

## DRAFT

### SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 28 June 2015 at 10.00am, The Windlestrae Hotel, Kinross

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

2       APOLOGIES:-W Duncan.

3       WILD FISHERIES REFORM – DISCUSSION WITH ALAN WELLS

CC introduced Alan Wells from the Wild Fisheries Reform team. He was present from 10.00 to 11.00. Members indicated their interests and linkages in the fisheries field. The following topics were covered with discussion continuing after Alan Wells left.

**Broad objectives** The Committee agreed that the status quo in fisheries management did not provide a system of accountability for decisions on freshwater fishery management that worked well for conservation of fish stocks and, therefore, of fisheries. The reform programme, as outlined in the consultation paper, was generally supported, despite concerns about particular aspects of how it might be implemented.

**Funding** It was noted that the extension of remit for the new Fishery Management Organisations (FMOs) to all species meant that expenditure would increase. Also, the intended role of creating an Angling for All Programme (AfAP), at either national or local level, would increase expenditure. While the proposed National Unit would be funded by central government, there remained a question mark of how to fund FMO activities. It was noted that the consultation did not tie the question of rod licences to the AfAP expenditure. Had the consultation asked about some kind of angler levy (say, a “conservation levy”) as a contribution to FMO funding, there might not have been the adverse reaction to “rod licences”. The widespread perception of members was that rod licences levied by the Environment Agency in England and Wales did not provide value to anglers. It was just another tax and, as such, would be a disincentive to participation rates in Scotland. More generally, there was concern that extra costs borne by either anglers directly, or by clubs, would be dangerous to provision of angling opportunities and to participation rates. Questions were raised about the whether the extension of levy funding to proprietors of non-migratory fishing would be adequate to fund the extra costs that would fall on the successor bodies to District Boards. Also, the relative scale of the proposed national levy and the possible local supplementary levy was questioned. The mood of the meeting appeared to favour emphasis on the national levy.

**Protection Orders** It was agreed that this was primarily a topic for the NMFC. However, there appeared to be an opportunity to improve access through FMOs without recourse to a direct replacement of the current system.

**Register of Anglers** Whether or not a direct levy on anglers is introduced, there was some support for the concept of identifying anglers on some kind of publicly accessible register. This is not a subject within the set questions of the consultation.

**Participation Rates** There was discussion of whether recruitment levels to angling club membership were purely driven by cost issues. The rise of put-and-take fisheries were cited as a demonstration that cost was not the sole issue. Rather, the chance of catching success was a more powerful stimulus. The converse is also true. Declining interest in fishing for migratory fish was in line with the fall in stock levels. N.B. tagging, where already introduced, had not proved to be a significant disincentive to participation.

On his leaving Alan Wells was thanked for attending and his helpful responses to the many and varied questions posed.

4       MINUTES OF MEETING OF 5 APRIL 2015 – These were approved nem con.

5       MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 5 APRIL

CC commented on the ongoing membership of W Duncan and JP on further correspondence with Ross McDonald.

6       WILD FISHERIES REFORM

On 2 July CC will be attending both a stakeholders group meeting and later in the day an angling group meeting. Notes on the meetings will be circulated. Minutes of these meetings are posted on the WFR part of the SG website.

The Committee agreed that there should be a submission from SANA on the broader subjects and topics with answers to the set questions provided as an appendix. It was to be hoped that a joint SANA submission by the two policy committees would be possible.

The deadline for responses to SANA is 15 July but CC will write an early draft along the lines indicated above.

CC would welcome text on whatever WFR issues sends members to their keyboards.

7       LICENCES AND CARCASS TAGS

SANA received few comments despite the opportunity posted on the website. The SG has received about 600 responses to the consultation. The SG seems committed to having the scheme in place for 2016. Its detailed proposals on several central features are awaited with interest. The prevailing prefixing of 'kill' to licences is unfortunate.

