

Argyll District Salmon Fishery Board
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting on 22nd April 2015 at 1pm
Loch Fyne Hotel, Inveraray

Present

Roger Brook (Chair) (Awe) **RB**
David Stewart (Creran) **DS**
Andrew Barker (Ruel) **AB**
Hugh Whittle (Nell)
David Jardine (Forestry Commission) **DJ**
Bill Duff (DDAC)
Bill Rankin (DDAC) **BR**
Jimmy Middleton (Tenant netsmen's rep)
Jennifer Lang **JL**
Stuart Crome
Gren Lang
Campbell Thompson (Member of Public) **CT**
Craig MacIntyre (Clerk/AFT) **CM**
Helen MacIntyre (Administrator)

Rosie Campbell-Preston (Awe)
Duncan Rogers
Bebe Corbett
Stephen Austin (SNH)
Jamie McGrigor
Willie Shaw
Tom Turnbull
Ian Amory
Ian Tegner
Calum Macfarlane-Barrow
Richard McKenzie (LAIA)
David Sumsion
Andrew Montgomery
Michael Handley
Nicholas Ferguson
Steven Beale
Brian Scott
Iain McArthur
Tuggy Delap (Fyne)

Apologies

Stephen Gibbs (Arran)
Caroline Fleming (Arran)
Beth Nicholson (Nell)

- 1) **Introduction from Chair and apologies**– Roger Brook welcomed everyone to the meeting. See above for apologies.
- 2) **Minutes of Meeting October 2014** – A motion that the minutes be accepted as an accurate record was proposed by AB, seconded by DS, and agreed by all.
- 3) **Declaration of Members' Interests** – None were declared.
- 4) **Matters arising** – None

5) **Election of Board Members and Convenor**

The following people put themselves forward for election to the Board:

Roger Brook (Awe)
Mrs Rosie Campbell-Preston (Awe)
Stephen Gibbs (Arran)
Mrs Caroline Fleming (Arran)
David Stewart (Creran)
Mrs Tuggy Delap (Fyne)
Mrs Beth Nicholson (Nell)
Hugh Whittle (Nell)
Andrew Barker (Ruel)

Election of the above people was proposed by RB, seconded by DM, and agreed with no objections.

The following people put themselves forward as representatives to the Board:

Richard McKenzie (Salmon Angling Rep, Loch Awe Improvement Association)
William Duff (Salmon Angling Rep, Dunoon & District Angling Club)
James Middleton (Tenant Netsmen's Rep, Loch Fyne)

RB proposed that they be elected, AB seconded, and they were accepted with no objections.

Roger Brook put himself forward as Convenor. AB proposed, DS seconded, and elected with no objections. RB thanked those new Board members and said the plan was to run this smaller Board mainly by email communications.

6) **Finance & Clerk's Annual Report**

CM presented the 2014 accounts, which showed a net surplus of £3,000 and assets of £25,000. DS proposed that the accounts be approved, DM seconded, and they were approved with no objections.

RB proposed that the levy remain at £1 in the £ for all proprietors except for those in the Awe or Ruel districts who are charged at £2.30 in the £ (with 75% returned to the district to pay for bailiffing). All agreed.

JL asked what ADSFB spends the levy income on. CM described all the activities which includes: contracting work for the improvement and protection of salmon and sea trout in Argyll; appointing and managing bailiffs; responding to consultations for aquaculture, wind farms, hydro schemes and other works that may affect wild salmonid populations in Argyll; and administration of the Board. Further information on these activities can be found on our website: <http://argyll.dsfb.org.uk/your-levy/>

CM presented the annual report. Catch returns show that salmon catches in 2014 were down on the five year average. However, the number of fish over the Awe counter was up by 60%, showing that catch numbers were not representative of fish presence. Sea trout catches were still below the five year average, however anecdotal evidence across Argyll suggests sea trout numbers are increasing, which is promising. Catch and release figures from the Add were very poor at only 53% of fish returned, and Kintyre was poor too. This is not sustainable. We are looking for 80-90%. Habitat improvement work included some tree planting on the Goil, which we are looking to do on other areas. There are just two hatcheries in operation this year – on the Creran and the Etive.

CT suggested that fewer people are fishing because of catch and release restrictions being brought in. RB disagreed, saying that in Argyll it is the other way around, with fewer fish leading to fewer anglers. JL asked why hatcheries aren't supported by the Board anymore. RB explained that the science has shown that hatchery reared fish mostly don't survive, and those that do will weaken the genetic mix of the wild populations. JL asked if catch and release is working to increase fish numbers. RB thinks that it is but that the situation is worse out at sea so fewer salmon are returning.

7) **Small Rivers Committee update**

DS reported that the committee had considered the paper produced by CM on the possible solutions to the small rivers conundrum, but there was clearly no one single answer so they have deferred the decision until after the Wild Fisheries Reforms have been introduced. RB said the problem in Argyll is that we have 100 rivers classified as having salmon and 42 are 'fisheries'. Is a small river through a farmer's land a fishery? CM thanked the committee.

