

Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

DRAFT

Annual Report 2017



Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

The Clubhouse

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Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

MEMBERS 2017

Fen Howieson (Chairman) (Mandated: Cambusmore)

Fiona Simpson (Mandated: Crown Estates

Aly Dickson (Lanrick))

Scott Mason (Mandated: Stirling Council)

Robert Baird (Anglers' Rep)

Tony Cameron (Leny)

John McKenzie (Mandated: Allan Water Angling & Improvement Association)

Chris Thomas (Anglers' Rep)

Jason Walls (Anglers Rep)

Clerk to the Board: Alison Baker

Superintendent: Lee Fisher

Finance: William Anderson

(c/o Managed Estates,

1 Sprinkerse Road, Stirling, FK7 7SN

Accountants: Douglas Home & Co

47-49 The Square, Kelso

Roxburghshire, TD5 7HW

CHAIRMAN'S FOREWORD

A number of significant events have happened in 2017. Firstly, there was the statement from Scottish Government in February putting to an end the aspirations within the Wild Fisheries Review/Reform. This was extremely disappointing for the Forth District Salmon Fishery Board as it has left us with no additional funding, no extension of powers to deal with all species and showed a lack of ambition from Scottish Government to deal with the issues confronting an area such as the Forth. This despite the efforts made by the Clerk and also the River Forth Fisheries Trust to ensure that the Forth's voice was heard at national level.

That said, some elements of the reform are still alive; including conservation limits and fisheries management planning. The possibility of new legislation is also muted although this is likely to be delayed by the demands of Brexit. Our representational body is now Fisheries Management Scotland (in conjunction with the Fisheries and River Trusts). The Clerk (in her capacity as the manager of the River Forth Fisheries Trust) sits on the FMS Board –so we continue to be well represented at a national level.

Despite this, the year has seen the start of the delivery of a number of projects which will benefit the Forth DSFB including two new fish passes on the Almond via the River Forth Fisheries Trust's RiverLife: Almond & Avon project, working with Marine Scotland on the deployment of receivers for a national project (the Forth receiving more receivers than any other area), the completion of the collection of samples for the genetics project for the Teith and Allan Water and the collection of additional data on birds and redds on the Forth & Teith.

The day-to-day running of the Forth DSFB continues with board meetings having occurred in February, May, August and December. At the public meeting in May, Dr David Summer's gave an inspirational and entertaining talk on the work the Tay DSFB have been involved in getting more water (back) into the River Garry system. The talk highlighted how long these processes can take and how the DSFBs can lead where other regulators do not. The Board has formally approved a number of policies; including the Conservation Codes 2018 and a new enforcement strategy. My thanks to Managed Estates, who continue to do a great job collecting the assessments and managing the Board's accounts.

In 2017 the salmon fishing rights were revalued by the Scottish Assessors, there have been a number of changes in the Forth area which appear to have created a number of anomalies, which the Clerk continues to work with the Assessor's office to bring to a conclusion. The methodology of valuation is

complex and this means that there is not a simple inflationary change applied. In general terms the Forth Fishery has been valued higher overall, which reflects the quality of fishing available.

The Board's Superintendent, Lee Fisher and his team continue to develop. The Tyne/Esk group has resulted in significant savings in time and cost in managing this particular localised poaching issue (my thanks again to East Lothian Angling Association for supporting this initiative and helping with volunteer expenses and equipment). Discussions have started on other rivers to set up something similar. The works on the Almond resulted in some additional time having to be deployed and additional restrictions put in place. Lee has been well supported by the volunteer bailiff team which now include several members of staff from the Trust. Again, work in the estuary has been further consolidated and better information is being received. A review of the equipment being used has been made and some new equipment has been purchased to support their work. Jonathan Louis (working in a new role as Operations Manager (seconded from the Trust) continues to coordinate enforcement, collecting data and undertaking training allowing the bailiffs on the ground to get on with what they do best.

