



River Earn Improvement Association



Minutes of the A.G.M. held at R.B.L. Crieff 20th April 2016.

Apologies- Roger Jenkinson, Chris Russell, Peter McDonald, Jim Perrett, Roger Alwen, Gavin Harrower, Bobby McGrandles.

Present – 30 members

1. **Chairman's Welcome.**--- Colin Lowson welcomed and thanked the 30 members for making the effort to turn out and commented that this A.G.M. was unique in that the developments over the previous season had led to much more interest in the activities of the R.E.I.A. which has culminated in the tremendous turnout of members on the evening.
2. **Apologies**---The Secretary read the list of members apologies as listed above.
3. **Minutes Of 2015 A.G.M.**----These were read by the Chairman , proposed as accurate by Sandy McIntosh and seconded by Derek Trevis.
4. **Matters Arising.**---- None requested.
5. **Wild Fishery Review.**---- The Chairman commented that this was possibly the most fundamental and wide reaching piece of legislation ever to affect salmon fishing on the Earn particularly and Scotland generally. He commented that the time and effort expended by members of the R.E.I.A. led by the Secretary and the support and help from David Summers of T.D.S.F.B. was enormous over the past year. The argument for the Earn and its Associations was taken and delivered forcibly to politicians and civil servants alike but to no avail. The Earn remains a Cat 3 river. Only time will now tell how that affects the viability of the future of salmon fishing on the Earn.
David Summers commented that the result was clearly wrong and based on flawed science which had been totally disproved but was clearly ignored by the civil servants in M.S. whose careers depend on supporting the Establishment line. He recommended continued opposition to the legislation.
He went on to explain in detail the flaws in the M.S. model and clearly demonstrated that the spawning target laid down by M.S. was entirely not appropriate for a lowland river such as ours. He stated quite clearly that going forward, it is in everybody's clear interest to report fully and accurately their

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River Earn Improvement Association



catches and where possible, to take scale samples for analysis. This will help clarify the disparity in the M.S. assertion that the average weight is corrected using a figure of 43% grilse. It is essential that we get a better understanding of the sea age of adults running the river.

He further suggested that it was in the full interest of the Earn for a representative to attend the T.S.F.B. meetings as an observer and that he would advise meeting dates.

Various opinions and facts were then voiced from the floor.

Ian Dalglish reinforced the view that it was essential to report catches accurately if we had any chance whatsoever to get out of Cat 3.

Alan Brock asked about the relationship of water flow to catches.

Laurence Crompton Howe said the only accurate gauge of run data is by use of a counter. The Chairman replied that it would incur a cost of around £100k which is clearly out with our reach but that he would liaise with T.D.S.F.B. to elicit clarification of help on a possible project.

Gordon Taylor, Crieff A.C. Secretary, said that all the effects so far were hugely negative with membership down by 30% or £10k per annum.

Pat Silvey, Secretary of Comrie A.C. reported a downturn of around 15% in membership and stated that it would be a very long haul to ever get out of the Cat 3 status.

John Robertson asked what level of catches would be required to achieve a higher status. David Summers suggested that the Earn would now have to return to figures approaching 1000 salmon per annum consistently to do so.

Craig Ramsay asked how the river was in terms of fry density to which Sandy McIntosh replied that his observations showed it to be very healthy indeed, just as all electrofishing data suggested.

6. **T. In The Park.** ----The Chairman reported that all had been done under the circumstances to manage the threats and problems posed to the river by the existence of this event. He personally, along with others in the committee, had met with the organisers. Two reps had been appointed by S.E.P.A. and twice daily water quality reports were given to the R.E.I.A. during the lead up to, throughout and the period after the festival.

Sandy McIntosh reported that in his view the quality of the Machany remains poorer after the event. Both he and Jim Perritt agreed to attend meetings on behalf of the R.E.I.A. for the 2016 event.

Ian Dalglish spoke passionately about the negative effects felt by some proprietors and residents of the area. Concern was also raised about illegal



River Earn Improvement Association



campsites, particularly the one at North Kinkell and the fact that Perth and Kinross Council had made 36 recommendations going forward into the 2016 event.

