

MINUTES of MEETING

River Luce District Salmon Fisheries Board Note of Matters discussed at Board Spring Meeting held at Lochinch Stables Courtyard, on Friday, 5th June 2015, at 10.00 a.m.

PRESENT: Lord Stair (Chairman); David Greer (Clerk); Jamie Ribbens (Galloway Fisheries Trust); Jackie Graham (Galloway Fisheries Trust); John Gorman (SEPA); Martin Lock (Head Bailiff River Luce Voluntary River Watchers); Mrs Mary Nicholson (Galloway Fisheries Trust/fishing syndicates); Robert Greenhill (Stranraer Salmon Fishing Association); Hans Topping (Stranraer and District Angling Association); Jim McClung (Dumfries & Galloway Council); David Bythell (fishing syndicates).

ITEM	NOTES	ACTION BY
1.	<p><u>Apologies</u></p> <p>Apologies were received from Dr Sir Nicholas Spicer (River Luce proprietor); Robert McCreadie (Dunragit Angling Association).</p>	
2.	<p><u>Minutes of Last Meeting</u></p> <p>The Chairman welcomed all present to the meeting and reviewed the minutes of the previous meeting and dealt with the following matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. In response to proposals for bank reinstatement works at Red Brew or elsewhere, John Gorman noted that reinstatement would normally be viewed favourably by SEPA but all proposals should be consulted in advance ii. It was noted that stocking had taken place in the Cross Water, contrary to the intention expressed in the minutes. GFT recommended that the Luce DSFB should prepare a policy document on stocking incorporating recent and historic electrofishing surveys across the catchment. Agreed that a meeting be scheduled in August with GFT to draft a policy. iii. Jim McClung noted that issues with river bank works at the Piltanton Burn on the upstream edge of Lochans were ongoing. Following the initial works, there was evidence of erosion of the opposite downstream bank. A hydrologist report had been commissioned by Dumfries & Galloway Council to advise on the impact on adjacent sections of river bank. GFT had been consulted on the works and advised that the works should be scheduled to avoid silting of redds downstream. Their advice to Luce DSFB was that as things currently stood, the Board need not get involved. <p>There being no other comments, the minutes of the meeting on 14th November 2014 were approved.</p>	LS/ DG/ GFT
3.	<p><u>Chairman's Report</u></p> <p>The Chairman noted that there had been no developments in river use or management since the AGM. However there were significant legislative changes at consultation stage that would be picked up in greater detail as part of the GFT report.</p> <p>A programme of summer river maintenance works was still to be confirmed.</p> <p>He concluded with the wish that this summer would be kinder to anglers than the previous one.</p>	

4.	<p><u>Head Bailiff's Report</u></p> <p>Martin Lock talked to his Spring Report (copy attached). The hatchery took 60,000 eggs through to the fed fry stage which were stocked into the river system in May.</p> <p>He noted that the hatchery had performed very well with few losses and vigorous fry. The Board agreed that the Clerk should write to Peter Crawford to thank him for the use of the hatchery building and his contribution to the smooth and successful running of the hatchery.</p>	DG
5.	<p><u>Galloway Fisheries Trust Report</u></p> <p>Jamie Ribbens and Jackie Graham provided a GFT report:</p> <p><u>2014 Season Review</u></p> <p>The poor fishing season on the Luce was consistent with that experienced by most salmon rivers; with very little fresh water until October by which time the only significant movement of fish was a late run of coloured fish that moved very rapidly upstream.</p> <p><u>2015 Season Preview</u></p> <p>Those rivers that opened early (Cree, Bladnoch) have enjoyed good numbers of fresh fish and, provided there is some rainfall, the signs are encouraging. The smolt run measured on the Bladnoch at Torhouse has been a lot higher than in the past few seasons.</p> <p><u>Invasive Non-native Species</u></p> <p>Control of Japanese Knotweed will continue this year. However the success of previous years treatments has resulted in a much less vigorous regrowth and the intention is delay spraying until September when there is enough leaf area to enable optimum uptake of chemical.</p> <p>GFT are monitoring an English trial of a rust spore that infects Himalayan Balsam, causing deformities in stem growth that stunt the plant and prevent normal growth and spread. There may be the potential to replicate the trial; or the pathogen may spread naturally across the border.</p> <p><u>Celtic Sea Trout Project</u></p> <p>The Project have not released any further data since providing GFT with some raw data last year. The Project team are making a presentation at the Atlantic Salmon Trust Symposium in Dundalk on 20th – 22nd October 2015. They may intend to publish their findings at the conference and data may be more widely available after that.</p> <p><u>Training</u></p> <p>GFT has organised for The River Fly Partnership to hold a 2 one-day training courses on 15th and 16th July at a venue tbc. The purpose of the course is to enable a layman to work with a standardised, basic protocol and sample invertebrate groups within a river habitat. The presence or absence of a particular group is a good indicator of water quality and any potential pollution issues. Spaces still available.</p>	

Scottish Government Consultations

1. Wild Fisheries Reform – Dr Aileen McLeod, the Environment Minister, has published the Reform paper in response to the independent Wild Fisheries Review.

