

Kyle of Sutherland District Salmon Fishery Board



MEETING TITLE: Board Ordinary Meeting
Meeting Date: Friday 26th March 2021
Meeting Time: 10.40am
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) John Green (JG) Rob Whitson (RW) Keith Williams, (KW) Clerk Nicky Griffiths (NG) Alex Hunter (AH) John McCrorie (JM) William Paterson (WP)	Steven Mackenzie (SM) KSFT Sean Robertson (SR) KSDSFB Naveed Bhatti (NB) SSE Michael Baird (MBrd) Public
Apologies	
Gary Gruber	

1. **Welcome** – AW welcome everyone to the meeting and accepted apologies.
2. **Minutes of Ordinary Meeting held Thursday 24th September 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.</p> <p><i>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 gauge</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.</p> <p><i>Open air meeting next week.</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>	RS	October 2018	Ongoing
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</p>	SR	October 2018	Ongoing

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		platform. <i>Website will be updated shortly. SR action</i>			
5	VICARIOUS LIABILITY	Re-visited with David McKie and requested possible dates and or bolt on when in area. Introduce option to attend to neighbouring boards. DMK suggested bolt onto Skibo in April, now postponed. Action JH Organise with DMcK through VC once technology installed. <i>AW: has emailed DMcK to organise a remote seminar for November 2020.</i>	JH/AW	April 2019	Completed
6	FIAG TRAP	Trap can be a danger to staff. <i>Action RS - Take up with FMS. Action KW – Revisit H&S our policy with SSE. New trap in place, SSE will reimburse Board.</i>	RS KW	September 2019	ASAP
7	NEW TRAP	<i>Action KW notify SSE to provide a new trap for next season. Discussed informally with SSE. State of Fiag trap to be included in 2020 smolt trapping report. SR writing up summary and will include damage. SSE need to provide new trap.</i>	KW	September 2019	Completed
8	BANK SIGNATORY	Approval for Rob Whitson as 3 rd bank signatory. Action JH process with bank. RW moved out of area, signature not approved. <i>Action JH Re-do forms and ask RW to complete and attend bank if necessary.</i>	JH	September 2019	Completed
9	INVERAN BRIDGE	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</i>	KW	April 2020	ASAP

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		<i>to do search once Covid restrictions lifted.</i>			
10	Underwater video surveying in the Kyle for Fresh water Pearl Mussels.	Speak to Richard Davis, Pete Cosgrove etc. to look at feasibility. Approach SNH to partner the cost. Discuss at next Trust meeting. <i>KW spoke to SNH etc. on this topic. Unlikely to add much useful information as there are already records for the Kyle.</i>	KW/MB	June 2020	Completed
11	Alternative to Dropbox	SR/JH investigate, test & recommend new document sharing platform. Microsoft share point	SR/JH	Sept 2020	Completed
12	COVID 19 H&S document	Share document with the board. <i>Action point superseded by constantly changing Covid regulations.</i>	KW	Sept 2020	Completed
13	Connect PB with BJ	Connect Polly Burns of FMS with Ben Johnson of Cooke Aquaculture.	KW	Sept 2020	Completed
14	Predator Groups	KW to re-engage with predator groups and push for more licences to control piscivorous birds. <i>KW still speaking to relevant parties re general issues of predation.</i>	KW	Sept 2020	ASAP
15	Temperature Loggers	Provide cost & process proposal for the Trust. <i>Basic network can be established within existing Trust budgets.</i>	KW/SR	Sept 2020	Completed
16	Conservation Policy	Review policy and ensure fit for purpose. Liaise with Carron sub-group. KW Carron draft no fundamental in compatibility. Only real changes were the temperature issue. Pleased in adherence to boards policy. In a good place.	NG/KW	Sept 2020	Completed

Matters arising

Point 6 & 7 Fiag & Tirry traps, update.

KW - From a H&S point of view Wolf traps are safer than rotary screw traps.

KW - We are at the mercy of SEPA being able to function. We are effectively in limbo regarding trap provision but continue to work on ways we can influence the process.

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RDM - Meetings are perpetually cancelled by SSE and there is a lack of resolve from SEPA. It is unlikely that SSE will step up. It is incredibly frustrating when petty politics are involved. Regulator cannot function without its IT system.

NB – SSE understand and sympathise, however, we have to defend our position. SEPA are starting to get their systems running and SSE can contact some members of staff via email. The people NB is working with in SSE are keen to do the right things that are evidence based. NB keen to work in a positive way.

Point 9 MB – Inveran Bridge when owner established there may be grant money available.