7. **Chairman and Secretary's Report.**-----The Chairman read the report and took questions and observations from the floor. It was clear more scientific data was required to strengthen our case, principally in the area of migration and spawning times. Lawrence Crompton Howe criticised the rules on bleeders, pointing out it simply meant a slow lingering death for fish in that category. Alastair Hamilton asked why there was a differentiation between salmon and sea trout in Cat 3 rivers. The Secretary replied that this was an area which was bound to cause conflict going forward, particularly with in river nets. David Summers was asked if he felt that the levy structure was now unfairly biased against Earn proprietors given the undoubted pressure and reduction of income resulting from the legislation. He suggested that every Earn Proprietor should now appeal their valuation on the grounds of a material change having taken place which negatively affects their business. Moving on from the W.F.R. the Secretary once again asked for information and reports from grayling anglers on the river to add to the website. The beaver population is increasing by the day and it was pointed out that some banks are now devastated whilst S.N.H. and S.W.T. continue to promote the increase. Invasive spraying is planned to continue through 2016. Hatchery report. The Chairman said that around 50000 juveniles were stocked in the upper catchment in 2015 and that conditions in 2015 hindered the capture of broodstock. He pointed out that there was still significant capacity for such broodstock and that he would be contacting T.D.S.F.B Chairman requesting a focus on this area. The Secretary commented that catches were up year on year for both salmon and sea trout and that our 5 year average remained settled around 800 salmon and grilse. Actual figures were Salmon and grilse 752 (531 in 2014), with a C & R rate of 87%. The salmon catch represented an increase of 42% over 2014. Sea trout fared even better, 2015 rod catch was 872 (550 in 2014), up 59% with a C & R rate of 84%. So, not so bad a season after all said and done! We continue to show a very respectable improving trend.
8. **Treasurer's Report.**-----Ian Dalglish gave his final report of his long association with the R.E.I.A. Key points were that the account remained



River Earn Improvement Association



healthy with some £27k in the bank and that the money required some good quality requests from the membership to spend on suitable projects, a familiar theme from Ian's many previous reports.

The Chairman then thanked Ian for the huge contribution he has made to the association as Chairman, Treasurer and committee member over the last 4 decades. He then presented Ian with a bottle of the finest malt whisky as a token of our gratitude.

9. **Election of Office Bearers.**-----John Robertson was formally elected as Treasurer in succession to Ian Dalglish. Proposed by John Young and seconded by Alastair Hamilton. No further nominations for other posts were made, so the status quo remains.

10. **A.O.B.**-----Simon Wright of Lochlane and Laggan asked if the R.E.I.A. would be prepared to support a proposal to ease Coquhalzie Weir and commit R.E.I.A. funds to a project which may also include a fish counter. There is a perception that, in its present form, the weir presented a barrier to upstream migration under certain conditions and particularly that it was a temperature barrier in the early spring. This was questioned by the Secretary who quoted some notable catches from Crieff A.C. waters in the past when spring numbers were good compared to the low catches now experienced throughout the river in Spring. Only 5 fish were caught in February, for example, a stark contrast to the highs of the 90s when one angler in Crieff had 14 springers during a March week on the beat. Even latterly, there were 3 opening day springers on Lochlane and Laggan just 3 seasons ago. The general opinion from delegates, including those from Crieff and Comrie A.C. s, was that there was no great appetite to invest funds without proper evidence to support it. David Summers said that a previous engineering survey concluded that baffles could be incorporated to moderate flows through the fish pass during periods of high flow which seemed a fairly pointless exercise as fish ignore the pass in these conditions, preferring instead to simply swim over the weir. The pass is used by salmon regularly during periods of low to moderate flows. He added that a counter incorporated in the pass would cost around £30k but that it would only be of limited use for the reasons stated previously. Colin Lawson said that it would be too far up river anyway to give us an accurate idea of fish numbers, with so many fish in the autumn spawning downstream in the main stem and tributaries including the Machany, Ruthven and Mey. Fish continue to be caught above the weir in the early spring months



River Earn Improvement Association



and there was certainly no impediment to later running fish.

Those members who have studied the weir in the past, including Drew McIntyre, stated openly that they could see no evidence of any impediment to upstream migration.

Simon Wright then asked if the R.E.I.A. would support even modest improvements to take place. The question was then referred to Arabella Connel as the proprietor directly concerned with any possible project discussion who in turn asked Crieff and Comrie A.C. s for their input.

The Chairman extended an invitation to a representative from Lochlane and Laggan to sit on the committee where their concerns could be discussed in greater depth.

Alan Brock expressed concern at the amount of sawbills now living and breeding on the river, a comment that received universal support. However, we remain at the whim of S.N.H. who strictly control licences and indeed numbers of birds that can be culled. It is certain that avian predation has a huge impact on our juvenile stocks.

Sandy McIntosh reminded people of the consequences of killing fish under the new legislation.

There being no further business, the Chairman thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 10.00 p.m.