The Reform paper has wide ranging implications for wild fishery management. Salmon Fishery Boards would be replaced by Fishery Management Organisations responsible for all freshwater fish and answerable to a central national unit. The role of FMO's would include the function currently provided by fishery trusts too. There are many issues to consider:

Scale – of FMO's in terms of membership composition, geographic area and the ability to manage at local level. There is potential for consolidation of existing Fishery Boards into larger, regional FMO's. While this may bring benefits in some areas, the Board were of the opinion that a Galloway FMO would be more desirable and appropriate for local circumstances than a Dumfriesshire FMO.

Resourcing – the levy system operated by most boards would be replaced by a sporting rate possibly supplemented by a rod licence, collected by government and allocated back to FMO's.

Diversity – the ability of FMO's to recognise the different economies affecting small west coast rivers and large, commercial east coast rivers.

The consultation period on the Wild Fisheries Reform is open and closes on 7th August. Details may be found at <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/marine/Salmon-Trout-Coarse/fishreform>. All Fishery Boards, Angling Associations, and proprietors and anglers are encouraged to respond.

2. Consultation on Proposal to Introduce a Licensing System for Killing Wild Salmon – this consultation has now closed. The next stage will be the drafting of a Bill and the target date for introduction of the proposals, if approved, would be 1 January 2016.

The driver for this proposal is driven by EU law and the recognition that the Scottish government has no statutory regulatory system to control the numbers of wild fish taken on rivers. There is also a degree of urgency on the part of the Scottish Government to act in advance of their Fisheries Reform legislation which would be the logical place to introduce regulation.

The proposals as they stand require a fishery proprietor to apply for a licence to kill a specified number of fish in any season. The application must be supported by appropriate evidence to substantiate the numbers of fish requested.

If successful, the owner will be supplied by the appropriate number of tags and fish taken must be tagged immediately after the fish is tagged. It will become a criminal offence to be in possession of an untagged wild fish.

The whole system could be incredibly onerous for fishery proprietors to administer if it proceeds as outlined in the consultation and there are many unanswered questions on how the system will be policed – will it be bailiffs, local authorities or Police Scotland?

6. Agency Reports

1. SEPA

	<p>John Gorman had no pollution incidents or issues of concern. He reported that the cause of historic incidences of sporadic minor silt movement in the Back Burn at Glen Luce had finally been solved with the cause being a small number of cattle taking access across the burn upstream.</p> <p>Another minor incidence of silting had been traced to run off from a soil bund and in this case the farmer was encouraged to establish grass seeding over the bund to secure the soil.</p>	
7.	<p><u>Any Other Business</u></p> <p>The Chairman thanked Jamie Ribbens and Jackie Graham for the quality of their interpretation and analysis of the proposals for legislative change.</p> <p>John Gorman noted that Callum Sinclair would be taking up post with SNH at the end of June.</p>	
8.	<p><u>Date of Annual General Meeting</u></p> <p>The Annual General Meeting will be held at Lochinch Stables Courtyard at 10 a.m. on Thursday 12th November 2015.</p>	

Bailiffs Report – Spring 2015

Brief Update

Over the last few winter months we have had around 60,000 eggs in the hatchery which were released last month as fed fry. This year again we didn't have a lot of brood stock but the fry we had were probably the best we have ever had with loads of life and coming onto the feed with no problems and very little loses.

These fry were released on the Cross Water all the way up to Miltonise with the remainder in the main water burns.

We have been looking out for the seatrout starting to run into the river but as yet I haven't managed to see any as of yet. They may be there with the amount of water that we have had recently and hopefully there may be an early Salmon as well.

River maintenance will start soon with bank trimming and some tree trimming as well. Growth is a bit slow this year but I'm sure when we get a bit of heat it will take off. Quite a bit of gravel movement again this year all the way down to the sea pool one or two changes in the pools.

Hopefully we will see some fish in the river soon.