**RIVER BLADNOCH DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES**

**of Meeting of the Board**

**held at**

**The Bruce Hotel, Newton Stewart**

**At 5.00pm on Tuesday 4th February, 2020**

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1. **Board Members Present**

Colin Richardson, Chairman

Charlie McNeill

Jonathan Haley

Dick Scott

Mark Davies

Mark Godfrey

Andrew Gladstone

 **Also in Attendance**

 Francois Chazel (Scottish National Heritage)

David Pagan (Angler)

Peter Murray (Clerk)

2. **Apologies**

 The Clerk intimated apologies from:-

Sir Michael Wigan, John Haley and Jamie Ribbons for the GFT.

3. **Minutes**

 Minutes of the meeting of 3rd September, 2019 having been circulated were approved subject to a couple of amendments written in by the Chairman before signature.

4. **Matters Arising therefrom**

1. Matter 3.3. In the Minutes the Tannylaggie Peat Restoration Project. Francois advised that he had no immediate information on this and he would make enquiries. He advised that was part of his brief within SNH and was asked to explain to the Board what that meant in practical terms. He replied that if the Board were considering any projects then he was their contact within SNH to run the project past the SNH in the first place to see (a) whether they had any objections and (b) whether they could assist in preparing SEPA and Forestry consultations.

Accordingly their brief was reactive rather than a proactive one. This was because the lead usually came from the landowners or the Board.

It was noted that SNH were meant to assess the SAC every five years and last time their report said the river was improving. It is due to be assessed again soon and the Board noted that the river was definitely not improving as it had gone down to a Category Grade 3. Francois advised that SNH have a website on the SAC and he will come back to the Board with the appropriate link to that.

He advised that although SNH was principally reactive, in some areas it was proactive such as monitoring the river and reporting on six yearly basis. Electro fishing was part of that monitoring but so too was the management by or behalf of the Board.

 Board Rules

It was agreed that no further changes require to be made after the one made in September which removed pike from the rules altogether.

The Clerk confirmed that he had requested information on catch Returns from Marine Scotland but had not yet received a response. The Chairman estimated that the catch return should be in the region of 130 which was a large increase on the previous year. This year past will now replace 2014 in the river quality classification calculations and should make a big difference as 2014 was the river’s worst year.

Angling Efforts

It was noted that it remained compulsory for angling effort to be recorded on the proprietor’s catch return to Marine Scotland.

Galloway Fishery Trust Report

See copy attached.

Matters Arising

1. Brood Stock.

A vote of thanks was given to Mark Davies for looking after this.

 Bladnoch Part of West Coast Tracking Smolt Project

Some discussion took place regarding this but it was noted that the tracking of smolts in the river due to be carried out next year would be more useful to the Board.

Fish Counter Site

It was noted that Marine Scotland staff had visited the distillery to look at the weir as a possible site for a fish counter. This was simply one of many and people should not get their hopes up. However it was agreed that the Chairman should have a word with Jack Robinson on the opposite bank to let him know that it was at least being looked at. It was noted that Jack’s son Andrew was now really the person to deal with and the Clerk was asked to check to see whether there would be a place available for him on the Board although he could always be invited simply as an attendee.

GFT had not received any dead pike for some months. Jonathan advised he had three in the freezer and would get them along to the Trust.

Jessica Rodgers left before Christmas however noted she had completed her Habitat Catchment Report in draft for all rivers together with a document from her describing the methodology behind the process. Copies will be emailed to Board Members, the Clerk and Francois. Mark Davies explained that this was desktop survey based on data and the next step would be going out on site. He advised that Phil Dowling had now been taken on by the Trust and will continue her project. He explained he was highly experienced but not in Fisheries. He urged the Board to give him every assistance possible.

Online mapping was noted and the sub-committee would be available to meet with Jamie Ribbens next week.

The Board thanked Jamie for his report.

River Classification 2020

Everyone knew the river was Category 3 for this season.

River Restoration

The Board accepted the Trust’s feasibility study for the Angling Club. SNH had given support to this and support should still be available but it would depend on the projects.

Peatland restoration was still going ahead and it was noted that Conifers had already been removed by Forestry around the Polbae Burn.

Response to the AGM and Work above the Meetings

It was noted that electro fishing showed that there were juvenile salmon above the meetings but no real sign of any adults. It was noted that these upper waters were where the spring fish originally came from.

The Board required to check whether improving the habitat would in fact make any difference to Salmon going up the river and felt that they have to put in limestone gravel and they certainly don’t want new forestry and would expect re-planting to be kept at least to minimum requirements. The Board asked if SNH would fight the Board’s corner on this. Francois advised that this really went beyond his remit and it was better for Roddy but noted there would be concern that it might set a president for elsewhere. He wasn’t sure what the strategy would be but he would speak to the appropriate person in SNH. It was noted that all political pressures were against the removal of trees but as Jonathan pointed out the problem was a man-made problem and required a man-made solution. He advised that the experiment with limestone gravel in the Cree had been very successful.

Mark Davies added that with climate supposed to be getting hotter and dryer then concern should be held regarding water flow as trees were exceedingly thirsty and accordingly more trees means less water in the river. With regard to stocking the Upper Bladnoch the Board should have a discussion with Marine Scotland.

Thereafter the Chairman advised that the Angling Club had made a wooden walkway on the Tarff at the Kenmure pool. Francois was asked if the BCF funding pool was over or under subscribed and he advised it was probably oversubscribed.

Finally the Board confirmed dates for the next meetings as 5th May, 8th September and 24th November.

At that the meeting was brought to a halt with a vote of thanks to the Chairman at 6.30pm.

**DRAFT:- PMM/SC/LM/HO RIVEB01-15**