

MINUTE of the ANNUAL MEETING of
THE SALMON NET FISHING
ASSOCIATION OF SCOTLAND

held in The Dunkeld House Hotel,
Dunkeld

on 2nd November 2012

at 10 am

In the Chair

J MacKay, Thurso - Chairman

In Attendance

William Shearer, Consultant, Montrose
Keith Allan, Solicitor, Aberdeen,
Secretary & Treasurer
Robert Bruce
Joseph Yule
Peter Hutchison
Sandy MacLachlan
Marion Highet
Councillor Iain Carruthers
Councillor Richard Brodie
William Grant
George Pullar
David Linkie
Kevin Pullar
John Pullar
David Pullar

The Secretary intimated apologies for
absence from Robert Ritchie, Michael
Smith, John Logue, John Sellar, Les
Philips, Dr Iain Robertson, Kevin Gibson,
Julian MacLean and Greg Allan.

I Minutes and Business Arising

The Secretary read a précis of the
Minute of the Annual Meeting of the
Association held in the Town Hall,
Moffat on 4th November 2011, copies of
which had been circulated to all
members. The Minute was held as read
and duly approved and the Minute book
was signed by the Chairman.

II Financial Statement & Rate of Subscription

The Secretary expressed his thanks to
Mrs Penrose Lindsay for once again
inspecting and approving the Accounts.
The Secretary referred to the Financial
Statement for the year to 30th September
2012 which showed total funds of

£16,680.56 and a deficit of £1,215.06. Mr Allan outlined the entries in the Statement and pointed out that, although the outgoings were stable and normal, income from subscriptions was reduced. He intended to pursue a number of outstanding subscriptions and arrears. He intimated that the services of Messrs John Kennedy, the Westminster Parliamentary Agents, would not be retained.

On the proposal of Mr G Pullar as seconded by Mr Hutchison, the Financial Statement was duly approved by the meeting.

The Executive Council was recommending that subscriptions remain at the existing rates. On the proposal of Councillor Brodie as seconded by Mr Grant, it was agreed that the rate of subscription remain at £15 per £100 (or part) of rental value, subject to a minimum subscription of £150 and a maximum of £1,250.

III Election of Office Bearers

The Secretary reported that of the three retiring members from Council, namely Messrs MacKay, Logue and Grant, only Mr MacKay and Mr Grant were eligible for re-election as Mr Logue had resigned from membership due to having recently sold his fishings. On the proposal of Mr Bruce as seconded by Mr D Pullar, Mr MacKay was re-elected to the Council. On the proposal of Mr Hutchison as seconded by Mr G Pullar, Mr Grant was re-elected to the Council. Mr D Pullar proposed Mr Joseph Yule for election to the Council, but Mr Yule asked for an opportunity to consider this first. On the proposal of Mr Bruce as seconded by Mr D Pullar, Mr Gavin Thain was elected to the Council, subject to Mr Thain's agreement. Mr S MacLachlan was also asked if he would be willing to join the Council, but he declined.

Mr Allan intimated that at the previous day's Executive Council Meeting, Mr MacKay had been elected as Chairman of the Association and Mr George Pullar as Vice-Chairman, both for the ensuing year.

IV Voluntary Reduction in Exploitation

The Chairman reported that the Executive Council was recommending the continuation of the voluntary six week postponement of the season. 2013 would see the start of the fourteenth consecutive year of this initiative. The view was that the continuation of the voluntary code was important, particularly given the changes looming under the current Bill. The Secretary was instructed to confirm the Association's decision straight away to Marine Scotland. Mr Linkie's assistance in highlighting the announcement in Fishing News would be useful and should emphasise that this would be the fourteenth year of the Association members' commitment.

V Weekly and Annual Close Times

The Chairman reported that the Association was looking for the restoration of the weekly close time for all fisheries and was asking the Government to consider the days at sea proposal or an extension to the season. Mr G Pullar added that there were health and safety aspects and that it was not only economics that caused pressures. Mr Hutchison said that what was being pursued was high priority and for the well-being of all netmen. Mr MacKay added that the moves may not succeed but anything granted would be material and important. Councillor Brodie felt that there should be a mechanism in place for extending the season in the same way as District Boards could. A change in the legislation was required to give the Government the power to make such changes.

VI Seal Licensing and Courses/Grant Application

The Chairman stated that the cost of the compulsory seal licensing courses was approximately £550. The Secretary was looking for details from members as to the number of marksmen they each required and thereafter he would apply to Government for possible grant assistance. Any monies received would be distributed to members on a pro rata basis. Mr D Pullar felt that there may be the possibility of discount on the charges for members of the Association and a block booking for the practical side could be placed. The theory section of the course could be done online.

The Chairman expressed concern about the inappropriate questions in the Seal Licensing application forms which really needed to be simplified and to contain different questions for netsmen as opposed to fish farmers. The Secretary would be writing to the Seal Licensing team at Marine Scotland seeking a meeting with them in an attempt to have the application form simplified and made more relevant. Mr D Pullar felt that there should be one form for netsmen and another for fish farmers. Mr G Pullar stated that it was pointless having a restriction on the number of seals which could be shot. It was important to have the ability to shoot the numbers of seals that were causing damage to the fish or the fishery, and a quota was not practical. Mr D Pullar added that, on a positive note, the qualification created a status of being a professional marksman and therefore provided a certain protection against challenge.

VII Carcass Tagging

The Chairman reported that it was expected that the enabling powers for carcass tagging proposed in the new Bill would be passed, although there would be no detail until a later stage when further consultation would take place. Anglers were proposing that every fish should be measured, weighed, recorded and numbered but the Association would oppose this suggestion and support only the use of a simple tag. The voluntary scheme operated by the majority of Association members had been well received by the Government. Every netsmen would require to comply with the new scheme and membership could be boosted by offering a starter pack funded by the remaining monies. This could be used as a marketing tool for enticing new members into the Association.

