account things that had been proposed in the 2014 report and which were now implemented or ongoing.

He indicated that he would circulate the 2015 River Cree management plan with the agreed amendments.

There was some discussion about where the High Cree started. The view appeared to be that the High Cree was that part of the Cree above the confluence with the Minnoch. There was also discussion concerning the merits or otherwise of stocking salmon fry into the High Cree. Although GFT had said in the stocking policy document that stocking should be phased out on the High Cree, Mr Ribbens made it clear that phasing-out would be gradual and take place only when wild fish naturally returned in good numbers which could take many years, perhaps as many as twenty.

#### 10. Wild Fisheries review

The Chairman read out a letter which he had written to the ASFB following the last meeting of the Board, declining to answer in detail the questionnaire which the ASFB had circulated in relation to the Review. The letter had said that the Board disagreed with every recommendation of the Review.

Following his letter the Chairman had been telephoned by Alasdair Laing, the Chairman of the ASFB, requesting that the Board answer the questionnaire. During the conversation, a philosophical difference of opinion became apparent. Mr Laing considered Boards represented the *salmon*, and it was improper of them to represent the interests of their proprietor-members. The Chairman pointed out that the primary duty of a Board under the 2003 Act was to protect and enhance the *salmon fisheries* within their district. The fisheries were the enterprises of catching fish which were owned by the proprietors.

The Chairman had wondered whether there was any point in the Board still contributing to and being members of the ASFB considering that they appeared

supportive of the Wild Fisheries review proposals, apparently in contradiction of the views expressed by some of their members.

It was generally agreed that there would be no point in sending in any detailed or specific representations on the proposed review to the ASFB.

The Chairman reported on a consultation, prompted by the WFR, on a licensing system for killing wild salmon, including a "tagging" proposal. It was agreed that a sub-committee of the Board, comprising the Chairman, Jonathan Haley and John Galloway should report back to the next meeting of the Board with proposals on the consultation, which closed on the 30<sup>th</sup> April.

11. Letter to Nicola Sturgeon.

There had been a difficulty with engaging with Jim Davidson on this subject and accordingly the Chairman sought and obtained the authorisation of the Board to confine the sub-committee dealing with this to himself and Steve Smith. They would meet briefly afterwards to discuss the proposed letter.

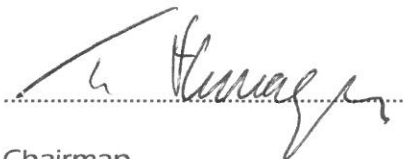
12. AOCB

There was no other business.

13. Date of next meeting

The next meeting would be held on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April 2015 at 5.30pm.

The meeting closed at 7.05pm

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Sturgeon', written over a horizontal dotted line.

Chairman