8) **Consultation on licence to kill salmon**

RB described that it is currently illegal to kill salmon before April, which doesn't really affect Argyll as our salmon don't arrive that early. There is now a consultation on the proposal that from next season a licence will be needed to kill any salmon at any time of year. ADSFB, ASFB and RAFTS will all be making responses. ADSFB think it is a good idea, but that it will be very difficult in practice. How will it be policed? How will a sustainable population be proved? How would it work for rivers shared by several proprietors?

RB pointed out that we need to be able to kill escaped farmed fish, and have some training on identification. HW asked if you would put bleeding fish back. RB confirmed that you would, and dead fish. AB said that if it is being done to stop net fishing then he supports it. RB said the Government have said they can't tackle net fishing

without concessions from rod anglers. Nets are indiscriminate and can be catching fish from several rivers, for example the net in Loch Feochan was showed to contain salmon from three rivers with very low salmon numbers; and nets at Thurso catch fish from West Coast rivers. DS pointed out that the netting station at Cuil Bay could well be catching fish from Argyll rivers as it is not far from Argyll. CM will investigate.

Update: Lochaber DSFB report that salmon catches from this netting station are around 75-150 per annum, and that is it very possible that Argyll fish are being caught in these nets. No genetic testing work is done on the fish.

RB said he would support the use of tags along with a licence system. It is not clear how the licence system would work. Would there be a direct licensing system with individual proprietors? How would it work with many proprietors on one river system? Regulations are proposed to prohibit the use of certain equipment e.g. barbed hooks. ADSFB only support banning those with proven increased mortality rate. We need to encourage education with regard to fishing methods. The main impacts of introducing this licence are likely to be significant costs, impacting mostly on uneconomic fisheries with poor catches and no bailiffs or ghillies. CT suggested that if you have a licence you are more likely to kill a fish. BR asked if you have to pay for tags for fish killed under licences. RB said we are not sure how it will work. DJ suggested that the cost of a licence is likely to include tags, and asked who would be the licensing body. RB said Marine Scotland Science.

9) **Wild Fisheries Review update**

The future management of wild fisheries in Scotland looks like it will consist of a central unit with 15-20 local Fishery Management Organisations (FMOs). The central unit could be independent or part of an organisation such as Marine Scotland or Scottish Natural Heritage. The FMOs will be an amalgamation of the current Fishery Trusts and District Salmon Fishery Boards. There are likely to be changes in Argyll since there are several areas that are not currently covered by Boards, such as Mull and Jura, and Arran is part of the Argyll Board but actually part of Ayrshire geographically.

It has not yet been decided whether the levy will be collected centrally or locally. AB thinks it should be collected locally since FMOs will have local contact with proprietors and can communicate what is going on. RB said that the alternative view is that if it is collected centrally then it could be redistributed according to need, so the West Coast may benefit from some of the money from other parts of Scotland.

With regards to enforcement, the Government are reviewing the powers that water bailiffs currently have, and they may want to take it under central control, but we are fighting for it to stay local. HW asked what would happen to the Board's statutory powers. CM thinks that FMOs would retain their statutory consultee status for aquaculture planning applications. Proprietors will be kept up-to-date with any news regarding the Wild Fisheries Review, and there is a dedicated ASFB website page (www.asfb.org.uk/wild-fisheries-reform/).

Regarding a rod licence, Andrew Thin (who carried out the WFR) was told not to include it in his report but he has seen the benefits of it and has put it in. The rod licence could be used for angling development. CT asked who would police it? RD pointed out that the permits would have your address on them so people are traceable. BR said there is a severe penalty of £2000 in England if you are caught fishing without a licence, which costs £72.

The Government wants all wild fish species to be managed but says there will be no extra money for this and it is to be covered by the salmon levy. They may assess other fisheries e.g. trout, and they may have to pay levies too. This would impact fisheries such as Loch Awe, which sells around 10,000 rod days a year.

The consultation is due out in May/June. We will forward this to all proprietors. We will write an ADSFB response and ask proprietors for comments before submitting it to the Government.

10) Argyll Fisheries Trust presentation

CM described the work that AFT have been doing. More information can be found on their website, and the presentation will also be available to download from the ADSFB website.

11) Revaluation of salmon fishing rights

There will be a revaluation in 2017, and all proprietors will receive forms through the post from the District Assessor. This is done independently of ADSFB. CM will email proprietors about this.

12) ASFB/RAFTS report

RB talked about RAFTS having a cost cutting year as their grants have been cut, and they have now balanced their budget. Both RAFTS and ASFB have advised the Government on the WFR, beavers and Spring Conservation Measures. They are part of an aquaculture working group, which is putting pressure on the industry to co-operate on issues such as migration routes and pro-active sea lice treatment. Alan Wells from ASFB has been seconded to the Government to work on the WFR.

13) AOB

The Government have commissioned PACEC to survey the wild fisheries sector to assess the economic value and other impacts of wild fisheries in Scotland. It is very important that proprietors fill this in and don't underestimate values as it will affect the Government's view of the salmon angling sector when it is considering policy. Please fill in the survey that has been emailed to everyone.

14) Date of next Board meeting – Thurs 29th October at Fasnacloich.