3. Standard Items

- a) Declarations of interest in agenda items to be discussed – none declared.
- b) Health & Safety - no reportable incidents
- c) Complaints – no formal complaints
- d) Governance
 - i. Reserves Policy

An updated reserves policy was discussed. Reserves were to be based on 35 – 55% of annual operating expenditure. KW explained that any ringfenced monies such as Carron SSE funding is not included in the general reserve. Board agreed and new reserves policy was formally adopted.

4. Directors Report – Report was circulated prior to the meeting.

Items discussed by exception.

- a) Flexible furlough, all staff were put on flexible furlough during January and February.
- b) Appraisals have all been undertaken.
- c) AST project – more temporary staff required over the smolt run period, we will receive some recompense for that.
- d) Enforcement; even whilst on flexible furlough the bailiffs were out on a daily basis. We started to see one or two issues with rod and line this last weekend. The individuals packed up and left once they saw bailiffs.
- e) Carron is fishing pretty well in lower reaches.
- f) Oykel had a 20lb fish, but the bulk are in the typical 7 – 9 lbs range.
- g) Very little field work has taken place. However, preparations have been taking place. The Fiag and Tirry traps are now in place and plan to operate from the beginning of next week. Merkland is already operating but not catching anything. Oykel trap going in next week. The upper Cassley box trap is ready to go next week.
- h) There have been lots of consultations regarding forestry and wind farms. We are encouraging forestry applications to undertake riparian planting but with the right type of trees.
- i) Meall Buidhe windfarm - we have put in a formal objection. In this case HC forgot that we are a statutory body which must be consulted. We were alarmed at the potential construction in deep peat areas and highlighted the issue with pearl mussels and lack of surveys. Our objection may mean that the issues are sorted out and the scheme may still be adapted. AH - Whose land is the Meall Buidhe windfarm on? KW - James Hall. KW - The Board and Trust must keep our objections very closely to the protection of salmon, sea trout and aquatic environment and must not get involved with the aesthetics of wind farms etc.

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- j) New management plan for Carron. We will get that out to the Carron proprietors very soon. It was held up because of the work Sean was doing on tree planting that had major relevance. We will get a Carron-proprietors meeting together to discuss. There must be a tie in with the deer management groups etc. There is a real danger of tree planting missing the riparian zone. **Action KW (8)**
- k) Carron radio tracking we will get that up and running again. A meeting with Mossy Earth was held to discuss additional funding.
- l) We have been asked by the Development Trust to submit a letter of support in relation to proposed provision of official overnight camping berths at the car park near the bridge in Bonar Bridge. KW is in favour of the proposal due to the present unregulated nature of camping at the site and associated fishery enforcement issues. RDM - If they have to pay you risk moving the problem to another part of the catchment. RDM had a chat with David Watson of KSDT regarding the Falls of Shin car park and suggested that if they are going down this route that there must be some ongoing management. **Action KW (9)** to make these points in the letter of support.

5. COVID -19

- a) KSF have own internal policies, but in dealing with the AST project we must fit in with their protocols. We will be tested for covid twice a week. AST staff tested daily.
- b) FMS trying very much to provide up to date information regarding fishing. JH passes this on to proprietors.
- c) Recap on current regulations: We are still essentially restricted to movement within local authority area. Fishing is seen as a form of exercise; you can fish within local authority area and up to 5 miles outside. The Scottish Government has very clear information on their website.

6. Budget & Finance

a) 2020-2021 Budget

AW Overview -

- The main income is from assessments and we appreciate the financial impact that 2020 has had on proprietors. The board reduced the assessment to 0.69p in the £ for 20-21. It is worth pointing out that in 2008 it was £1.15. The amount of money received by the board has not really increased in the last 20 years. Still providing excellent value for money. A redundancy of the assistant science officer was made to cut costs in the absence of anticipated funding.

KW Key points –

- We achieved close to £12K in furlough payments from Government.
- Kept all costs down as much as possible.
- Line 64 - removed all contingencies. Incurred some costs such as Inveran bridge ownership search and the vicarious liability talk, neither of which were budgeted for.
- The vehicle purchase was removed.
- The pay increases were removed.
- All the assessment income has now come in.
- The Trust uses Board staff, and the payment for this was reduced due to all funded projects being cancelled.

