

Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board



MEETING TITLE: Board Ordinary Meeting
Meeting Date: Friday 18th June 2021
Meeting Time: 9.30am
Meeting Place: Kyle Fisheries Office, Ardgay & Via Video Conference Call

MEETING MINUTES (Draft)

Chair/Facilitator: Ashe Windham **Minute taker:** Jacqui Hamblin
In Attendance

Board	Attending
Ashe Windham (AW) Chair Richard Sankey (RS) Robbie Douglas Miller (RDM) Left at 11.04 John Green (JG) Rob Whitson (RW) Keith Williams, (KW) Clerk Nicky Griffiths (NG) Alex Hunter (AH) William Paterson (WP)	Steven Mackenzie (SM) KSFT Sean Robertson (SR) KSDSFB Finlay McCulloch (FM) KSFT
Apologies	
Gary Gruber John McCrorie	

1. **Welcome** – AW welcome everyone to the meeting and accepted apologies.
 A minute's silence was held in honour of the recently deceased Robert Douglas Miller as a long serving past board member and father of Robbie Douglas Miller.
2. **Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held Friday 26th March 2021.**
 - I. **Adoption & Approval**
 - II. **Open actions and matters arising**

No	Action Title	Open Actions	Owner	Raised	Complete by
1	CARRON GLEAN BEAG	Action KW - disseminate times and dates of plate being changed at next Carron proprietors meeting and to write a draft document explaining the present situation. Action KW/SR/IM - talk about the feasibility of introducing a sonar device to monitor movement of fish when the ground sluice is opened.	KW KW/SR/ IM	June 2019	Ongoing

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		<p>KW Alternative strategy being developed i.e., compromise flow to negate need for plate changing. Sonar element therefore redundant. KW recently spoke to SEPA and asked for them to check on progress being made by SSE. Richard Fyfe SEPA is retiring in May 2021, it may take another 12 months to get someone else in place. KW- still a live issue, spoken to RF he is trying to get update from SSE on flow gauging.</p> <p><i>Keith Beaton SEPA Dingwall – Action KW pick this up again.</i></p>			
2	HEALTH & SAFETY	<p>Health & Safety policy to be updated.</p> <p>Review undertaken. Requires final staff meeting to formally complete process. Action KW still to complete as felt virtual meeting would not work well. Open air meeting next week.</p> <p><i>Continually having to change due to COVID. Revised H&S by September 2021.</i></p>	KW/SR	October 2018	Ongoing
3	SSE AGREEMENT	<p>Draft received was unacceptable and request made for more concise agreement. SSE advise it is with their legal department RS. Doubt we are vulnerable in meantime. Alastair Stephen has informed KW that a draft is imminent. The five-year lifespan of the agreement will commence from point of signing not from when negotiations were completed three years ago.</p> <p><i>Update from Alastair Stephen by June. SSE intend to start 5 year term when agreement is in place.</i></p>	KW	October 2018	Ongoing

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4	KEEP EM WET	<p>“Keep em Wet” campaign seems to have lost momentum and new material still not available. Action SR look elsewhere. SR and Daniel Logie keen to do video on best practice. New material recently placed on Kyle Fisheries social media platform. Website will be updated shortly. SR action.</p> <p><i>Website updated, created a catch and release page on website and links to resources. SMK link to article in Fish World Mag. Publish further afield. Poster for fishing huts.</i></p>	SR	October 2018	Ongoing
5	FIAG TRAP	<p>Trap can be a danger to staff. Action RS - Take up with FMS. Action KW – Revisit H&S our policy with SSE. New trap in place, SSE will reimburse Board. <i>£24K received. Revisit H&S on all rotary screw trap sites.</i></p>	RS KW	September 2019	Moved to H&S item 2
6	INVERAN BRIDGE	<p>Deterioration of Inveran Bridge – now in danger of further collapse. Go back to HC and ask for evidence that they do not own it. Action KW. <i>KW has had virtual and face to face meetings with HC. HC seeking to identify ownership. Barriers are in place at bridge. HC - have date in diary to do search once covid restrictions lifted. Spoke to HC again; still no access to property register, and will carry on chasing.</i></p>	KW	April 2020	ASAP
7	PREDATOR GROUPS	<p>KW to re-engage with predator groups and push for more licences to control piscivorous birds. KW still speaking to relevant parties re general issues of predation.</p>	KW	Sept 2020	ASAP