The Board continues to work closely with the Trust which is now the largest Fishery Trust in Scotland. The Trust continues to provide the conservation support required to the Board, through data collection, monitoring and research and providing scientific data to respond to consultations, set conservation codes etc. The Trust continues to use the funding from the Board to not only deliver in the areas agreed but also to use as a lever to access further funding from others to deliver projects. Further changes and development of the Trust will be announced in 2018.

Catches continue to be below the five year average. River levels have been more consistent and therefore this is more worrying. Although no consolation, many other Scottish rivers have also seen poor catches with the Spey at 65% and the Tweed below this figure. Further work is required to promote the Forth Fishery and ensure that we are providing the best opportunities to reverse the decline of anglers, which compounds this trend. Dialogue is being undertaken at both national and local level. As part of this, funding is being sought for the development of a website dedicated to fisheries promotion in the Forth. The issue of marine survival continues to cause concern. It is important that, whilst it is difficult for us to influence what happens at sea, we need to ensure the best habitat and conditions for all returning salmon given much of the issues and pressures across the District.

Of course, one of the big stories in 2017 was the influx of pink salmon into a number of Scotland's rivers. In the Forth two reports were made, however it is difficult to know how many may have entered the estuary. Work continues at national level on the impact of these non-native species and further assessments and management techniques are being investigated.

After nine years sitting on the Board, the last five representing Cambusmore as their mandated member and also being chair, I have decided to step down due to increased work commitments. It has been an interesting time developing the Forth DSFB throughout this time where some major changes have taken place and I am pleased to hand over the role of chair to John McKenzie as temporary chair pending election process by the board. I wish the Forth DSFB, all the proprietors and anglers continued success with the development of the Forth Fishery

Fen Howieson
Chairman

January 2018

COLLECTION OF DATA

ADULT STOCK MONITORING CATCH RETURNS

For the last two years the Forth DSFB has attempted to collect catch returns directly from proprietors and not wait for the Marine Scotland figures to be published. Marine Scotland figures are collated Districtwide and on a slightly different basis to the Board, and this does not provide the Board with sufficient detail and have then to be split river-by-river which is often problematic due to the differences of reporting.

Catch returns have always been one of the means by which the Board can report on the level of fish caught, often then used to related to fish populations. These figures are also now used as part of the calculations used by Marine Scotland Science to assess the categorisation of each river. If these figures are not correct, then the calculations made will by extension be inaccurate. The Board acknowledges that for many fisheries in the Forth that preparing catch data is difficult and has been working with Marine Scotland to look at other methods.

Catch data is also used as part of the valuation calculation of the individual fisheries by the Scottish Assessors. It is important that a method of reporting which is accurate and easy for anglers and fishery owners to engage with is explored and put in place so that this only a single return required and that this is consistent. The Board continues to work with others to try and put this in place.

There continues to be a general downturn although some rivers have reported larger catches. Whether this is due to better conditions or just better reporting is not easy to confirm.

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	5 Year Average	10 Year Average
Salmon Caught & Retained	1139	1120	910	1034	791	613	391	138	253	111	100*	199	546
Salmon Caught & Released	1414	1089	1170	2399	1783	1601	1166	652	893	1205	831*	949	1279
Salmon Caught Total	2553	2209	2080	3433	2574	2214	1557	790	1146	1316	931*	1148	1825
Sea Trout Caught & Retained	467	305	234	227	236	836	571	467	0	13	26*	215	292
Sea Trout Caught & Released	317	351	860	773	816	146	92	71	0	222	331*	143	366
Sea Trout Caught Total	784	656	1094	1000	1052	982	663	538	0	235	357*	359	658

*10 year catch return figures (*no catch return from Keir Estate)*

The submission of catch returns is a legal requirement from all proprietors and as the Conservation Limits are based on the catches returned it is important that all proprietors complete and submit their catch return form.

COUNTERS

Counters can be useful to measure the numbers of adult fish within a river system, however traditional types of counter can only be installed where there is an existing weir/fish pass. Care needs to be taken that the installation does not impede fish movements. Technology is changing fast in this area however it is necessary to ensure that the ongoing resource required to maintain these systems is of a sustainable level.

