

KYLE OF SUTHERLAND DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD TRUST

MEETING TITLE: ANNUAL MEETING OF QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS

Date: Thursday 24th September 2020
Time: 9.00am
Place: Kyle Fisheries Office, Ardgay and
via video conference



MEETING MINUTES (Draft)

Chair: Richard Sankey
Minute taker: Jacqui Hamblin

In Attendance

Board	Attending
Richard Sankey, Chair (RS) Ashe Windham (AW) Alex Hunter (AH) joined at 9.30am Nicky Griffiths (NG) Robbie Douglas Miller (RDM) Williams Paterson (WP) Rob Whitson (RW)	Keith Williams (KW) Director (KF) Steven MacKenzie (SM) (KSFT) Sean Robertson (SR)
Apologies	Guests
John Green Gary Gruber	

1. Richard Sankey welcomed those attending and noted apologies
2. Minutes of Meeting held 27th September 2019 were approved and adopted
3. Action Points & Matters Arising

B/Fwd. Actions

No	Who	Action	Raised	Completed by
1	KW	Annually review the hatchery operation and relevance. <i>Fish Health inspectorate visited, and it is now a de-activated hatchery. It is still serviced and inspected regularly. It is on a care and maintenance package. Check on CAR license and how long to get back in operation. Action KW</i>	October 2018	Ongoing

2	JH	Asset register value of netting and fishing rights clarify with accountant. Action JH. He advised to get them re-valued. Maintain book value. Freehold title that Board owns on lower Carron has some value.	October 2018	December 2020
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RDM: Is there a commercial opportunity to let out the Hatchery. RS: Giving up the Care and Maintenance from SSE for a commercial package and losing control of biosecurity etc. is not necessary a positive way forward.

4. Chairman's Report

As the Covid-19 crisis started to unfold at the beginning of the season the wider challenges of 2020 were something none of us could have predicted. Within a couple weeks of fishing starting on the rivers everything was suddenly locked down. It was not until the Scottish Government started allowing limited travel from 3rd July that some fisheries were able to open, although most fisheries were unable to fully operate until well into July.

July mostly provided decent fishing conditions for the Kyle of Sutherland region anglers, but this was then followed by a prolonged drought in August. With so few decent fishing days overall, there is no way of estimating the size of run we have had in the Kyle of Sutherland this year. However, initial reports from further south in Scotland, where more rain fell, are that runs have on the whole been better than in recent years.

Despite just about everything else closing down in the wider economy the work of the KSDSFB continued, albeit with our office closed and our staff adapting to mostly working from home, or within social distancing guidelines when outdoors on fieldwork. I have been impressed at just how well our staff have coped, and importantly managed to deliver our statutory obligations and responsibilities throughout the Covid-19 crisis. This has been an extremely challenging year for our staff so I would like to thank them for their effort and commitment. Enforcement in particular, during and also post lockdown, proved to be demanding as the region experienced increased pressures from illegal fishing and especially from rod and line anglers. Our staff were also able to ensure the Shin 'trapping & trucking' operation continued successfully. In recent weeks, our team has managed to carry out the majority of the electro-fishing plan for 2020.

The long period of lockdown and restricted working has meant that some of the planned projects and workstreams for the KSFT and the KSDSFB could not be undertaken. These included the second year of the AST's Moray Firth Tagging project which had to be abandoned but will hopefully resume in 2021.

In common with many regions in Scotland, the economic impact of Covid-19 on our regions fisheries has been enormous, and I am sure the effects will be felt for some long time to come. Because of this, the KSDSFB has very carefully reviewed its budgets for the current year and has done its best to make savings wherever possible. These savings have been reflected in a 'one-off' reduction in this year's annual assessment rate.

Maintaining resources and capacity for both the KSDSFB and the KSFT, for when we do get back to some sort of normality, was also an important part of the decision making when setting budgets.

5. Director's Report – including activities of the Board for the year to date and proposed activities for 2019/20

2019 KYLE DSFB STATUTORY ANNUAL REPORT

Fishery Performance

- 2019 was again in general a wet season, with the exception of a very dry late spring. Salmon catches were generally reasonable although once again September disappointed. Catches elsewhere in Scotland were mostly poor although once again rivers in the Far North appeared to fair better than those rivers further south. Sea trout catches were again a concern, albeit stocks have recovered from a low base in the past. Fishing activity in the early months of 2020 were curtailed by the lockdown associated with the Covid-19 epidemic.

