

# URR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

## Minutes of Board Meeting held at the Market Inn, Queen Street, Castle Douglas on 28<sup>th</sup> November 2018

**Present:** R Bellamy (Chairman)  
D Biggar  
K Irving  
W Levi-Marshall  
K Gibson  
  
W G N Gourlay (Clerk)

**In Attendance:** J Ribbens (Galloway Fisheries Trust)

**Observers** R Smith

1. APOLOGIES: G Kerr and A Ferguson

2. ABSENT: A Graham

3. MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING OF 12<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2018

The Minutes were approved as correct and signed by the Chairman.

4. MATTERS ARISING

The only matter not appearing elsewhere on the agenda related to Dalbeattie Reservoir. Dalbeattie Angling Association has been advised that work to restore the outfall would start in November 2018 and be completed in March 2019. Contractors have said that they will not do anything unless the dam is empty. In the light of that, we surmise that nothing will occur before late spring / summer 2019. Refilling would be a staged process. Sampling has found no crayfish, but surprisingly many eels have been found. Dalbeattie Angling Association has received Heads of Terms for a new lease.

5. DRAFT MINUTES OF 12<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2018 AGM

The Minutes were circulated without comment being required.

## 6. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk reported verbally, the year end being 30<sup>th</sup> November. There had been no rating appeals on the Urr. Only one 2018 levy was unpaid, but the Clerk was assured it would be paid shortly. The balance at the bank stood at £11,959.52, an increase of £3,087.13 from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017. However, the Chairman's expenses, the Clerk's fees and expenses, and the donation to Galloway Fisheries Trust, totalling about £3,400, were still due to be paid out.

The Clerk was asked the amount of the FMS levy paid - £438.00, which he considered extraordinarily good value for the service provided.

## 7. FISHERIES MANAGEMENT SCOTLAND

The Clerk reported on the election to the FMS Board on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2018 when Richard Sankey (Kyle of Sutherland), Lorraine Hawkins (Dee) and Peter Landale (Nith) were elected.

## 8. CONSERVATION GRADES 2019

The Chairman and Mr Ribbens reported that the Urr remains in Category 2. Marine Scotland has tweaked its formula (model). Sustainable levels of salmon populations are based on assessment of egg deposition but that in turn remains based on catches. The percentage chance of meeting the egg requirement (1.77 eggs per m<sup>2</sup> over 486,100m<sup>2</sup>) for the Urr averaged 63.16% over the 5 years. For the 2020 categorisation, the 64.53% in 2013 will fall out of the reckoning so accurate and full catch returns for 2018 are doubly important (60% being the dividing line between Cat.2 and Cat.3).

Depending on the quality of returns, a round robin encouraging accurate records might be in order. To be reviewed in February 2019.

## 9. PARTNERSHIP DELIVERY OF PRIORITISED SALMON HABITAT RESTORATION IN THE GALLOWAY RIVER CATCHMENTS

Mr Ribbens reported that GFT with the support of the DSFBs had obtained EMF funding for a 2 year project with employment of a project officer who is currently being recruited. The project should lead to engagement with the Forestry Commission, SEPA and with local government to include habitat enhancement at the macro land use policy development stage rather than at the micro development stage when it is probably too late to effect meaningful change.

## 10. MATTERS FOR REPORT

### a) KILQUHANITY FISHINGS

After discussion at the Board meeting in February 2018, R. Bellamy and W. Marshall had been actioned to make contact with Gavin Aitkenhead (Kilquhanity House), to try to clarify which of Kilquhanity House and/or Kilquhanity Farm had the responsibility to make the statutory return of catches to Marine Scotland and the UDSFB (because of the concern that fish were being caught but were not being reported – all part of the “Conservation category” jigsaw).

A meeting with Gavin was held in August:- he confirmed that, as the Clerk had previously advised, the Kilquhanity fishings do belong to Kilquhanity House (Professor Hori) and not to the MacTaggart (Kilquhanity Farm). It would appear that Professor Hori allows fairly free access to his fishings, with anglers often told that they may also fish upstream through General Brown’s water and into Knockvennie (Tony Graham). Whilst all these beats submit returns, they are most usually nil. Mr Hillsley, the Kilquhanity Farm manager may be a more useful source of catch information on this beat. Gavin had undertaken to speak to both Mr. Hillsley and to Tony Graham, to stress that it was in every proprietor’s interests to make sure that catches were reported, owing to the importance of catches in the grading formula.

### b) GNI (UK) LTD

Currently, matters on the pipeline front are relatively quiet. Ground reinstatement in the Urr catchment is largely complete, with a significant snagging list to be dealt with as time/weather/seasons permit. Despite delays caused by Roadbridge’s internal machinations, GFT were finally able to carry out electro fishing surveys, which they were permitted to make available to the Board. The results of subcontracted analysis of the invertebrate surveys are awaited.

Siltation has had varying impacts on the spawning gravel in both the main river, downstream of the Buittle Burn outfall and particularly in the (lower) Buittle Burn itself.

Roadbridge is looking for advice in the spring on further mitigation work – the extent of required measures will be dependent on to what extent the winter 2018-19 floods have cleared accumulated silt..

Erosion is occurring at the main river and Buittle Burn crossings, where the re-formed banks are too steep, and the material too loose, to be signed off as permanent. The erosion has left exposed considerable amounts of plastic and other synthetic materials. Attempts to reseed the face of the re-formed banks were too late to be in any way effective.

Both GFT and the Board ought to be able to look to SEPA firmly to ensure that Roadbridge complies with the well-established environmental standards....

c) REVALUATION 2017

The Clerk reported that there had been no appeals lodged against the new assessments.

II. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

- a) The Clerk handed out updated copies of the Rules of the River and Board Recommendations.
- b) The Chairman noted the Scottish Government Fishing Report and the Report from the Fish Farming Industry are in contradiction. The meeting thought that little would come out of it.
- c) Mr Gibson reported that he had only caught three fish. Scales had been passed to GFT. He had been issued with 50 tags by Marine Scotland. The Chairman said that he would take possession of the leftovers and reissue them in future. He had proposed this course of action to Keith Main of Marine Scotland's Salmon and Recreational Fisheries section, and was awaiting his response.
- d) Mr Ribbens reported on the gudgeon found at Spottes. If found in the river, they must be killed. They school and compete.
- e) Mr Ribbens referred to historic reports of sparling in the Urr – relevant to the GFT sparling project in the west. Sparling can be confused with grayling. They are likely to occur on spring high tides not far from the tidal limit. If found, GFT wish to know – this topic may be aired at the Board's AGM in March 2019.
- f) Mr Ribbens produced and circulated the electro fishing results for fry and parr. Fry were encouraging. Parr reflected the poor water conditions during the dry summer.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Board: Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 2019

AGM: Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Both in the Market Inn, Castle Douglas at 7.00pm.

Mr Biggar tendered his apologies for 5<sup>th</sup> February.

There being no other business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 9.04pm.