

Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board



Ordinary Board Meeting Minutes

Friday 9th June 2017. 09.30 am

Present

District Salmon Fishery Board

Keith Williams, (KW)
Robbie Douglas Miller
Michael Hasson (MH)
Nicky Griffiths (NG)
Tom Inglis (TI)

Public

Michael Baird (MB)

Apologies

Richard Sankey
Alex Hunter
John Green
Peter Routledge
Ashe Wyndham
Steven Mackenzie

Minutes

Jacqui Hamblin

Absent

George Skinner
Gary Gruber
William Paterson

Welcome

Robbie Douglas Miller opened the meeting and in particular welcomed Jacqui Hamblin to the staff.

Minutes of Meeting held 12th April 2017 – Approval & Adoption

The minutes were accepted without amendment.

Matters Arising/ Action Points

1. Asbestos in roof of ice house and netting store has been removed. A new roof on Ice House has been fitted. It will be used for storage and bailiffing. Netting store will be demolished.
2. A boat numbering system had been introduced in conjunction with the Kyle of Sutherland Angling Association. Seven boats registered so far. RDM asked if there is a map of exclusion areas, KW advised he was aware of areas and would provide map.
3. Little progress had been made regarding outstanding netting buyout contributions. RDM asked if we are writing to the right people. MH noted the lack of response. KW agreed to write to them and try and arrange a meeting. NG and MH offered support in speaking to proprietors on their rivers.
4. Forms had been sent to Peter Routledge to complete register of interest etc. The opportunity to refresh the register in respect of other Board members had been taken. Updates had been received except for William Paterson and John Green.
5. Consider options in relation to obtaining Loch Shin farmed salmon genetics. On agenda
6. Liaise with district assessor regarding assessments. On agenda

Standing Items

- **Declarations of Interest in agenda items** – RDM declared an interest in Shin matters. MH declared an interest in Cassley matters. NG declared an interest in Carron matters. TI and KW had no interests to declare.
- **Complaints** –none.
- **Health and Safety** – no issues.

Governance

A review of all governance procedures was almost complete and will shortly be placed in Dropbox. Policies will be separated into manageable sections such as general governance, operational, employee handbook and health and safety. New appraisal and performance management policies are being drafted.

RDM noted that in the context of good governance he felt that rotation of the role of chair of the Board was important. As such, he would not be seeking re-election as chair at the triennial elections to be held later in the year.

Director's Report

KW and JH had undertaken interviews for the post of seasonal bailiff and an appointment was imminent.

RDM asked if permission is required to put a boat on the Kyle. KW responded that his understanding was that permission to use a boat on Kyle is not required. However, permission is required to fish for salmon and/or sea trout. RDM asked if canoe patrols were a regular feature of the bailiffing programme. KW confirmed that canoe patrols had recently been extensively utilised in light of the low water conditions in the rivers. There had also been boat trips when tides were suitable. NG asked if consideration had been given to drone use. KW replied that it is something that could be considered as an addition to other bailiffing resources. KW to arrange a trial to ascertain the usefulness of a drone. **Action KW.**

KW expanded on the MSS tagging project. The aim was to catch 1,000 fish and tag them at Armadale. Receivers require to be deployed locally. Involvement in the project would be cost neutral as some funding would be available. There was agreement that the Board were keen to be involved in this project.

RDM asked for more information on the netting lease with Highland Council. He asked KW to identify the area the lease referred to. KW replied that the lease was in the Dornoch area. He was keen to avoid a scenario similar to the Tain netting lease which went to open market before being ultimately leased to the Atlantic Salmon Conservation Trust. KW to produce a paper for Highland Council members explaining the importance of the Board renewing the lease as a conservation measure. **Action KW.**

RDM asked if we should apply for a licence to shoot more sawbills. KW puts in an application for a licence every year. RDM asked if we are able to ask for a greater number based on increases in their numbers. KW explained that SNH use a formula based on count numbers and added that it is imperative that we demonstrate we are scaring the birds. The licence is only issued as an aid to scaring.

RDM asked if there is an issue locally with seals. KW responded that the Board has a nominated marksman but care has to be taken where seals are shot and the species that are shot. KW to physically inspect relevant licenses. **Action KW.**

KW noted the potential requirement by the Scottish Government for fishery boards to produce fishery management plans. He felt that the Board were well placed to produce such a plan as the templates that he had seen were similar to the plan already in existence for this area. It also offered

the opportunity to shift the emphasis from exploitation of the resource to other pressures such as aquaculture, electricity production and predation.

Budget and Finance

RDM asked why the (Capital costs) netting purchase shortfall is shown as a negative expense rather than as an income. Also VAT is shown as an income. This should be altered. **Action JH.** KW informed the meeting that we get circa 30% of VAT back. Income is around 300K of which circa 200K is assessments. We are treated as if we are an association therefore no VAT is charged on assessments. It was agreed that the VAT situation should be looked at by an expert. **Action KW & JH.**

KW noted that we had received the purchase order from SSE for the basic agreement payment of circa £75K plus VAT. RDM noted that a meeting was to be held on 22nd June with SSE to open discussions regarding future financial arrangements. KW and Richard Sankey would represent the Board in the first instance as both were independent of Shin and Carron proprietors. RDM cautioned that it was possible that funding from this source would not be available post the 2017/18 financial year which would have serious implications both for total income and cash flow. The structure of any new agreement would be that Shin and Carron mitigations are separate. RDM was confident that Mr Sankey was the right person to lead the negotiations for the Board.

