

MINUTES of A BOARD MEETING of THE RIVER UGIE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY held at Broad House, Broad Street, Peterhead on Thursday, 14th November 2024, immediately following the Annual Proprietors Meeting of the River Ugie District Salmon Fishery Board.

Present: Joseph Yule (Convenor) (JY)
Alexander Buchan for Lunar Fishing Company Limited (ABL)
Simon Stephen for Ugie Angling Association (SS)
Stephen Buchan for Ugie Angling Association (SB)
James Ritchie for Ugie Angling Association (JR)
David Will, Water Bailiff (DW)
John Fraser for Ugie Angling Association (JF)

In Attendance: Louise Kershaw for Bruce Milton, Clerk to the Board (LK)

Apologies: Alexander Buchan for Score Group plc (ABS)
William Stephen for Ugie Angling Association (WS)
David Low Mandatory for Mrs Booth, Ednie (DL)

MINUTES

JR proposed that the Minutes of the last Board Proprietors meeting held on 16th May 2024 be taken as read and this was seconded by SB.

FINANCES REVIEW

LK produced a projected cashflow forecast covering the next 6 months up to 31st May 2025. The cashflow position of the Board continues to look very healthy. LK noted to the Board that the only rates still outstanding are those due by Alexander Russell. LK advised Mr Russell had been sent a reminder, with no response, and confirmed she would send a further reminder in the hope that Mr Russell makes payment soon.

No queries were raised.

MATTERS ARISING

Request From Water Bailiff re Increase to Retainer

JY asked DW to leave the meeting temporarily so that the Board could discuss his request for an increase. JY reminded the Board that DW is currently on a rate of £10,500 per annum. There was consensus from everyone present that an increase should be awarded in recognition of DW's excellent work as Water Bailiff.

ABL suggested an increase of 10% which would take the retainer up to £11,550 per annum.

JR proposed this new rate and SB seconded this.

DW was brought back into the meeting and informed of his new retainer. DW thanked the Board.

Proposed Workshop by Fisheries Management Scotland re: River Catchment Restoration Fund Development

JY asked if anyone on the Board would be willing to attend the workshop. DL and JF confirmed they would attend, either by going in person or accessing the workshop online. JF



commented he thought it might be useful for finding out about possible grants. JY asked DW and JF for a report on their findings after the workshop.

Environmental Information Request by Mr Cross

JY advised the Board that it appears Mr Cross has sent the same request to all the fishery Boards in Scotland. Following the guidance issued by FMS, JY instructed LK to respond to Mr Cross and advise that we do not have the requested information to hand.

Proposals on Appointment of New Convenor

JY reminded the Board of the discussion held at May's Board meeting regarding his plan to step down as Convenor. JY then asked for any proposals on his replacement. None were made. JY advised he would shelve the topic for the time being, but that everyone should bear in mind that he will be stepping down as Convenor and a replacement will be required.

Fish Counter Figures

ABL asked if everyone had received the latest email with the fish counter report. JY advised that nothing had been received yet. ABL confirmed he would forward on the report to everyone, but in the meantime read out the results from his phone. Overall, the numbers are down from last year. The last quarter is the only one which has increased compared to last year, however this is for small fish. The numbers for finnick, trout and mature fish are all very low.

Catch Figures

JY produced a chart that he had prepared showing the catch figures, noting the decrease from last year. DL commented that this seems to be a nationwide issue rather than a specific problem for the Ugie.

Water Bailiff's Report

DL delivered his report, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

DL then went on to suggest holding an annual meeting (for new anglers in particular) to cover best angler practice. Attendance would be voluntary, but DL thinks it would be very useful as many new anglers are not familiarizing themselves with the rules. No objections were raised to this.

Electro Fishing

JY advised that Gillian Doig (SSE) has requested historic electro-fishing records. JY confirmed he has records dating back to 1991, however asked the Board if this information should be released to Gillian. JY thinks she has asked for this so that SSE can obtain evidence that fish numbers were low before any works are carried out by them. This would make it difficult for the Board to pursue any future claim of damage to the fish supply against SSE.

Hatchery Work

JY and ABL listened to a seminar held by Sterling University about new research and trials being carried out on hatcheries. ABL explained that a more productive method seems to be to trap the smolt and raise them in the fresh river water before releasing them into the river. ABL suggested renting a smolt trap from the Deveron Board for a trial period. The only cost for the trial period would be £450 for insurance. A licence from the Scottish Government would be required, as well as consent from SEPA for taking water from the river. The man who delivered the talk at Sterling University has offered to assist with obtaining the appropriate licences etc. JY asked the Board if they would support ABL taking this project forwards – everyone present confirmed that they would. JY gave ABL the go ahead to email the Sterling University contact and find out the next steps.



A.O.C.B

Habitat/ Redd Survey

JF asked if any further decision had been taken on whether to go ahead with the surveys or not. The consensus was that this should be placed on hold for the time being.