Mr G Pullar felt that it was important that netsmen funded the tagging themselves or through Government, but definitely not through District Boards as they would then attempt to control activities. Mr D Pullar said that the design of the tag has been acclaimed as a great tool, not only from a practical view point but also for marketing and

promoting a high quality food product. In response to a question from Mr Hutchison, Mr MacKay indicated that the scheme would probably commence in 2014. In response to a question from Mr Yule, Mr MacKay said that it was presently unclear as to whether or not the tags would be numbered, but that would be opposed by the Association as it would not be workable for small businesses. There were concerns about how carcass tagging would operate with the Solway Haaf Netters and the Council may need to be involved in issuing the tags and discussion between the Council and the fishermen would be necessary. Councillor Brodie added that if the fishermen wished to sell their fish, then they would have no alternative but to tag. Mr Hutchison said that self-government would be the preferred option and he would attempt to simulate a discussion in the Solway area with the relevant parties.

VIII Preferred Food Name

The Chairman acknowledged that Messrs D and G Pullar had pioneered and pushed forward the application for the preferred food name although the Association had worked with them over the three year period.

The Chairman reported that the six month EU consultation period for the preferred food name application had ended on 4th October and no objections had been made. The Commission would now prepare the Regulation which would grant legal protection to the name. The Regulation now required to be published and this process could take two to three months. Mr D Pullar exhibited a sample logo label which could show the protected geographical area and this could be attached to the fish tag, boxes and other marketing material, including the website. The cost was approximately £36 per 1,000 and it could be set up that the label could be purchased through the Association.

Mr D Pullar added that, in Europe, chefs look for the PFN status and, when they see it, they know straight away that it must be a quality product. Eventually, it may be possible to have the PGI logo embossed on the actual fish tag. It was known that DEFRA deals very strongly

with any infringement of the rights.

IX Renewable Energy

The Chairman stated that renewable energy was a massive issue which would not be going away. The Secretary had attempted to ask Jim McKie of Marine Scotland to come and talk to the Association but his calls had not been returned. Mr MacKay felt that there should be a mechanism in place to ensure that, in relevant cases, compensation should be paid by the development company for losses to all sectors. This had been a failure with the introduction of fish farms years ago. Mr D Pullar said that the Inshore Fisheries Group was the locus to learn first hand about developments. He sits on the Committee for the East Coast and Moray Firth and he encouraged members to attempt to become involved in the Committees in other areas so that they would have access to information which would be beneficial. The Inshore Fisheries Group had been set up by the Scottish Government and was industry lead. Marine Protected Areas had power to stop most activities but it was thought that they could not interfere with salmon netting as the rights were held under an heritable title.

Mr Hutchison felt that it was important to have a mechanism in place to measure the affects which renewable energy schemes may have, otherwise it would be very difficult to pursue compensation. Mr Grant thought that Marine Scotland was to be producing a report. However, Mr D Pullar thought that this was only for smolts, which was not sufficient as the data could be quite different for sea returning fish. Mr Grant's experience had been that fish are easily disturbed by anything such as noise, movement or electro-magnetism. Mr D Pullar added that the development companies had acknowledged that there would be interference with migratory paths and patterns but that they didn't know for sure what this would be. Mr Grant was doubtful that the developers would be interested in paying compensation. Mr Hutchison added that compliance behaviour ought to be part of the conditions of the grant of the licence. The Secretary would continue

to endeavour to get a meeting with Mr McKie of Marine Scotland. Mr D Pullar would pass details of the Inshore Fisheries Group Scottish Co-ordinator to Mr Hutchison so that he could attempt to arrange representation for the Solway area.

X Aquaculture and Fisheries Bill

Mr G Pullar reported that the Rural Affairs Committee had started taking evidence from Stakeholders in connection with the proposals under the Bill and that they would be meeting with the Committee at Usan on 10th November next to discuss the issues affecting the net industry. The Bill had been published recently on the website and would be progressing. Mr MacKay reported that some of the provisions in the Bill were an attempt to curb the activities of District Boards and force them to be more transparent and accountable. Monitoring would continue. Mr G Pullar would be the representative at the Stakeholders' meetings. The Secretary was asked to arrange a meeting with Mr Paul Wheelhouse, the Deputy Minister, to discuss the Bill.

XI Venue for 2013 AGM

The Chairman reported that there was no recommendation from the Executive Council for a venue for the 2013 AGM, although central Scotland had been stated as a preference. Locations of Dornoch, Crieff Hydro and a return to Dunblane were all suggested and the Secretary was instructed to investigate suitable accommodation and thereafter a decision would be made by the Chairman and Mr Allan.

XII AOCB

(i) Association Website

The Chairman made a plea for any photographs, new or old, to place on and enhance the Association's website. Mr Stephen MacMillan was willing to create a small film on fisheries. The preferred food name could be advertised on the website once it is finally registered. Mr D Pullar suggested that the website required a latest news page in order to maintain interest. The Secretary would pass a copy of Mr Shearer's article on the history of the Association to Mr Linkie for publication,

subject to an acknowledgement to Mr Shearer.

(ii) Seafood Scotland

Mr D Pullar passed on some folders from Seafood Scotland which outlined benefits which might be available to members. They were unable to deal with the Association as a body but could help individual members or firms with marketing to promote their quality product for best value.

Mr MacKay thank everyone present for their attendance and support and the meeting then closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman proposed by Mr Hutchison.