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		<i>Do not have Seal license at the moment. Application sent in March. KW keep comms open with Alan Wells on subject</i>			
8	CARRON PROPRIETORS MEETING	Carron management plan. KW to set up meeting with Carron Proprietors. <i>Almost ready to go. Will now Incorporate Riverwoods within the plan.</i>	KW	March 2021	ASAP
9	REGULATED CAMPING AT BONAR BRIDGE	Letter of support to KSDT to include ongoing management of any official camping sites. <i>Ran into trouble with SEPA, due to flood issue. HC will not move forward due to SEPA objection. Still illegal activity of free camping.</i>	KW	March 2021	Completed
10	TIDY UP IN FRONT OF POST OFFICE IN BONAR BRIDGE	KW to speak to Community Council for long-term solution as bailiffing staff now too busy to volunteer. <i>Perhaps based on commitments we may be able to help in winter months. KW speak to KSDT about this re funding</i>	KW	March 2021	revisit
11	TEMPERATURE LOGGERS	KW to ensure SMK is kept in loop on any discussions. <i>MS network. Trial small loggers on rivers with Bluetooth to phone facility. Action KW get some ordered and out to rivers.</i>	KW	March 2021	Immediately

Matters arising

Item3 SSE agreement - RS can we check when renewal is due as there is an opportunity to reset the relationship.

Item 4 Keep em Wet - SR advised now on website catch and release page with resource links.

SMK advised he had article published in Wild Fish Magazine. **Action SMK (4)** send links and speak to Andrew Graham Stewart about publishing in Trout & Salmon and further afield. Ask permission of Nick Measham.

AH would like some posters in fishing huts to educate people how to handle fish. **Action SR/JH (4)** to arrange

Item 7 Predator Groups – KW advised that we do not have a seal licence at the moment; there is no response from government departments. Those licensed to shoot have been

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advised. KW to keep communications open with Allan Wells on the subject. **Action KW (6).**

RS: hope to report more on this later as there is a new government and new ministers.

Item 9 Regulated Camping at Bonar Bridge – Sent letter of support but SEPA have objected due to 1,000 year flood possibility. HC will not move ahead with planning permission.

Situation now is toilets have had to be closed due to waste from camper vans blocking drains. The problem is now worse with free campers and no infrastructure to support them. AW asked RDM about Falls of Shin. RDM advised that the general area is disgusting. There is a major issue with the lack of consultation.

SMK advised Falls of Shin utilises a buried tank, purely collection only with no drainage.

RS advised that funding was made available for infrastructure but was oversubscribed.

Local authorities were advised to scale back their ambition by 90%. A lot have already been refused. Fundamentally the driver is money and there is not enough funding available.

Item 11 Temperature Loggers – FM advised that Daniel Logie closed the Falls Pool at Glencalvie to angling due to temperature. KW – We have trialled small loggers that communicate direct to phone via Bluetooth. **Action KW (8)** get some ordered and out to rivers.

3. Standard Items

- a) Declarations of interest in agenda items to be discussed – RS & RDM – advised that they are attendees on the board of Missing Salmon Alliance & Atlantic Salmon Trust.
- b) Health & Safety – near miss incident recorded and reported in Director's report.
- c) Complaints – no formal complaints.
- d) Governance – JH advised that many documents have been updated but there has been a delay and not all are available to review by the Board; therefore asked for continuance until September.

4. Directors Report – Report was circulated prior to the meeting. Items discussed by exception.

- a) KW would like to express thanks to Steven and Joey on the Oykel for help with getting traps in and out and also rescuing one trap when it was submerged.
- b) Leanne Munro is being employed seasonally for the summer and NEPS money to the Trust will be reimbursed to the Board to compensate for additional salary.
- c) Bailiffing – KW reported that there have been more incidents of netting from the younger generation in the last twelve months. SMK asked that we send clear message if caught that we will prosecute. KW advised that we have had more input from the wildlife crimes officers of the police, and we are feeding intelligence into them. Also, worth noting that in the event of successful prosecution they would potentially lose any shotgun and/or firearms licences they hold. JG: it may be worth mentioning that if they have criminal record that they will have restrictions on travelling abroad, and especially to the USA. AW: is it worth drafting an article to the Kyle Chronicle? KW advised that most locals now know that the salmon populations are in trouble and an article about poaching may be well received. **Action AW (9)** to draft.
- d) Rod Catches – Carron star performer with over 200, Oykel with over 150, Shin low catches but picking up now. Cassley: no recent information. Generally, in Scotland June has been quiet to date. RS – High level of mortality on the North Esk; it seems to be river specific. Have we picked up on any unusual reports? KW replied that he

