

MINUTES of MEETING of THE RIVER UGIE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD held at Broad House, Broad Street, Peterhead on Thursday, 16th May 2024 immediately following the Annual Public Meeting of the River Ugie District Salmon Fishery Board.

Present: Joseph Yule (Convenor) (**JY**)
Simon Stephen for Ugie Angling Association (**SS**)
William Stephen for Ugie Angling Association (**WS**)
Stephen Buchan for Ugie Angling Association (**SB**)
David Low Mandatory for Mrs Booth, Ednie (**DL**)
John Fraser for Ugie Angling Association (**JF**)

In Attendance: Louise Kershaw for Bruce Milton, Clerk to the Board (**LK**)
David Will, Water Bailiff (**DW**)

APOLOGIES

Alexander Buchan for Lunar Fishing Company Limited (**ABL**)
Alexander Buchan for Score Group plc (**ABS**)
James Ritchie for Ugie Angling Association (**JR**)

MINUTES

WS proposed that the Minutes of the last meeting held on 23rd November 2023 be taken as read and this was seconded by SS.

JY suggested that everyone should receive copies of the minutes via email. This was agreed by everyone, and email addresses were provided to LK to circulate the minutes going forward.

MATTERS ARISING

JY asked those present to bring up any matters they wished to discuss that were not already on the agenda.

UAA Mission Statement

JF asked if anyone had looked into the issue of the potential requirement for the UAA to have a constitution rather than a mission statement.

SB advised he had looked into it, and there was no obligation to have a constitution.

JY commented that the mission statement should be sufficient, however if a committee does not have an appointed Chairman, Treasurer etc. this can sometimes cause complications. It would be advisable to have these people appointed. JY went on to recommend that JF should be Chairman.

WS agreed with this, noting that it would be good for the UAA to have an official point of contact.

JF's view was that things are working well at the moment, with everyone getting on and no money being handled.

SB agreed with JF, adding that everyone's view were being heard. DW also agreed that the UAA currently has a good committee and probably does not require a Chairman at present.

JY explained that the role of the Chairman is to achieve consensus and act as a figurehead for the committee.

JF suggested that an online portal would be beneficial, something that allowed people to put forward comments and feedback etc. Options are being looked into.

Update on Survey Proposals from Tommy McDermott

JY asked if any cheaper options had been looked into yet.

JF advised that he has informed Tommy that the Board is not going ahead with anything at this point.

JY agreed that was fine for just now.

Rising Temperatures

JY asked if SEPA can take regular recordings of the temperatures, or if this was something that DW could do.

DW confirmed he could do this and agreed to take regular temperature readings and report on these.

JY asked what the critical temperature would be and DW advised that anywhere above 20 degrees was not good. Average temperature at the moment is 8/9 degrees so fine for just now.

Pollution

WS asked if SEPA had been informed about the pollution from the BioGas plant.

DW confirmed he had reported to SEPA, and they are in the process of obtaining proof that the BioGas plant is the cause. He has spoken with the plant manager, and measures are being put in place to prevent further pollution in the future.

Wind Farm Projects

JY advised that he had attended the meeting held by SSE. He was encouraged by the meeting, and it seems that SSE are listening to concerns raised. There is an ecologist involved, which JY thinks is promising.

JY reminded everyone that the construction of the wind farms etc. is not likely to start until at least 2 to 3 years from now. These are long term projects, and many objections are being raised – inevitably they will be seen through, however. All the

Board can do is ensure that their concerns are being submitted. JY also mentioned that the UAA should put forward their concerns too.

JF asked in the UAA should voice their concerns even if they are not in line with the RUDSFB.

JY confirmed that they should absolutely do whatever they feel is appropriate.

Netherton Hub

JY advised that he has managed to obtain a better picture of the hub – it is a huge site. One of the main concerns for the Board would be the two burns they are proposing to run water into.

JY's view is that Netherton should finance independent electro-fishing surveys for two to three years to monitor for any detrimental effects. He has requested this.

Substation at New Deer

JY stated that he is not sure how the plant will affect the river. He asked if DW could look into/ research this and report on his findings.

DW agreed he would do this.

DW went on to advise that he had worked for SSE for 40 years, and in his experience they would want to know about pollution incidents. SSE are very willing to contribute to improving water quality and conservation. In DW's view, there is definite potential for the Board to benefit.

FINANCE AND RATES

LK produced a forecast for the 12 months up to 31st May 2025.

After careful consideration of the projections, a reduced rate of £2.20 in the pound was proposed by WS and seconded by DL.

LK agreed she would issue the notices accordingly.