Stolen Bins & Dumping at Peach Tree Car Park

JY commented that following the removal/ theft of the two wheelie bins at the car park, there had been a lot of dumping going on. ABL agreed, and warned that James Strachan would close his gate to stop members of the public using the footpath if this continues.

JR confirmed he would ask the 'Peterhead Live' Facebook page to post a message asking the public to keep the car park and road tidy. If the dumping continues, James Strachan may have to put a padlock or a keycode on the gate.

PUBLIC MEETING DATE

The date for the next public meeting was set for Thursday 15th May at 3pm.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 5:20pm.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Strachan', is centered on the page.

Bailiff's Report 14/11/2024

As I am sure you are aware, this season has proved a bit trying for our anglers.

Salmon catches have been encouraging at times with one angler in particular landing six fish over a seven day period. Several good double figure fish have been taken which is surely encouraging for the sustainability of our river.

Unfortunately, seatrout catch records submitted thus far tell a different tale.

Numbers are down on previous years. This could be for several reasons:

Fluctuating water levels early in the season followed by little or no rain for extended periods through the summer, followed by **several spates** which saw the river unsettled. Other systems have had similar results with regards to low seatrout numbers, with one theory being, that **high populations of sand eels** have encouraged a greater percentage of our seatrout to remain at sea, to return as two or more sea-winter fish next year. Time will tell if this theory comes to pass.

Though this is perhaps not the best fishing season with regard to fish caught, we have seen more new anglers trying the river for the first time. In their number are some keen youngsters, which we hope will get hooked and return next season. All those new to the river are informed when they collect their licence that if they get in touch with myself, I will arrange to spend time with them showing them around the beats and advising on tackle etc. This service has been taken up by quite a few of the new anglers and it is always a pleasure to show off our wee river. For the upcoming new season, it is intended to invite all our new and any of our existing anglers to attend an **Introduction to the Ugie** where we can share information on tackle, rules and angling best-practice.

Offshore Wind Generation

This year has seen a huge leap in energy companies wishing to invest in Wind Generation. This may have an impact on the river and coastal waters as well as angling. Concerns have been raised with regards to the laying of high voltage cables at sea and across the river. The building of the **Netherton Hub High Voltage Substation** in close proximity to two of our feeder streams is of course of great concern.

Several committee members along with myself have attended meetings held by the energy companies and are keeping a close eye as they progress through their planning stage and on to the awarding of work contracts.

In preparation for conservation work, an electro fishing survey has been conducted by SSEN on two of the burns most at risk from the proposed Substation Site near Longside. The results of the electro-fishing sessions have been most favourable with the Ludquarn Burn in particular showing itself to be a very healthy stream, producing over sixty fry and parr from a random twenty five metre stretch.

Pollution

There have been several incidents of pollution this year. The **East Burn** that runs from the **Tortiston** area has been of concern for quite a while. A white fungal bloom has been evident particularly after a rise in levels following heavy rain. I have had several site meetings with Mark from **SEPA** and it seemed that the Bio Plant at the old RAF camp was responsible. Subsequently, SEPA placed several improvement notices on the plant and since that time all has been well. The East Burn now looks healthy and a population of fry can be seen to inhabit the burn. We will be keeping a very close eye on this stream throughout the year. One evening the **Collie Burn** was reported to me as running red. Past years have seen diesel oil entering this burn with the loss of fry and parr, fortunately, the red colouration was the result of Scottish Water using an inert dye to trace leaks in their road drain system. No fish were seen to be harmed.

Angler's Access

It was reported that a tree had come down on the **Buthlaw Beat** impeding angler's progress. It was requested that this should be removed as it represented a safety hazard. Unfortunately, the land owner made it clear that he did not want the tree interfered with. Therefore, anglers were advised to follow the river bank when heading up stream, avoiding the wood.

Invasive Species

Robert from the **Invasive Species Group** and I have been out on the river many times this year, keeping a check on invasive plants and assisting me with the new **Mink Radio-Traps**. All but one of my traps are now fitted with **Radio Transmitters**. These transmitters inform us when a trap is triggered hence eliminating the need to visit individual traps daily. We seem to be getting the better of the unwanted mink. (Along with a reduction in the population of brown rats). These North American invaders present a big problem for our indigenous wildlife including fish of all sizes. Let's hope we can keep them at this very low population level.

Poaching

Again this year, I can report that poaching activity has been very light. Only a few adults and youths have been directed to the smokehouse to buy a ticket. Fortunately, on each occasion there were no fish found on their possession. After dark patrols have all proved to be drama free and no poaching activity has been observed.

So to conclude, though it has not been the most productive season with regard to fish caught, it has been encouraging to get healthy reports on juvenile populations in our feeder streams along with a greater interest from new anglers fishing our wee river. As ever we look forward to a productive new season next year.

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