

SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 25 September 2016 at 10.30am, Windlestrae Hotel, Kinross

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

2 APOLOGIES:- Messrs Duncan and Stephen.

3 CHAIRMAN:- The age profile of the MFC and the NMFC is biased towards pensionable years. Efforts to attract new members to the MFC had produced good geographical coverage but no younger representatives. Also the MFC has only ever had one member of the fairer sex. The Chairman asked that these issues be addressed. See AOCB below.

4 CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

CC explained the background to this matter. Since SANA is a registered limited company this will be an ever present agenda item. It was agreed that none of the interests which members identified gave rise to conflicts of interest.

5 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 19 JUNE 2016:- Adoption proposed by RP, seconded by CC.

6 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 19 JUNE:- covered under following headings.

7 WILD FISHERIES REFORM

Notes on the Stakeholder Reference Group meeting of 25 August had been circulated by CC. The next meeting of the group is on 5 October and there are two matters on which CC may have to take a position.

The first of these is on where WFR is heading. SANA responded in May to a consultation on a draft bill in the expectation of a Bill this parliamentary session. However there was no mention of this Bill when on 6 Sept scotgov announced its Programme for Government, setting out the priorities for scotgov over the coming year. The lead scotgov WFR official on the same day circulated an email which included:- 'While that statement did not include plans to progress a Wild Fisheries (Scotland) Bill within the first year of the Scottish Parliament it did reaffirm that the Scottish Government will introduce a Bill during this Parliamentary session to underpin new management structures and establish the foundations for a more secure and sustainable future for wild fisheries.'. This statement was discussed at the SANA board meeting on 8 Sept. Two possible interpretations of this are a) that politicians have pulled back from the full blooded WFR fearing negative political impact or b) that realisation of the complexities of full WFR points to an extended timetable. Members thought that both interpretations were probably involved. Views heard expressed around the country ranged from a certain delay of years to why should there be any delay. Is there an element of scotgov looking to the DSFBs and the Trusts to take the lead with pilot FMOs? Brexit might also be a factor as pressure from the EU to press ahead will no longer be there.

The second concerns a management and development levy paid by all anglers in Scotland, effectively a rod licence. No figures have been floated as to likely charges for it or what total annual revenue would be required from it. The consequences of the introduction of this levy on all anglers are problematic and will depend significantly on the charges set and how its yield is distributed. For widespread acceptance of such a levy members envisaged it being set nationally and being 'small'. Also the total sum raised should be ring fenced for local funding back to the regions where it was sourced. Should the levy be introduced and did not conform to these features some members foresaw declining angling club membership and the demise of some clubs. In a few areas of the country the situation would be that effectively club members would have two additional charges to meet, a DSFB type rate and the levy. In the absence of specific proposals a definitive stance cannot be adopted. For the time being it was deemed best to stay with the principles of:- nationally set, 'small', ring fenced for angling development and local management spending – with anglers represented on management committees. The Chairman was instructed to stand firm on these principles and to oppose any move that could prejudice the deliberations of the Finance Technical Working Group. This working group of the SRG has not yet met. Our position on the management and development levy can be reviewed when the outcome of that working group's deliberations are made known.

8 CONSERVATION MEASURES

Refined input to the estimations of the extent to which rivers will meet their conservation limits have been used in the recent release of grades for 2017. Extensive documentation was published with the opportunity to comment by 29 September. Accepting the principles behind the measures, the complexities of the assessments of the egg depositions and of areas where salmon are present, the MFC saw no grounds for responding to the consultation. An increased number of areas have been used for 2017 and compared to 2016 some river grades have moved up, others down. The 'resources' expended in this exercise must have been considerable. The time demands of this effort on quantifying salmon status must have pushed further into the future the more complex circumstances of introducing corresponding conservation measures for sea trout, barring some broad brush regional measures.