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had recently been advised of 2 or 3 fish seen with Saprolegnia infections as is usual for the time of year. No obvious 'red belly' issues although there are reports of it further north. SMK advised that handling the salmon is a contributing factor. RS advised that pink salmon are due soon, Iceland has caught pinks in record numbers in 2021 to date. Reminders to everyone if caught they are to be killed and location notified. NG asked if they could cross breed with our native salmon. RS advised no as their cycle is different.

e) Fieldwork – AW asked RDM what the plans are for the Moray Firth Tracking project are for next year and RDM responded that it will be discussed once the 2021 data has been looked at.

f) Developments & Projects -

I. Riverwoods - AW - Andrew Wallace of Fishmongers' Company is particularly interested in the Riverwoods project. SR did an excellent piece of work showing the potential effects of climate change and rising temperatures on our rivers. The Riverwoods solution is riparian planting of native broadleaf trees. The baseline cost is in the region of £62 million mainly as a result of deer fencing costs. Huge project that will take around 20 years of the Trust's time. With Fishmongers' and the Trust providing 50/50 funding, we are in the fortunate position of being able to temporarily employ Hugh Chalmers, formally of the Tweed Forum, who has a background in habitat improvement and riparian planting. He is already undertaking scoping in the upper Oykel catchment. We are hoping that Government rules change and more funding for riparian planting can become available. We can potentially get spades in the ground by the end of this year. KW advised that SSE carbon offset means they plant 3 times the number of trees that they remove. They tend to utilise projects and scoped forestry schemes that are ready to go. We should have this scoped and ready to go if funding becomes available. SMK asked if tree planting in isolation is all they look for. KW advised that their biodiversity gain policies suggest that they may look at other factors. We want planting to remain local and we need to have plans prepared and ready.

II. Biodiversity Challenge Fund (BCF) – The Lairg Estate has had concerns regarding the state of the gravels in the Upper Shin. The Trust applied to BCF for funding on the back of pearl mussels habitat improvement potential. We were successful in gaining funding and we have commenced the process by employing a contractor, CBEC, to design the improvements required to the habitat, gravel, large woody material etc. RS asked for sight of the CBEC design as soon as available. **Action SR (10)**

5. Budget & Finance

a. 2021-2022

Received the SSE 21-22 money in the 2020-2021 budget, this means an inflated c/fwd cash position.

b. Assessments

AW reminded everyone that we had to make considerable savings. In 2019 our assessment was 0.79p in the £, this was reduced to 0.69p in 2020 and for 2021-22 it is 0.75p. Excellent work by KW & JH in managing the costs.

c. Valuation roll data management

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The Valuations Roll is routinely updated with new ownership etc. We have tried to separate out the individual owners, leaseholders and sub-leaseholders in the Kyle and will provide this information to the assessor in due course. It will be up to the assessor to decide if he wishes to make those changes or leave as is when he undertakes the next revaluation of fishings. The assessor has asked the Board's opinion on whether the valuation information should be made publicly available online. RW advised that the majority of the information already is, although the breakdown of how the RV assessment is made is not shown. The board felt that transparency is always best and raised no objections.

6. Smolt Trapping

Smolt trapping conditions were very difficult with extremes of very high and very low flows. At Fiag some vandalism occurred, but there was no permanent damage to the trap. The motor arrangement on the new Tirry trap worked well until the motor sheared from its housing point. We will discuss the problem with the Canadian manufacturer. Tirry has produced circa 1,400 smolts, Fiag circa 3,900 and Merkland circa 200. Three smolts were euthanised at Merkland as they were believed to be of farm origin. We will inform Fish Health Inspectorate in due course.