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- Line 155 is a little unclear due to 2 tranches of SSE money being received in the previous year and none being received in 20-21.
- Line 159 cash position reduced to £155K that includes Carron ringfenced money £37k.

b) 2021-2022 Budget

Costs

- JMG discussed wages and recommended 1% increase. AH - What is the feeling of staff? KW replied that none of us would turn down more money, however, the mood is acceptance and strong recognition that these are extraordinary times. We indirectly depend on the hospitality sector and must be realistic. AW- Cognisant of pressure that proprietors are under. We cannot compromise on our statutory duty to protect the fishery.
- Kept cost to a minimum.
- No staff cost for extra science staff; however, this is dependent on NEPS etc and will change only if we get project funding.
- Stopped donating money to the trust.
- Included are resources for a seasonal bailiff June to Sept, circa £5K. Last year was a very busy bailiffing season.
- Line 64 and 65, budgeting for no contingencies again.
- Group Life Assurance. This was agreed by the Board in the original budget of 20-21 but was removed. Death in service cover for all staff (3 times salary). Critical illness cover and life assurance for KW. This would pay the board £50K to cover for serious sickness absence and in the event of death £100K to bring in outside services to maintain operations.
- Replacement vehicle is back in the budget to ensure vehicle rotation. We have good vehicles and keep the old Hilux on the road that does all the dirty work. Money in budget for one replacement and disposal. JMG discussed the potential use of electric vehicles and the technology for our needs is not there at the moment. Looking into that for the future.

Income

- Assessment set at 0.75p in the £ which is an uplift from 0.69p. Working hard to keep assessments reasonable.
- SSE funding - budgeted for an uplift of 1%.
- Aquaculture income only receiving from Cooke at the moment. This is not guaranteed as no formal agreement is in place. The Merkland trap was due to go in on the day of lockdown 2020. Intend to make sure there is full monitoring in 2021.
- Income from Trust to Board pegged at same level of £12K. This may well vary due to any new funded projects.
- 2021-2022 is roughly a breakeven budget.

AW asked if there was any questions or objections regarding the new budget. The 2021-2022 budget was approved by the Board.

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7. AOCB

a) JMC – I have recently become acting chairman of the Angling association (KoSAA). KoSAA seek an advance to the fishing season on the Kyle bringing this forward into May. We would like to point out that finances are not as good as they were, membership is down, and visitor permit income is also down. It is to encourage membership and an earlier opening would make this more attractive.

AW – Advised that the agreement is not with the Kyle Board but with the lower Oykel proprietors.

JG – Chairman of the lower Oykel answered that his knowledge of the situation was that for over 40 years the season has started on the 1st June. JG gave a brief indication of the economics of the lower Oykel: Annual cost for running this is circa £200K, with assessments being around £50K, and staffing costs being the majority of the remainder. To recover this and make it economically viable the fishing needs to be fully let from the 1st March to the end of the season. The charges made are varied. The season is broken into 2 halves, the spring March to May and summer/autumn fishing June to September. The catches on a 5-year average March to May per month respectively are 13, 44 and 52. Those 12 weeks are so important to our financial viability. There is also the scientific argument. There have been extensive studies on how many spring fish are caught and how many of those were re-caught, the latter is only circa 2%. Spring fish are much more aggressive and therefore not difficult to catch but the difficulty is in finding them. If we were to open the Kyle earlier most of the spring fish would hang about the bottom of the Kyle initially making easy fishing and only 2% of those caught could be caught again up the rivers. The catch rates on the rivers would drop and the whole economic model would be seriously impacted. The total jobs impacted would be about 20 people who are all dependent on this whole financial structure. The proprietors cannot afford for that number to drop any further. The whole structure would just collapse. If the salmon figures came back up to the level of the 70's and 80's then it could be a consideration, but not with the current low spring population.

SMK – The study done on the Oykel recently shows that once fish that have been caught, less than 2% will be caught again and that is the same as 20 years ago.

AW – From experience the economics are difficult.

JMC stated that he understood what had been said but did not necessarily agree with it.

b) MBrd – The board allowed the bailiffs to do an excellent job of tidying up opposite the post office in Bonar Bridge. Do we see giving approval for a bit more to be done? KW – the work was done at our quietest time. It would be very difficult to commit time to this now. KW will speak to the bailiffs and perhaps they could help later in the year. KW Advised that the Community Council intimated that funding may be available. KW will go back to them to encourage more progress towards a long-term solution. We are happy to help, but the community needs a long-term solution. **Action KW (10)**

c) SMK asked to be brought into the loop on any discussions regarding temperature loggers. **Action KW (11)**

Meeting closed: 12.11

Nest meeting: Friday 18th June 2021

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Open & New actions C/Fwd.

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8	Carron Proprietors Meeting	Carron management plan. KW to set up meeting with Carron Proprietors.	KW	March 2021	ASAP
9	Regulated camping at Bonar Bridge	Letter of support to KSDT to include ongoing management of any official camping sites.	KW	March 2021	Immediately

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10	Tidy up in front of Post Office in Bonar Bridge	<i>KW to speak to Community Council for long-term solution as bailiffing staff now too busy to volunteer.</i>	KW	March 2021	ASAP
11	Temperature Loggers	<i>KW to ensure SMK is kept in loop on any discussions.</i>	KW	March 2021	Immediately