

Minutes of Meeting
of
The River Bladnoch District Salmon Fishery Board
Held at The Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart on Tuesday 29th September 2015 at
5pm

Present: Andrew Gladstone
John Haley
Jonathan Haley
Colin Richardson
Malcolm Adkins

Also in Attendance: Peter Murray (Clerk)
Jamie Ribbens (GFT)
Mark Godfrey (Proprietor)

Apologies received from Sir Michael Wigan and Richard Scott.

The Chairman Sir Michael Wigan had requested the Clerk to chair the meeting. The Clerk offered the chair to any other proprietors and on the invitation not being accepted duly took the chair.

1. The Minutes of the last meeting held on 18th May 2015 having previously been circulated were considered and then approved.
2. Matters arising therefrom
 1. Under item 5 Jamie Ribbens advised that he had not yet circulated the electro fishing summary but confirmed that he would now do so.
 2. With regard to the Waulkmill Hydro Jamie Ribbens advised that both SEPA and SNH had now met the developer on site and put various issues to them but he wasn't sure where the matter now stood.
 3. Jamie Ribbens was asked if there was any further information on the liming and he advised that the Trust continued monitoring the liming on the Cree and Electro Fishing results showed a good wild salmon fry population. The results were encouraging. Jonathan Haley expressed the view that whilst this was very encouraging it was disappointing that it could not be done in the Bladnoch as it was an SAC. Jamie Ribbens advised that the Trust were trying to draw the matter to a close this year and the Bladnoch Board could take this forward thereafter.

3. Catches so far in 2015

Various proprietors indicated their catches to date and it was clear that so far the year had been much better than last year but not as yet as good as 2011 or 2012. It was noted that if sufficient water came then the catches could be doubled before the end of the season.

4. Levy for 2016

A proposal was put forward through the chair that the levy remained the same as last year and there had been no counter proposal this was approved.

5. Baliff reimbursement

It was noted that Colin had not been fit enough to carry out any duties and it was agreed that the Rab McCreadie should receive a payment of £200 to account of his fuel costs and be invited to submit a brief report to the AGM.

6. Fisheries Review

The Clerk circulated a printout of the Kill Licence amended proposals put forward for consultation for a further 28 days. It was noted that this would now be done not on an individual basis but on a regional basis and the whole of the Solway was rated grade 3 which meant catch and release only for one year.

Jamie Ribbens expressed the view that the Trust were all in favour of the use of Conservation Limits but totally against the way that the Districts had been classified due to the lack of data used in the model. It appeared that classification was being made solely on reported rod catches to Marine Scotland which meant that a river which may not have a particularly good stock of fish but was regularly fished would produce a higher result than one which was better stocked but lightly fished. Under the present proposals one that was heavily fished would show up as having a more sustainable salmon population than the other when in fact the reverse may well be true. This was discussed at some length and it was agreed that the chairman should be asked to lodge a response on behalf of the Board but also individual Board members would also lodge their response within the 28 day period which started on the 28th September. It was also noted that no netting for 3 years outside the estuary limits but it was considered that most of the nets in the Bladnoch and Cree areas were within the estuary limits and therefore should be caught by the catch and release provision although this has not been clarified by the Scottish Government yet.

7. Rod Licence

Jonathan Haley enquired whether Marine Scotland were still requesting a Rod Licence and Jamie Ribbens advised that Scottish Government has indicated that were not going to do it unless the fishing section wished it.

8. Amalgamation

It was noted that the draft bill would be produced in January but it could be some time before it progressed. Concern was expressed as to how any future management organisation would be funded as funding was one of the main reasons for setting up the Galloway Fisheries Trust which raised most of its funds itself and carried out work that the Boards could not afford.

Jamie Ribbens advised that if the Conservation Limits proposal go ahead then there will be a requirement to compile a salmon conservation plan next year and indeed it was agreed that this should be done in any event and the Clerk was asked to put it on the Agenda for the first meeting in 2016. Jamie Ribbens suggested a sub-committee should be formed to between the BDSFB and Trust to progress the development of a Salmon Conservation Plan.

9. Galloway Fishery Trust Report

Jamie Ribbens reported that:

GFT had undertaken baseline and monitoring electrofishing for the Airies and Glenchamber Wind Farms.

GFT are keen to run the hatchery this year if adequate numbers of fish are present to address the Marine Scotland brood stock collection conditions. The BDSFB needs to apply for the license to collect brood stock and this should be done promptly to ensure there are no delays.

The on-going control of Japanese knotweed has been completed again this year by GFT with assistance from Colin Richardson.

He was happy to find out that the Kilquhockadale Flow peatland study completed by GFT in 2014 has resulted in the Forestry Commission agreeing to undertake 200 ha of peatland restoration in an area which has been 100 % Sitka spruce plantation.

Kirkcowan Fishing Competition was well attended again with 38 anglers fishing and it was won by Paul Ryman with a 5.5lb grilse. Some nice brown trout were also caught.

Rowan Armstrong recently ran a River Fly Monitoring training workshop which included representation from the Bladnoch catchment. It is likely that there will be at least 4 sites on the Bladnoch catchment where the aquatic invertebrates will be regularly monitored to check the water quality.

GFT has undertaken various electrofishing to monitor the wild salmon stocks. Some key findings were:

- The return of wild salmon spawning into the upper Polbae Burn in 2012/2013 has not continued since sadly.

- In a 16.6 metre stretch of the Barhoise Burn we caught 35 juvenile salmon and 61 trout.
- Encouraging numbers of salmon fry again in the Malzie Burn
- Glassoch Bridge on the Bladnoch had only a few wild salmon parr
- Beoch Burn – salmon have spawned again in the burn by Knowe Village. They were absent in 2014 which would explain the lack of salmon parr this summer.
- Very high numbers of juvenile salmon on the Tarf by the Drumdow Burn outflow. Decent numbers also found up at Barmore Farm.

Jamie Ribbens also reported that SEPA have been out electrofishing on the upper Tarf and this data will be shared at some point with GFT and the BDSFB.

Jonathan Haley thanked the Galloway Fishery Trust for their success in getting rid of nearly 200 hectares of trees under the Peat Restoration Project.

10. AGM/Meeting of Proprietors/public meeting

It was agreed that subject to the absent chairman's approval these meetings would be held as one on Thursday 26th November at either 6pm or 7pm whichever suited the chairman best. It was noted that SNH would be specifically be invited to the meeting.

The meeting duly closed at 6:10pm and the proprietors remained behind for a general discussion

NOTE:- AGM 25th November at 6pm.