FISH COUNTER REPORT

In ABL's absence, JY advised that it was really too early in the year to have any significant data from the counter. He has been sending on the reports to everyone anyway. There tends to be very little fish in the Winter months, but numbers should start to pick up now. JY reiterated how good an investment the fish counter has been.

A.O.C.B.

JY opened up the discussion for any other matters to be discussed.

DW read out his Water Bailiff's report for the year to 31st May 2024 (attached to these minutes).

WS commented that there seemed to be fewer incidents of people fishing in the dark than there were last year.

DW raised the possibility of claiming compensation for the lost fish resulting from the pollution caused by the BioGas plant.

JY agreed that it could be an option, however the difficulty would be proving the loss. It may still be worth trying. JY expressed his frustration that SEPA do not punish companies more harshly for pollution.

WS mentioned the issue of septic tanks emptying into the burns. The use of bleach and washing powders is causing the septic tanks to stop working. DW added that the older tanks especially did not work as well as the newer ones.

DW advised that he and SB had taken responsibility for the mink traps. DW has an air rifle kill them, and SB will obtain a licence as well so that he can assist.

JY asked if there were any further queries for DW. There were none, so JY thanked DW for delivering his report.

JF announced that the UAA would be running a Scottish Week competition again this year.

JY then went on to say that he feels it is someone else's time to be Chairman of the Board. He has held the position for over 40 years, and enjoyed every minute of it however it is a chance for the younger generation to come along.

JY asked everyone to have a think about potential replacement candidates in time for the next meeting.

DL also offered to step down to make way for the younger generation as well. JY reminded DL that he is a valued member of the Board.

DL asked JY if he had any recommendations for his replacement. JY advised he did not have anyone specific in mind, but that the person should ideally be local. JY went on to say that it is not necessarily a case of having the knowledge, but that the person should be interested and have the river and Board's best interests in mind.

DL stated that JY would be very difficult to replace.

NEXT MEETING

The date of the next Board meeting was set for Thursday 14th November 2024 at 3:00pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 4:25pm.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Yule', written in a cursive style.

Joseph Yule
Convenor

Bailiffs report May 2024

The season got underway with very high water levels. Since the heavy rains in August and right through to the closed season and continuing right through to the start of play this year. It certainly has been one of the wettest if not the wettest year that I can recall. The river has seen quite a few floods over the closed season and has yet to fall back to summer level. The continual rain from the end of August did not deter anglers from venturing out and some nice fish were grassed early to mid, season. It is my belief that with the continual high water many of the back end fish continued up in to the single waters therefore out with the reach of anglers.

As ever our wee river is still suffering the effects of modern agricultural methods with silting and chemical run off which together with lack of shade has been making things rather difficult for fish both juvenile and adult. Though numbers are in decline we are still at sustainable levels with seatrout, salmon numbers seem to be declining year on year as with the majority of rivers but are still holding on. I think that it's fair to say that the catch figures for last season were modest but so were angling man hours so not surprising perhaps. I am pleased to report to the board that both fresh seatrout and salmon were taken last week from the river in the tidal areas. We live in hope that they continue to run in ever greater numbers throughout the season.

As you may be aware that several energy companies have plans to increase the integrity of their networks in our catchment area. The board is keeping a sharp eye on planning applications etc. Up grading the 275000v lines to 400000v requires additional and larger pylons, switching stations, substations, and extensive cable undergrounding. Concerns with regards to feeder stream spawning grounds, disturbance and disruption to banks, groundwork contamination, oil filled plant pollution and high voltage cable crossings are all cause for concern and has to be monitored closely. The Board, committee and myself are in communication with the companies concerned and will be monitoring progress.

There has been concern for some time with regards to the health of the East Burn that is the stream that flows past St Johns Wood at Inverugie. Effluent is finding its way in to the burn and a white slime algae type substance caused by excessive nutrient levels are choking the stream and dead fry have been recorded as a result. The matter has been reported many times to SEPA by myself and adjacent property owners and I am pleased to say that the most likely suspect of the pollution has been given instruction to bolster their run off protection. The company assures me that these measures are in place so we await an improvement in water quality so fish may return and thrive in this important feeder stream.

I was absent from duties for a time last summer and members of the committee were keeping an eye on the river on my behalf. I am pleased to report that no incidents of poaching were witnessed by myself or the chaps keeping an eye on things. Fishing by rod and line was being carried out at Buchanhaven and along the north coast but no retaining of

fish was observed. Angling on the shoreline of course is quite legal provided that any seatrout or salmon are returned unharmed.

The high water has prevented the setting of mink traps this season and only one is in operation at present. As the water falls away all traps should be operational by the end of the week providing it remains dry.

The notice boards are in a rather poor condition and with the boards permission I would like to replace the existing boards over the next week or two.

Thank you for your attention

Davie Will

River Ugie Water Bailiff.