Surprise was expressed over aspects of the scheme backed by £100K from scotgov to assist angling clubs suffering financially because of the conservation measures. The scheme is being administered by the fishpal website company. The CEO of Fishpal has a two page piece on the scheme in a monthly fishing magazine. CC will make inquiries about the MS contract with Fishpal.

The ban on fixed engine coastal netting will continue in 2017. By what amount the fixed engine operators were compensated

for being unable to fish during 2016 was not known. CC will enquire as to what sum was paid in total to all idle coastal netmen in 2016.

It was noted that nine net and coble operators were given licences and tags. One operator was given far more tags than he has ever landed salmon. The regulations governing the use of tags by licensees are comprehensive as regards record keeping.

9 CROWN ESTATES STAKEHOLDER GROUP

There have been no meetings since AW reported on the first at the June meeting. There are to be three workshop meetings on 26 to 28 Sept on respectively land, coastal and marine assets. CC plans to attend two of these and AW possibly the third once it is clear what is in the frame at each workshop.

The Crown Estate have recently appointed a new head of property in Scotland for its portfolio of 37,000 hectares of rural land and significant salmon fishing rights as well as around half of Scotland's coastline with ports, harbours and 5,800 installed moorings. The profit from throughout the UK paid to the UK government in 2015/16 totalled £304M.

10 NASCO

AW is kept informed of NGO group activities. The most recent was attendance at a NASCO convened meeting relating to the Greenland fishery. Post Brexit the UK will have a direct seat at NASCO rather than as part of the EU.

11 ASFB/RAFTS

On 14 Sept ASFB and RAFTS held a joint meeting followed by an ASFB Special meeting then a RAFTS EGM. Essentially the meetings were to adopt proposals from the boards of both bodies for the amalgamation of the two bodies under the title of Fisheries Management Scotland. Discussions lasted from 10.30 until 14.45 with a 30 minute break. The outcome was that all the motions were withdrawn. Revised proposals will be considered at AGMs in November. There were strong pleas from some speakers that if the 'network' is to continue to have influence the new body is essential.

11 ESKS AND YTHAN

Other than no update on the Ythan seal haul out site designation there is nothing to minute.

12 THE 2016 SEASON

In general most rivers experienced salmon catches building up until June or July then steadying with, thus far, rather disappointing late season catches. There were exceptions to this but there seems to be increasing late spring numbers and decreased late season numbers.

Reports on sea trout were generally of no great numbers although some areas are seeing good numbers of finnock.

Although the NE of England net catch of salmon for 2015 was in NASCO papers the corresponding sea trout figure is still lacking despite a request to the EA. This request has been acknowledged and passed to their fisheries section. In recent years the publication date of the England and Wales annual statistical bulletin has been erratic. In 2015 the net catch of salmon in the NE of England exceeded the total Scottish fixed engine plus net and coble catch. With no fixed engines operating in Scotland in 2016 these two catches will be markedly different this year.

13 NMFC MINUTES

No NMFC minutes received since June. It was noted than Alan Ayre will leave the NMFC at the 2017 AGM.

14 SANA BOARD

CC had circulated relevant parts of the SANA board minutes of 8 Sept. It seems that Angling Scotland Limited will now go ahead. Circumstances, particularly regarding grant money, leave virtually no alternative but there seem to be no disadvantages for SANA.

15 AOCB

The matter of attracting members to the MFC was discussed and the Chairman requested that members bring suggestions about suitable candidates to the next meeting.

The compilation of the papers at the 2015 sea trout conference is not yet published.

The revaluation of salmon fishings is underway. Guidelines to assessors for the previous exercise are on the saa.gov.uk website.

During 2015, conditions more extreme and long lasting than ever previously observed were present in the NE Pacific. Many species, fur, feather and fin, were all adversely affected. When available the catches of the Pacific salmon will be interesting.

Aspects of the potential impact of WFR on angling clubs were revisited.

16 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting was set for 10.30am on Sunday 4 December in Kinross.

The meeting concluded at 1.20pm.