#### 8 ASFB AND RAFTS

A joint ASFB/RAFTS meeting was held on 16 June to discuss the WFR consultation. It lasted three hours. While there were diverging views on much of the WFR the office bearers urged members to engage positively with the SG on the fundamentals of reform. They believed that the reality of the situation is that all species Fisheries Management Organisations below a SG funded National Unit is coming. The approach should be function then form.

FMOs as SCIOs was discussed at length. Legal advice is being taken as to whether SCIOs could have some of the functions of present DSFBs. Funding is of great concern to some, particularly the possibility of the redistribution between FMOs of a uniform national levy based on fishery value. Oddly the supplementary individual FMO levy possibility was not discussed. Possible FMO areas were shown ranging in number and size to a very muted response. Almost certainly there are areas already preparing to make a bid to be an FMO when the time arises. If FMOs materialise there will be a shake-up of jobs in the fisheries sector.

ASFB and RAFTS have set up a Joint Working Group to work up ideas along several work streams. The JWG is not a negotiating body. ASFB and RAFTS will negotiate separately. There will be a flow of information with fortnightly bulletins from the JWG and monthly updates from ASFB/RAFTS on their websites.

#### 9 NASCO

AW detailed the limited information available from the June meeting in Canada. In 2014 the Greenland catch reached 58 tons, estimated 30% European. Greenland Hunters are seeking much more and the Faroe agreement remains.

#### 10 ESKS AND YTHAN

Relationships in the Eskes SFD remain fraught with the netsmen getting good value for the money which they receive. The court case is expected to conclude during July. Fungal disease has reappeared in the North Esk.

In the Ythan SFD an agreement was reached with several DSFBs contributing to paying the Scottish Wild Salmon Company not to fish during 2015. This fishery was last net fished during 1997. This is hoped to preclude any tags being available to the netsmen from 2016 onwards. Alec Salmond has backed a pre-emptive right to buy by 'angling interests' of any net fishings for sale. Whether this might appear in the Land Reform Act or the WFR legislation is unclear. He has used his weekly page in the local press to discuss this and the current low salmon numbers.

#### 11 CATCHES IN 2014 AND 2015

The 2014 Scottish catch data was published in April. Excluding the first year of data the Scottish salmon rod catch for 2014 was the lowest in the past sixty two years. The Spey and the Nith also had their lowest catches in the period. Sea trout catches showed the anticipated modest improvement on recent years. Several updated files were distributed to members and on the SANA website CC had posted an updated one comparing rod and net kills.

Despite some figures being quoted in magazines the 2014 catches for England and Wales are apparently not yet available via the EA or DEFRA websites and NASCO papers for the June meeting are not yet on its website.

Thus far in 2105 salmon catches in many rivers are encouraging although there are rivers where catches have been very disappointing. Showing these encouraging trends have been the Spey and the North Esk while dismal reports come from the South Esk and the Dee. A feature has been the continued increase in the proportion of 3SW fish. Thus far sea trout seem to be continuing the improvement of 2014.

#### 12 NMFC MINUTES

These had been distributed and no matters were raised.

#### 13 SANA LTD

A board meeting was held on 14 May with another due on 2 July. SANA's annual grant from Sportscotland is continuing while that of the sea anglers may not be as they do not have a development plan. With the ADBOS officer now gone some of that funding will provide for a consultant who will report on how an umbrella body for Scottish angling can best be brought about. Whereas the emphasis at Sportscotland for angling has been to produce competition winners, i.e. elitism, Scottish Government sports policy favours increased participation. That has become clear in the WFR discussions.

#### 14 AOCB

The SG has published its policy on introductions of fish to Scottish inland waters, three pages in all.

At Carradale in Argyll 16,000 salmon averaging 10lbs escaped from a Marine Harvest sea cage on 2 June.

A leading land agency has been seeking near doubling of rents for fishing leased by their clients to angling clubs.

#### 15 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next MFC meeting will be on Sunday 27 September at 10.30am in Kinross, for choice at the usual venue.

The meeting closed at 13.00.