Activities 2019-2020

- A comprehensive review of activities and fishery performance for the 2019 calendar year has been produced and is available on the website. This report is produced in conjunction with the Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust and includes accounts for the 2018/2019 year. The accounts for the 2019/2020 financial year will be incorporated into the 2020 annual report. This is anticipated to be available in early 2021.
- The website and social media continue to be used to update the public regarding our activities.
- In the spring of 2020 Covid-19 restrictions radically altered how we operate. During lockdown activities were restricted largely to essential elements i.e. trapping and transportation of smolts on fish welfare grounds and fishery law enforcement. We have seen a recent resurgence in illegal netting activity and rod and line issues continue to be an issue.
- Tree planting took place on a River Tirry tributary utilising Board staff. The project had several other fishery trusts as partners plus SNH and Forestry and Land Scotland.
- Targeted juvenile salmon and trout monitoring has continued within the restrictions imposed as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic.

Consultations

- A number of consultations were received in 2019 and early 2020. Consultations were, as ever, wide ranging with responses to local forestry management plans sitting alongside national issues such as conservation limits. The Board aims to respond to all consultations received timeously.

Predator Control

- The Board remains an active participant in the Moray Firth Seal Management Plan and also is part of a coalition of Moray Firth fishery boards that collectively applies for a licence to shoot a limited quantity of piscivorous birds as an aid to scaring. In recent

years, a licence to shoot a small number of piscivorous birds has been received following the submission of an application to SNH. Counts of birds at a catchment level are undertaken by a combination of bailiffs and river workers in order to provide supporting information. Efforts in terms of scaring birds typically concentrate on the period leading up to and including the smolt run.

Complaints

- No formal complaints were received during the year.
- Statutory good governance obligations are placed on district salmon fishery boards as defined in law by section 46 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003. They comprise the original obligations placed on boards by the 2003 Act together with those introduced through amendments of the 2003 Act by the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 which came into force on the 16th September 2013. The purpose of the obligations is to enhance openness, transparency, and accountability of the management of salmon fisheries by district salmon fishery boards. They bring together existing best practice to ensure that all boards act in a manner consistent with bodies operating in the public sphere. Key activities covered by these obligations include:
 - Annual reports and accounts
 - Meetings of the board
 - Complaints procedures
 - Register of member's interests.

Due to Covid-19 restrictions it has proven difficult to fully comply with the procedures as outlined in the legislation. However, we have adhered to guidance issued by Fishery Management Scotland as much as possible and have indicated in the minutes of meetings when divergence has occurred.

Future Activities

- Future activities will continue in line with our statutory obligations.

RDM: Are there any additional future plans for riparian tree planting? Our catchment area is likely to be severely impacted due to climate change. KW: Catchment management is a priority and we have been looking at the Upper Oykel as potential hotspot. RDM: If this is identified through the board as a priority, we can identify funding sources and encourage landowners to utilise grant schemes. RS: Confirmed there are a series of work streams between FMS and Government to bring departments and policies together looking at funding targeted in this way. Not all tree planting is good for fish. RDM: Can we spend some more time and energy making this happen. KW: Now is the right time to revisit more peatland restoration and more tree planting. Alladale on the Carron have planted in excess of 1 million trees. We need to move this philosophy around to different parts of catchment. RDM: The thermal prediction maps suggest we are more likely to be impacted and we have to make a difference. KW: Totally agree to move prioritising this. AW: Native woodland planting schemes need to be recommended to landowners. RW: There is some very generous grant money out there, collective will is needed to utilise the grant money and make a meaningful difference. AW: UHI gamekeepers course has apprentices which could help the planting phases. **Action KW: The Trust to take the lead in this. Produce strategy.**

6. Adoption of draft accounts to year end 31 May 2020 – Agreed

7. AOCB

Richard Sankey announced he is retiring at this meeting and expressed his thanks to all for the help and support he has received.

Actions C/Fwd.

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2	JH	Asset register value of netting and fishing rights clarify with accountant. <i>Action JH Accountant advised to get them re-valued. Decision to maintain book value. Freehold title that Board owns on lower Carron has some value.</i>	October 2018	December 2020
3	Tree Planting	<i>KW to Produce a tree-planting strategy, engaging with landowners, community, and funding. Move project to the Trust</i>	September 2020	December 2020

Meeting Closed: 0945 am

Date & time of next meeting: TBA