100 smolts were tagged with acoustic transponders on each of the Shin and Oykel with a further 48 tagged on the Cassley. PIT tagging and mark recapture also took place on the Tirry and Fiag. Tirry & Fiag traps were removed on the 17th June. We have received £24K from SSE for the new trap which they intend to donate to us. Merkland trap is coming out soon.

7. Carron Radio Tracking

13 Salmon were tagged and our thanks to FM and other ghillies for doing such a good job. We need to buy more listening stations. No salmon are presently above the falls although a couple are at the base of the falls. They are slowly making their way upstream. We will get some feedback to everyone soon. **Action KW (11)**

RS asked how many listening stations are fixed and how many remote. KW advised that we have 2 fixed stations that work and a couple of remote ones. We have had issues with Lotek and service levels. We have located another supplier, Sigma Eight, who are half the price for fixed stations. Tags are £150-200 from Lotek and the new supplier is a little cheaper. NG suggested that perhaps anglers could donate. FM advised that he has had some guests who indicated they would like to donate.

AW asked how we bring this forward? KW advised that we are playing catch up and there will be increased effort next year on Carron spring fish in conjunction with SSE. We could discuss donations at a Carron proprietors meeting. Mossy Earth are still keen to pay for tags. Our website has donation options and we could identify Carron tagging as a project seeking donations. **Action KW (7)**

AH - How about a WhatsApp group for tagging? KW replied that there is already one. Currently fish are held in keep net, we are then contacted and we go out and do the tagging. Is there a possibility that Finlay, for example, could do it? KW It is worth considering, however proper training would be needed. If done incorrectly it is a major loss, both the fish and the cost of the tag. RS - perhaps train a dedicated biologist who could move around the catchment.

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SM asked if other rivers are checked for Carron tagged fish? KW advised that one tagged at Glencalvie in 2019 went up to the falls, then started dropping down and we lost contact. We subsequently located the fish in the Shin.

8. Trust projects update

Riverwoods and BCF projects were covered in the Directors report.

KW and JH had been discussing getting the right people in the right role and utilising the current skills more appropriately. A review of resources and a new long-term strategy is required. **Action KW (12)**

RS - the potential catchment-wide radio tagging project is a long-term study partnership over a 5-year period with meaningful and recurrent data.

AW - is a seasonal 3 month a year contract practical? KW in theory, possibly. There is however a danger with short terms contracts.

RS: trying to design a programme around seasonal staff would not work. We should be looking at a 4-5 year fixed term contract, post graduate, not just for fieldwork but the data interpretation which is as important. Put this as an agenda item for the next JMG meeting. **Action JH (12)**

9. AOCB

NG advised that there is an obstacle at the falls. KW advised that yes there is something there, probably a rock. It has been investigated by KW and the bailiffs and it is not in our gift to do anything about it at present. Would probably take major machinery to break it down. Can only be seen a low water. It does not appear to be causing an issue at the moment but we will continue to monitor and electro-fish to ensure does not cause further issues. **Action KW (13)**

AW wishes to schedule meetings on a rolling 9-month basis and to agree future meetings at the current meeting. Suggest Friday 25th March 2022 9.30am Public meeting to be followed by Ordinary meeting. **Action JH (14)** to send out calendar invites through Teams.

Meeting closed: 11.55 am

Next meetings:

Friday 24th September 2021 9.30am Annual Qualified Proprietors followed by Board

Ordinary meeting

Friday 25th March 2022 9.30am Annual Public meeting followed by Board Ordinary Meeting

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9	KYLE CHRONICLE POACHING/ RIVERWOODS	<i>AW to draft article for Kyle Chronicle.</i>	AW	June 2021	Immediately
10	BCF CBEC DESIGN	<i>SR to provide RS with view before approval.</i>	SR	June 2021	ASAP
11	CARRON RADIO TRACKING	<i>Provide feedback on 2021 tagging.</i>	KW	June 2021	ASAP
12	RESOURCE STRATEGY	<i>JH to add this to next JMG agenda.</i>	JH/KW	June 2021	ASAP
13	GLENCALVIE FALLS	<i>KW to ensure monitoring is conducted.</i>	KW	June 2021	ASAP
14	MEETING INVITES	<i>JH to send out calendar invites for March 2022.</i>	JH	June 2021	Immediately