**RIVER BLADNOCH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF PROPRIETORS AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**held at**

**The Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart on Tuesday 12th December 2017 at 6.30pm**

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**Board Members Present:**

Colin Richardson

Dick Scott

Jonathan Haley

Malcolm Adkin

**Also in attendance:**

Peter Murray, Clerk

Jamie Ribbens, Galloway Fisheries Trust

Jessica Rodgers, Galloway Fisheries Trust

Michael McNeill

Charlie McNeill

Mark Godfrey

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Andrew Gladstone, John Haley and Sir Michael Wigan, who intimated that he would like the Clerk to chair the meeting.

**2. Minutes**

Minutes of the last meeting held on 21st November 2016, along with the Chairman’s Report and Accounts, were circulated and time was taken for those present to consider these.

Thereafter the draft Minutes were amended and approved, and the Accounts approved. Arising from the Accounts it was noted that the Board still required to make a £500 donation to Galloway Fisheries Trust in respect of the liming study, and the Clerk was asked to implement this.

**3. Galloway Fisheries Trust Report**

Jamie Ribbens introduced his Assistant, Jessica Rodgers, who was covering for Rowan while Rowan was on maternity leave. Jessica had plenty of prior experience.

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Jamie reported on the on-going liming feasibility study which Jessica is working on. The study will provided information on water quality, with twenty one spot sampling sites across the upper catchment which are being sampled monthly, if high flows take place between now and April. The GFT water quality sonde is also in the river and will collect data during spring 2018.

It was important that all the pH results were as up to date as possible due to SEPA’s recent upgrading of the river pH classification, which has a potential knock on effect regarding tree planting.

The Kilhockadale Peat Restoration Project was currently on hold and the Trust were raising arguments over the standard to be applied for PH and gathering information to back up their arguments.

The Trust will be mapping the catchment showing all the peat areas. This is to draw all this together to give an accurate view of the catchment peatland resource which can influence water quality strongly.

The study was supported principally by wind farm money obtained through the Kirkcowan Angling Club.

With regard to the river being categorised Category 3, this appeared to be partly due to the light angling effort which contributed to low catch which if possible needs to be recorded.

The Trust would like to tag salmon to look at exportation rates, take the details of fish per month as authorities assume the fish come in in the month that they are caught.

With regard to the Bladnoch Distillery CAR Licence, it was noted that the smolt screen was not yet in place, and this was a big concern and would need to be in place before the smolt run. John Gorman at SEPA knows about the position, and has confirmed that both a permanent screen and / or a temporary screen must be in place and signed off before the smolt run. It was noted that the Board wished to carry out an inspection, and perhaps attend the proposed meeting at the Distillery on site in mid January.

It was noted that the Fish Farm caught over four thousand smolts in the Spring, the biggest in recent years, but then it had been a dry Spring so a greater proportion would be captured in the net.

Brood Stock Capture

Jamie explained that the Licence came in too late. The Trust were only going to take broodstock from the Tarf Water but when the Licence finally came through, the Trust went straight out but only caught kelts and noted that spawning had started and accordingly stopped netting. It is requested that the BDSFB needs to apply as early as September for the broodstock collection license.

Wind Farm monitoring continues.

With regard to forestry, in many ways things appear to be going backwards, and the Trust were trying to find advice as to where to target information and fisheries data to stop new planting in sensitive areas.High water all summer has resulted inthe highest ever growth rate recorded by GFT of salmon fry. A wet spell for the smolt run was needed in the Spring to get the smolts safely out of the river..

**Matters arising from all the foregoing**

1. Acidified status is now calculated as a annual mean so high summer pH’s paints a rosier picture than the low spring pHs found.

2. Peatland Project

It was noted and is disappointing that this was put on hold. The Board should consider a letter to the District Manager. It was noted that despite previous SEPA concerns about tree planting levels that the SNP were pushing for more forestry, and the Water Framework Directive has not helpe, infact it seems to have watered down some of the previous controls.

The Board should also consider writing to Alan Wells of Fish Management Scotland regarding how bad the river is.

3. Appeal on Categorisation

It was noted that no formal response had yet been received.

4. This year’s catch had indeed been very good and would come into account in the categorisation but not until 2019.

There being no further business, the meeting moved on to the Tri-Annual Election Meeting.

**PMM/RL RIVEB01-12**