

NMFC Report – SANA Handbook 2017

The Non-Migratory Fish Committee held six meetings between Nov 2016 and Dec 2017, four in North Lanarkshire at the Newhouse Hotel and one at Kinross after the AGM. Our longstanding venue at Howietoun closed early in 2016, so we held our meetings thereafter in Hillington at David Paterson's office, but David developed an aggressive cancer early in 2017 to which sadly he succumbed in August. He was a long term NMFC member and his comradeship and input to our discussions will be sorely missed.

Members	Home Area	Meetings attended
A Ayre (V/Chair & sec)	Falkirk	6/6
J Campbell	Glasgow	4/6
A McAlpine	Falkirk	4/6
J Mathew	Wishaw	6/6
K Mackie	Carluke	4/6
J Twaddle (Chairman)	Cumbernauld	6/6

Our numbers are now down to six, all from the central belt, and pleas to SANA's members for volunteers to join us have so far fallen on stony ground. Volunteers are our life blood so anyone tempted to get involved, especially from other parts of Scotland, should contact the SANA office for more information. Much business is conducted by email so attendance at every meeting is not absolutely essential.

What we do

It is all too easy for salmon interests to override or ignore trout and grayling anglers concerns. With fisheries administration in a state of flux; ASFB and RAFTS amalgamating under the banner of Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS); and Fisheries Trusts having increasingly closer ties with DSFBs, salmon issues tend to dominate fisheries management. It is more important than ever, therefore, for non-migratory fish to be protected and access to fish for them championed, and it is NMFC's raison d'être to help further these aims.

We try to keep abreast of matters that affect game fishing and inform the SANA board of any actions we consider necessary. We respond to Government consultations and other initiatives that may affect angling, often collaborating with the MFC when appropriate. Over the past year these have included Wild Fisheries Reform and devolution of the Crown Estate and its fisheries assets.

For several years SANA has been a corresponding member of the **National Access Forum** which monitors Right to Roam issues. The NMFC secretary receives all NAF's minutes and other salient papers, responding as necessary to items which might affect angling.

Wild Fisheries Reform (WFR)

Though plans for Fishery Management Organisations (FMOs) and other aspirational changes have been ditched, WFR is not yet dead in the water, and we continue to send our views to Marine Scotland via Craig Campbell of the MFC who is SANA's representative on the Stakeholder Reference Group (SRG). We extend our thanks to him for conveying our views and keeping us apprised of progress.

Despite the difficulties besetting WFR and the postponement of a new fisheries Bill, it seems the politicians have not lost sight of their promise to improve salmon and other fish species management. Roseanna Cunningham stated recently that "*The entire system of fisheries management is being reconsidered and all aspects will be taken on board*". Many anglers will be pleased that she has rejected the imposition of a rod licence, though where funding will come from to pay for management of species other than salmon is still unresolved.

What next?

If, as is expected, DSFBs are to be made responsible for drawing up all-species Fisheries Management Plans for their districts, we are adamant that someone representing trout anglers (and grayling where present) must be involved during and after their compilation to prevent over-domination by salmon interests. That sea trout are brown trout which have chosen to go to sea is a fact now universally accepted, and can only be helpful for the protection of trout and their habitats.

It remains to be seen what impact, if any, WFR will have on the future of Protection Orders. A working group, mooted by MS early in 2017 to discuss the way forward for POs, has yet to be convened.

Fishpal

The imposition by government of no kill category 3 salmon rivers sparked fears that some angling clubs would have difficulties in retaining members, so in June 2016 Marine Scotland awarded Fishpal up to £100,000 over two years to provide support for clubs that asked for help. Teething problems led to

some disquiet and accusations of Fishpal using the money for its own ends. In its latest (Feb 2017 at time of writing) six monthly review report to MS, Fishpal comments "*This is a sensitive issue – for some this could inflame the accusations that Fishpal are getting a commercial benefit out of the support contract.*" See <http://www.fishpal.com/Scotland/AnglingClubs/scotgovreport.pdf>.

SANA became aware of various background grumbles and had some preliminary correspondence with MS, since when Fishpal have waived their normal charges to clubs applying to join the scheme, saying "... *all the help and support on offer is now completely free*".

Now past the half way stage it remains to be seen if the scheme is proving cost effective and providing the help anticipated.

Young angler recruitment

In September Linlithgow Angling Club asked SANA for help in arranging fishing instruction for a local scout group. NMFC's Jim Mathew (now also director of the Coaching Committee) together with several SANA coaches turned up on two evenings, complete with fly tackle for all twenty scouts, resulting in some of them catching their first fish. It was so successful that there are plans to repeat the exercise in the spring of 2018. The club appreciates SANA's help and expects the venture, plus their Trout in the Classroom endeavours, will result in a few new junior members in future.

Predation – Some members will remember SANA's cormorant count of 2013/14, and the Angling Trust's *Cormorant Watch* website of 2012 whereon anglers could log the numbers of cormorants and sawbills they saw. The AT's project helped spark DEFRA into increasing the number of licences to kill birds south of the Border, but neither it nor SANA's evidence made any impression on the Scottish government who referred us to unhelpful SNH.

However, *Cormorant Watch 2* was recently launched to further the earlier AT success, and it is being extended to include Scotland. We are hopeful that many anglers here will use it. See www.anglingtrust.net/news.asp?section=29§ionTitle=Angling+Trust+News&page=2&itemid=4153

Alan Ayre
7 Dec 2017