

DRAFT

SANA LTD - MIGRATORY FISH COMMITTEE

Minutes of meeting on Sunday, 26 October 2014 at 10.30am, The Windlestrae Hotel, Kinross

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

2 APOLOGIES:-None.

3 CHAIRMAN:-The delayed date of the meeting was so that it would probably be after the publication of the Wild Fisheries Review, the early running salmon conservation proposals and the carcass tagging consultation. CC had now included 2013 data in the file giving the figures comparing angling retained numbers and percentages with the commercial fisheries' catches. The file is now on the SANA website.

4 MINUTES OF MEETING OF 29 JUNE 2014: These were unanimously approved.

5 MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 29 JUNE:-Covered under the following headings.

6 WILD FISHERIES REVIEW

Three documents have been posted on the government website, a letter from A Thin, the review and an extracted list of the recommendations. The WFR is based on an all species approach with an emphasis on optimising the public value outcomes derived from all wild fisheries. Unusually there has not yet been a statement from the government setting out its position, however broadly. No controversial measures are likely to be passed until after the general election in May 2015 and elections for the Scottish parliament in 2016. Whatever transpires, and whenever, the political attitudes towards salmon affairs of those in power in Scotland are almost certain to have remained unchanged. Given that the WFR was a policy review it was surprising that fifty three recommendations were made. Some of these could be put into effect under existing legislation.

Views on several of the fifty three recommendations were aired.

Is there an embedded contradiction in the WFR conclusions in that young and new anglers should be encouraged but there are implied additional costs for them? Will the competition angling scene be levied in some way?

Recommendations 24 to 27 on a revised and extended system to replace the DSFB rating system has logic to it for a fairer funding of FMOs but there are those who will fear the worst in a variety of ways. The review is weak on mixed stock fisheries. The proposal that all killing of salmon should be by licences, applied for by proprietors, and that the licence fees should cover all costs of the system leaves many controversial details of such a system unspecified particularly in the case of anglers. The possibility of rod licences is there but their introduction would be tied to funding the 'Angling for All Programme'.

Our detailed consideration of the recommendations can wait until it is known how the government intends to proceed or publishes consultations on particular issues.

7 CARCASS TAGGING

MS published a paper on the issue in 2009 and the documents for the forthcoming consultation, for some time promised on the government website, are thought to have been prepared. With carcass tagging having been recommended in the WFR with numbered, year and location specific tags, reconciling the WFR recommendations with the prepared consultation documents may explain the delay in publishing. With a three month consultation period already indicated there is still time for a system to be in place for season 2015 given the proposed spring conservation no kill measures. Whether tagging will be proposed for net caught fish only or will include retained rod caught ones remains to be seen. Since we have pressed for the tagging of net caught fish we can have no objections to the tagging of retained rod caught fish. However the practicalities of arrangements for the rod fishery pose issues and what costs to anglers if the system is to be cost neutral to the authorities.

8 EARLY SEASON SALMON CONSERVATION

Marine Science is asking for any comments by 6 November on proposed measures running from 2015 to 2020. These would prohibit any killing of salmon before 1 April throughout Scotland excepting the South Esk SFD where the date would be 1 May. Inspection of catch figures for recent years shows that the number of salmon 'conserved', at least until later in the year, is very modest. Accordingly our response would suggest 1 May, if not later, for all SFDs and beyond the 2020 date unless monitoring indicates otherwise. Inevitably there will be casualties during the mandatory catch and release period. Given past events on the North Esk and in England and Wales it seems these high quality fish will be discarded in the river.

9 GOVERNMENT ANGLING GROUP

The government invited the three Scottish angling governing bodies, coarse, game and sea, to an open ended meeting at Victoria Quay on 2 October. CC had represented SANA. His notes on the meeting have been circulated. The government representatives passed on much of interest to the MFC and offered to continue with such meetings. The next one is expected to take place in late November. Two questions posed at the meeting were discussed to the following effect:-

Restoring angler visitor numbers in Dumfries and Galloway: From a game angling perspective, the water quality and quantity disadvantages of the area stem from the way that state forestry was established. Most of the planting in the area preceded best environmental practice guidelines - by decades. Therefore, retrofitting is required and we know that some forestry restructuring has already been undertaken. Much more could be done by way of pulling back forestry from water bodies, planting deciduous species as buffer strips near watercourses and re-engineering drainage to slow run-off and reduce sediment carriage. From a wider tourism perspective, comment was also made about the aesthetics of blanket afforestation and its impact on vistas.