- 2017 assessments had been delayed as we have not had final reassessed values. The valuer advised that they would be produced by week ending 16/6/17. RDM asked what is situation on a challenge to the assessment valuer by a proprietor. KW thought that appeals were likely. The valuer will write to individual proprietors and advise them of their rateable values. Individuals then have the right to appeal. Budget assessment is based on the 2016/2017 income. KW understood that the Board charges proprietors irrespective of any appeal with refunds subsequently given if necessary. This would be checked. TI asked if there was commonality with other boards and how the assessment revaluation process is undertaken in other areas. KW to investigate and report back. **Action KW.**
- Vehicle numbers have gone from 4 at the start of the year to 2 with one now needing expensive repairs. We have ordered 3 new vehicles following an extensive costing exercise by Richard Sankey. Delivery should be circa 3 weeks. Vehicles have been bought outright rather than leased.
- Historically the Board made a contribution to Kyle of Sutherland Angling Association of £1,500 per year for the seasonal river watcher. The Association are very keen for the contribution to be reinstated. With the Category 3 status east of Bonar Bridge, KW felt that extra assistance could potentially be useful. It was agreed in principle that a contribution could be made subject to a written statement of remit and confirmation of employment status etc. This would need to be established by KW and Peter Routledge. **Action KW/Peter Routledge.**

RDM noted that year end accounts need to be ready by end of October.

RDM asked KW to formulate triannual elections timeline programme. **Action KW & JH.**

MH asked KW to continue obtaining better information on fishery ownership issues. **Action KW.**

Shin Smolts

SSE undertook the trapping in 2017. Circa 2000 were caught on the Tirry and 2500 on the Fiag which represent reasonable numbers. RDM noted that if the work falls to us in future it will need to be done on a full cost recovery basis. Given that this may form part of the negotiations with SSE, KW needs to revisit costings for deploying and servicing traps. This is to be distributed to the Board as detail will be required for any Board decisions. **Action KW.** This was important in light of the

meeting with SSE is 22nd June 2017. **Action KW.** The Board were unhappy about the efficiency of the Tirry trap and KW will relay this to SEPA and SSE at the meeting to be held on 15th June in Dingwall.

NG asked what was being done in relation to the evidence of fish accessing areas upstream of Gleann Beag on the Carron. KW has already flagged this issue to SSE and would be undertaking electro-fishing in the summer to assess if salmon fry are present.

The report on the genetics done by MSS regarding potential farm escapees on the Upper Shin was discussed. It was expected that a meeting would shortly be held with the operators of the fish farms and Fish Health Inspectorate but a date and agenda not yet agreed. The Board consider it vital that proper control measures are enacted and that those measures are monitored to ensure that they are being successful. Monitoring should be by a method such as using a rotary trap. The financial burden of this should fall to the operator. It was agreed to invite Charles Allen to October board meeting to report on what has been done. **Action JH.** TI suggested that planning consents be scrutinised in order to assess what should be done when escapes occur. KW to investigate. **Action KW.**

AOB

No other business

Next Meeting Date

RDM expressed an issue with next date of 6th October JH to go to board with alternative options as RDM cannot attend. Proposed 28th/29th September, 19th/20th October.

Meeting Closed.

ACTION POINTS				
	Who	Action	Raised	Complete By:
1	KW	Provide map of exclusion areas.	June 2017	As soon as possible
2	KW	Write to proprietors who have not contributed fully to netting buyout.	June 2017	As soon as possible
3	KW	Arrange a trial to ascertain the usefulness of a drone.	June 2017	Autumn 2017
4	KW	Produce paper for HC re Dornoch netting lease.	June 2017	Immediate
5	KW	Check gun licence paperwork.	June 2017	Immediate
6	JH	Alter budget re VAT and netting income.	June 2017	Immediate
7	KW/JH	Seek advice on VAT situation.	June 2017	As soon as possible
8	KW	Provide information on assessment process.	June 2017	As soon as possible
9	KW/PR	Establish remit of KOSAA seasonal bailiff.	June 2017	As soon as possible
10	KW/JH	Formulate elections timetable.	June 2017	Immediate
11	KW	Establish costings for smolt trapping work.	June 2017	Immediate
12	KW	Convey dissatisfaction with Tirry smolt trapping efficiency to SEPA/SSE.	June 2017	Immediate
13	JH	Invite Charles Allan to autumn meeting.	June 2017	Autumn meeting
14	KW	Check planning consent conditions for fish farms.	June 2017	As soon as possible
15	JH	Circulate new proposed meeting dates.	June 2017	Autumn meeting