

MINUTES of the **ANNUAL MEETING** of **QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS** of **SALMON FISHERIES** in the **NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD** held on **TUESDAY 24th OCTOBER 2017** at **10.00am** at **KINGSMILLS HOTEL, Culcabock Road, Inverness, IV2 3HF**

Present: Mr D Davies (Vice Convenor)
Mr C Marsham
Mr T McDonnell
Mr A Adamson
Mr J Allingham
Mr A Balfour
Mr C Macleod

In attendance: Mr C Cook (Clerk, Bell Ingram)
Dr Shona Marshall (WSFT)
Mr S Dryden (Scottish Government)
Dr A Wells (FMS)

Apologies: Mr R Vestey (Convenor)
Mr R Bradford
Mr G Osborne
Mr R Osborne
Mrs G Rex
Mr D Lindsay
Ms S Harkins

The Vice Convenor welcomed Mr Wells of Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) and Mr Dryden from the Scottish Government to the meeting.

1. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 26th OCTOBER 2016

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors held on 26th October 2016 were considered by Proprietors and signed by the Vice Convenor as an accurate record.

2. MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk advised Proprietors that in line with legislation the meeting had been advertised on the website with 21 day's notice to allow public attendance.

The Clerk also advised that the Minutes of the meeting, the Annual Report and Accounts would be submitted to Scottish Ministers and loaded onto the website all in line with legislation.

There were no matters arising.

3. ANNUAL REPORT 2016/7

Proprietors considered the Annual Report. The Clerk, for the benefit of guests talked through the content and structure of the report

Mr Allingham asked that if acronyms are to be used that the full title of the organisation first be used with the acronym placed in brackets afterwards for reference. There were no further comments.

4. FINANCIAL ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28th MAY 2017

Proprietors considered the audited accounts. One point was outstanding, the Vice Convenor asked for clarity on the bank balance as presented on the accounts. The Clerk said he would have a response circulated to the Board pending approval.

5. A DISCUSSION WITH ALAN WELLS (FMS) & SIMON DRYDEN (SCOT GOV)

The item started with Dr Alan Wells explaining that Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) was formed last year to replace the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards (ASFB) and the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts of Scotland (RAFTS). The organisation has a board comprising elected nine members and three appointee members giving a good geographic reach and a broad range of skills. In addition to Alan who is the CEO, FMS has two additional staff in Brian Davidson, Director of Communications and Administration and Sean Dugan who also manages the Scottish Fisheries coordination Centre (SFCC). The number of members enables a committee system to operate to work on different projects for example aquaculture and fisheries enforcement. The SFCC has its own committee too.

Proprietors briefly touched on aquaculture in reference to a particular experience the Vice Convener had of fish cages being washed up on the shore. The conversation touched on the role of the various regulatory bodies in such circumstance, notably the Crown Estate who Dr Wells said he was also in touch to access funding to take forward issues relating to interactions between aquaculture and wild fish.

Dr Wells explained that FMS had responded to the Conservation Assessment 2018 consultation process as the NWDSFB had and would pick up on the subject with Mr Dryden later on in the item.

Dr Wells also mentioned that the FMS were to seek approval at the AGM on the 9th November 2017 to convert to a company limited by guarantee. One of the major reasons for the change was that, at present, the individual Board members had considerable personal liabilities which would be reduced by the approach.

Mr Dryden started by explaining that Fishery Management Plans (FMP) were a feature of the Wild Fishery Review that would be progressed and anticipated another idea, the Conservation Plan, would be wrapped up into it. He said FMP's were under development and that the first draft would be unveiled this coming Thursday. There would be a trial period, hopefully starting in the first quarter of next year when some volunteer boards (3?) would establish if they were easy to use, not resource intensive and that the results of the plan were worth having. Mr Dryden said he thought the earliest that legislation would be in force covering FMP's would be April 2019.

Mr Dryden and the Proprietors then had a full conversation about the proposed Conservation Assessment for 2018. Proprietors expressed their strongly held views on the ineffectiveness of the model used by the Scottish Government to assess the conservation status of the rivers. They believe that the model applies fundamentally bad science and fails to reflect the real condition of the rivers in the district. They also felt that the model was really concentrating all the effort on the wrong part of the salmon cycle and that really the problems were not in the river but at sea. The reputational damage to the Scottish Government and also the proprietors and fisheries in the district from applying the outcomes from the model in the current manner was considered to be real and stemmed from a lack of cross checking with the reality on the ground. Mr Dryden explained that the model was being upgraded all the time but accepted that the resulting swings in fortune some rivers in the District experienced was a good reason for considering the idea of smoothing out the transition between grades, possibly by ensuring that any change would not be by more than 1 grade at a time.

The Gd3 status of the Polla was discussed and Mr Dryden agreed to accept the catch results from the proprietor and re-run the model if they could be resubmitted. The illogicality of a Gd1 status for the Kirkaig against the Gd 3 status proposed for the Inver (Gd 1 in 2017) was aired as was the slide to Gd3 for the Dionard against a Gd 1 status in 2017. The number of fish seen in 2017 in the two currently Gd1 rivers simply does not match with the proposed Gd 3 status. Proprietors shared their experience that the number of fish seen did not translate into a good catch record because the fish simply wouldn't take, a feature shared by many rivers in the north in 2016 and 2017.

Mr Dryden also agreed to accept a summary of what the NWDSFB/WSFT believed the conservation assessment rankings should be for the rivers in 2018.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Vice-Convener led a short discussion on Pacific Salmon. One had been caught on the Inver and another reported on the Laxford. He enquired if they were a possible source of *gyrodactylus salaris* but Dr Marshall said not, the sea crossing from the Baltic would kill any lingering on the fish.

There being no other business the Convenor thanked the Proprietors very much for coming and closed the meeting at noon.