Electronic communication with anglers: It was pointed out that not everybody has smartphones but that some anglers used them as a means of web connection. The key website for news of catches, river levels etc is "fishpal". Therefore, the question posed should be about websites, not apps. Bearing in mind that not all anglers use computers, never mind smartphones, there was some interest in the concept - with the proviso that it should probably involve an established operator, like fishpal. However, it could not substitute for daily/weekly/annual reporting as currently practiced - because not all anglers are willing/able to use electronic communication.

10 TAY FOUNDATION

The Tay Foundation has asked SANA to be a trustee/director. While this clearly recognises SANA, CC explained what the implications for SANA were. Consequently it was agreed that the message back to the board is that the offer be declined. The Tay Foundation might be advised to approach a local SANA member club for the name of a potential trustee/director.

11 FRACKING

Given the history of oil shale workings in central Scotland, it is likely that licences for fracking may be offered. The NMFC is apprehensive and has asked about the views of the MFC. There are concerns that should oil/gas exploration and subsequent extraction take place ground water may become contaminated. AW will draft a letter to the government for the president to use. While the significance of any side effects of fracking is controversial, SANA has no identified expertise on the matter but its members may expect SANA to be active in opposing the granting of licences to frack.

12 ASFB AND RAFTS

Both bodies are holding their AGMs on 5 November at Perth Racecourse. There will also be sessions on marine survival of salmon and on the Wild Fisheries Review. CC and JP will be attending.

13 ESKS AND YTHAN

In relation to alleged breaches of the weekly close time in the South Esk SFD there have been pleading diets. Cases will be taken forward in early 2015. Salmon wise the 2014 season on the South Esk has been very poor in contrast to that on the North Esk. There is no progress on the complaint from Brechin AA to the EU based on the habitats directive. Morphie Dyke on the North Esk will be allowed to continue to disintegrate. There has been no additional net fishing during 2014 in the Ythan SFD either by fixed engines or by net and coble.

14 ACCESS TO WATER

CC and AW have delayed meeting the rafting interests. They will do so after a paper, expected from a retired legal expert on access matters, on the implications of agreeing to operate on certain days is available. However there remains the issue of the activities of any groups or individuals who are not party to the agreement.

15 THE 2014 SEASON

Throughout Scotland and beyond salmon angling has been worse than disappointing. Compared to recent years salmon numbers were not high while grilse numbers were low and continued the trend of including many small fish. Sea trout and finnock numbers were appreciably up on the record lows of 2013.

In September Marine Scotland announced that as of 2015 the release of provisional catch figures in April for the preceding year, and final ones in September, will cease. Instead figures will only be published in April and historical data will also be updated each April. Since the welcome release of detailed provisional monthly catch statistics in April in recent years, experience has shown that compared to the final figures released in September the net catch figures are mostly unchanged while rod and line ones show many relatively small upward changes.

With the receipt from MSS of the file covering all SFDs from 1952 to 2013 the MFC can now see in detail how reported Scottish catches of salmon and sea trout have evolved over the years.

16 SANA LTD

A federation of the Scottish angling bodies is being considered. A strategic plan for the way ahead for SANA Ltd is being drafted for submission to Sportscotland. The sometimes controversial M Dawes has left ADBOS.

17 AOCB

A workshop was convened by Marine Scotland on 15 October in Aberdeen to discuss the contract awarded by Marine Scotland to a Canadian company to tackle the technical, logistical and economic considerations in the development and implementation of a Scottish salmon counter network. The research specification document, which has been circulated,

is clearly part of Marine Scotland's moves to address its admission to NASCO that it has not yet established conservation limits for any rivers in Scotland.

18 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was decided that with the late October date of this meeting the usual early meeting in early December would be cancelled. The SANA Ltd AGM is set for 1 February 2015. It was decided against holding a meeting on the day of the AGM. A late January meeting may be held if eg consultations are ongoing, although at that time the weather can be a problem.

The meeting closed at 1pm