

River Lossie District Salmon Fishery Board

Meeting Minutes

21st June 2022

Present: Crinan Dunbar (CD) (chair), Bob Laughton (BL), Bill Fraser (BF), Fred Rhind (FR), Poppy Holdsworth (PH)

Apologies: Valarie Wardlaw (VW), Mark Laing (ML), Tomas Christie (TC).
John Fielding (JF)

Next meeting: 29th November 2022, Pitgaveny Farm Office, Pitgaveny, Elgin, IV30 5PQ

1. Approval of minutes of AGM held on 1st March 2022

Meeting agreed.

2. Matters Arising not otherwise on the agenda

New Administrator – Gail Gunter will start on 18th July. She is a bookkeeper and former teacher. VW is continuing doing 1 day a week until end of June. There will be a lunch at the Trust and RL will circulate bank details for the collection. VW wants no ceremony or fuss.

Fish counter – FR said under point five. of the 2022 proposals that 'RL had asked Marine Scotland if a fish counter could be provided for the Lossie'. RL said there had been no substantive reply.

Cloddach Bridge – RL said the bridge was condemned as a road bridge. Unclear what will happen next – RL to ask Daniel Preston at Moray Council. The concreted section (under the bridge) and the undercut this is not as bad as in previous years though still a concern as an obstacle in low water, particularly as spawning in September or October. RL to apply for a licence to move fish up the river if necessary.

With regard to works to remove the obstacle, Moray Council cannot block a salmon migration path, so if the situation became bad, they would have to act. CD thought either the Angling Association or the Board could apply for money to do the works through the Money for Moray scheme, which allowed community groups to bid for money for projects.

RL to monitor for low water, and thought given Summers were becoming drier if funds could be sought from Climate Change funding sources.

Elgin Angling Association – BL was not sure that the EAA could continue to pay because they were worried about its long term future. Membership was now below one hundred but should go above again with new members – however, these new members are not continuing. There are few visitors permits. The problem is the lack of fish. RL said most clubs were experiencing declines, apart from Forres. COVID had provided a boost after the first

lockdown, but again this had not continued. PH suggested permit costs might be reduced. Current costs are £40 or £65 – equivalent to 2 days at a fishery like Kellas. FR thought it might be an idea to get the associations from lesser rivers together to lobby for the ability to take fish. He was also not convinced that the Scottish Government were evenly applying the standards. RL agreed to raise via Alan Wells at Fisheries Management Scotland. RL also said that catch & release on the Dee, Spey, and Tweed (which were regarded as very organised) was 80 – 90%. He thought the Scottish Govt. was unlikely to deviate from existing policy.

RL thought it was better to look at what could be done to improve the river.

FR wants to challenge the Lossie's grade 3 classification. This would need more returns – currently BF said this was running at 65%: if returns were not provided, the discount was not applied to the permit. RL thought this was an excellent rate. He also thought there was a need to increase salmon catches.

There was general discussion about previous approaches to the Minister which were not successful.

BF said there was a general issue about recording what was not caught – could be high as 15% for spring fish, 8-10% for the rest of the year. RL thought this was something that might get caught if the Scottish Govt. required rod licencing.

JF thought that the situation might need an approach to NatureScot to make like deer control and requiring a service level agreement. RL said that some Fishing Trust directors wanted such an approach.

It was thought windfarm money could be looked at as a source of funding, but for specific projects at Dallas which was closest to one.

RL said he would talk to the angling associations to see if there could be a joint approach to bolstering memberships. FR said it needed a guarantee of good water, particularly if attracting younger members. BF agreed that a discussion with other associations about how they were retaining members would help.

3. Financial

Brokentore overdue assessments

VW had charged interest as was the usual way of dealing with the problem but had not had a substantive response. RL visited and spoke to Sandy Christie. It was agreed that CD and Gail Gunter would visit Tomas. It was noted that Brokentore had been supporting hogweed control.

4. Director's report including catchment developments

Bailiffing

There had been a quiet period – weather had been cold and dry

River improvements

The East Beach bridge had been completed and the old bridge had been demolished leaving

its supports.

Miltonduff Distillery expansion

RL said this was at an early stage, but two pipes would be required one at West Manbean, the other at Brucelands or Mayne. It was thought Brucelands was a better location.

Fungal infection – Findhorn

There had been an outbreak of Saprolognia and fungal infection leading to losses of spring fish. Anglers had reported that salmon were lethargic in fresh water. Possibly related to long dry spells in the Spring.

Non-native species

Hogweed - Brokentore – done, Bogside to be done, West Manbean – slow going. Application of weedkiller for spraying paths was discussed – a licence is needed both for the application and spraying close to water. The Elgin Angling Association thought this was a potential project. Training might be available through SISI. RL said SISI was funded to March 2023 and was likely to be extended in some form. Additional funds were being considered by an application to Landfill tax.

5. AOCB

A96 corridor consultation

RL would respond.

6. Date of next meeting

29th November 2022 – preference of meeting was for it to be in person at Pitgaveny.