

MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE
Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 8 March 2020 at 10.30am, Green Hotel, Kinross

1 PRESENT:- Messrs Campbell, McLennan, Picken, Pirie, Walker and Wight.

2 APOLOGIES:- Messrs Balfour, McKay and Stephen.

3 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:- OMcL and JP indicated their links to DSFBs and Trusts.

4 CHAIRMAN:-CC welcomed members and explained that it was on Friday afternoon that he was informed that due to an unexpected family matter Antje Branding would be unable to attend as anticipated for at least the first two agenda items. He had been able to contact those invited for these matters before they would have set off. The two items would still be usefully discussed by those present. Antje Branding remained open to a future meeting.

5 POLICY ISSUES AFFECTING FRESHWATER ANGLING

CC believed that SANA Ltd should strive to be identified with headline issues which are associated with both protecting and enhancing angling in Scotland. As he had outlined two weeks ago at the SANA Ltd AGM four of these are:-

Clean water

Control of predators on fish

Habitat enhancement and conservation

Regulation of aquaculture and commercial fisheries

Regarding clean water SEPA appears to have a relaxed approach to combined sewage outfalls. On predation on fish the recent convening of a Predation Committee by FMS was noted as was the apologies for absence from SNH (licensing) from its first meeting in December 2019. Predation on fish in freshwater could be reduced but conflicting interests are in the arena.

6 ANGLING SCOTLAND LTD & THE THREE GOVERNING BODIES

At the SANA Ltd AGM ASL had presented its ambitions for its way ahead. It anticipated that it might become a body which individuals would join. However not all see it thus but more as an umbrella body for the game, coarse and sea angling governing bodies. Sportscotland is focussed on promoting competitive sports where press attention can be attracted. Its funding of angling as one of the ways of getting people out to fish and enjoying the outdoors can be discounted. There may be a possibility of public money coming to ASL if the benefits to the public of an active angling sector can be well made.

7 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 1 December 2019:- Their adoption was agreed by those present

8 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE ABOVE MINUTES:- These will arise under agenda items.

9 MFC OFFICE BEARERS FOR 2020

It was agreed that CC, AW and JP would continue as chairman, vice-chairman and secretary respectively. The time and effort being asked of the chairman supported by his vice-chairman were noted and much appreciated by the other MFC members.

10 CROWN ESTATE SCOTLAND

Since the MFC meeting in December a submission on forward planning by the CES was made and a report on the responses is on the MS website. CC noted that points from our response features in the report. The ministerial response to the report is awaited.

A submission was also sent on the corporate plan consultation. There are grounds for optimism that the corporate plan will feature the main issues for which CC has pushed the case at meetings.

On 1 April CC will attend two meetings, of the stakeholder group and of a working group, both of which relate to the launch of the CES corporate plan.

11 RIVER BASIN MANAGEMENT PLANNING CONSULTATION

The deadline for submissions is 19 June. There are two river basins in Scotland, the Tweed Solway one and the rest of the country. CC agreed to draft a response for the 'rest' river basin. It would be based on our previous response to river basin management planning. There would be an emphasis on combined sewer outfalls and the several contributions to the insidious widespread diffuse pollution. FW agreed to participate in Tweed/Solway meetings as a MFC representative if required at a later stage in this process. *Subsequently, it was established that there was no need to tailor a response for the Tweed/Solway river basin. The questions were the same in both consultations.*

12 CONCERNING SALMON FARMING

A few days ago Fergus Ewing welcomed Scottish Sea Farms' plan to deploy an open ocean cage for on-growing salmon. The multi million pound funding would come from the parent Norwegian company. The cage would hold upwards of one million fish.

A wall of silence appears to surround the believed trial of close containment with a number of enquiries all producing no information.

Were the on-growing of smolts to move to closed containment on land or sufficiently far offshore in open ocean cages the CES would experience a loss of income from sea bed leases.

The Salmon Interactions Working Group has been meeting and a report may not be far off.

MSP Gail Ross has asked the Scottish Government what progress has been made with the aquaculture sector on the recommendations in the RE&CC's report on Salmon Farming in Scotland. An answer is expected early this month.

13 NASCO

The 2020 annual NASCO meeting will take place in early June based at Dalmahoy. AW will attend. His basic costs will be covered by SANA Ltd and by donations of which a few have been received. The generosity of these donors is appreciated.

14 SNH GENERAL LICENCES

In their response to submissions to the consultation on general licences SNH effectively said that the consultation did not include consideration of bird predation on fish. On his suggestion it was agreed that CC write to Scottish government ministers regarding this and copy the letter to MSP Michelle Ballantyne, the 'salmon champion'.

15 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

In collaboration with Alan Ayre of the NMFC, who was the main author, comments on the Forestry Corporate Plan were submitted.

Presumably responding to pressure from T and J netmen in the North East of England, the Environment Agency sought comments on a proposal to extend the season during which the netmen can fish for sea trout and release entrapped salmon. Supporting and explanatory documentation was extensive. A submission, collated by email, was sent. It opposed the extended season and pointed to a preferred option of closing the fishery completely. With Scottish coastal fixed engine salmon fishing now halted, continuing to fish but only retaining sea trout is not allowed.

16 CATCHES

Members reported that so early in the season and with the weather that has been experienced no pointers to the numbers of early fish could be gleaned with any certainty.

The detailed bulletin of salmon and sea trout catches in England and Wales during 2018 is still awaited. This is several months after the usual publication date. Nevertheless the documentation for the North East of England season extension consultation did include some figures for 2018 and even some for 2019.

Quite a few Scottish catches for 2019 have been published by DSFDs. These point to season 2019 in Scotland having been more productive for salmon than was 2018.

17 FISHERY MANAGEMENT SCOTLAND

It was noted that the AST and the FMS events on 31 March and 1 April respectively had both been cancelled.

The release of the FMS review for 2020 would have been expected on 1 April. This will contain many DSFB catch figures for 2019.

The SANDS initiative, its continued funding and how it is progressing was discussed.

18 NMFC MINUTES

AA of the NMFC continues as a corresponding member of the Access Forum and keeps a very careful and watchful eye on distributed documentation.

19 AOCB

There has been a rapid turnover of officials at the Tweed Commissioners.

Possibilities for an MFC outing were reconsidered.

20 DATE OF NEXT MFC MEETING

The next MFC meeting will be on Sunday 21 June at 10.30am in Kinross.

The meeting closed at 1.10pm with a vote of thanks to the chairman.