The Trust currently runs a counter on the Fankerton Fish Pass on the Carron. The issues of data collection have been resolved and data has been collected from the beginning of the 2017 spawning run in October. There have been no fish passed the counter to date. TLS Hydro, who are responsible for the

fish pass, have undertaken some improvement works to the entrance of the pass and the Trust will continue to monitor. The data will be presented to SEPA to allow them to evaluate whether any changes are required to enable fish passage as required under the CAR License.

The Trust via the RiverLife: Almond & Avon project is still considering the options for counters on the Almond to evaluate the success of fish passage as part of the works on 8 weirs on the Almond system.

Following on from assessment of the possibilities of a counter on the Teith at Lanrick Weir in 2016, the Trust have been working with a number of new innovations to assess the options for a counter which can assess the whole width of the river. A trial has been ongoing at both Lanrick and Blair Drummond.

JUVENILE FISH STOCK ASSESSMENTS

This work is undertaken for the Forth DSFB by the River Forth Fisheries Trust.

In 2017 the Trust undertook 74 electrofishing surveys primarily on the Rivers Almond, Avon, Devon and Allan Water.

River Almond : Salmon were only recorded at one site directly below Horseshoe Weir albeit in very low densities. Trout were recorded at 14 sites out of 22 surveyed and aside from the Gogar and Brox Burns, trout densities were very low, ranging from 0.8 trout to 5 trout/100m²). Bullhead were present at 14 sites out of the 22. Where present, they dominated the fish population with densities as high as 400 fish/100m².

Compared to previous years, salmon and trout densities were lower while the bullhead population was booming. The Brox Burn was the only site where brown trout appeared to be doing better than previous surveys while bullhead were not so prevalent.

River Avon: Salmon were caught at 11 sites out of 25. As with previous surveying on the Avon densities were low. Only the most downstream site (Lovells Glen on the main stem, U/S M9 bridge) had a medium to high density of salmon with 44.3 fish/100m². The indications are that the lower main stem is important for salmon and sea trout spawning, and more focus will be given to this area in the future to better characterize the population. Trout were recorded at 19 sites out of the 25 and densities ranged from low to high (1.5 to 189 trout/100m²).

Compared to previous years, densities of juvenile salmon and trout, while still generally low, had slightly increased.

River Devon: Salmon were recorded at each tributary surveyed downstream of Rumbling Bridge (impassable falls). Densities ranged from low to medium, ranging from 0.8 to 59.5 fish/100m². Trout were caught at each site surveyed with densities also ranging from low to medium (4.1 to 62.5 fish /100m²). Compared to previous years salmon densities were higher, including in the Dollar Burn which is upstream of Dollar Weir fish pass renovated by RFFT in 2015. Trout densities remained stable or slightly dropped depending on sites.

Allan Water: Juvenile salmon were only absent at two sites. These were located upstream of A9 culverts. Aside from these two salmon densities ranged from medium to high with 46 to 228 salmon/100m². Trout were caught at all sites with the exception of one site on the Muckle Burn (although juvenile salmon were present) and densities were around medium compared to previous years densities remained stable for both species.

The rivers surveyed in 2017 generally showed stable or improving fry densities aside from the River Almond. Here, the situation is complicated by the presence of bullhead, and salmonid fry densities appear to be decreasing in most areas surveyed.

REDD COUNTING

This year the River Forth Fisheries Trust trained volunteers to carry out redd counting. A day was spent on the bank of the river Teith at Callander with eight volunteers going through the process of finding, identifying and finally counting redds. Conditions were not optimal, but territorial male salmon chasing each other were observed, as well as a female cutting a redd.

Trained volunteers carried out surveys on the Allan water catchment (Knaik, Danny Burn, Corriebeagh Burn, Muckle Burn, Lodge Burn), Teith Catchment (Calair Burn) and finally the lower part of the Duchray (Forth Catchment).

River Forth Fisheries Trust staff carried out surveys of the Teith catchment (River Larig and Inverlochlarig Burn, Balvaig, Ardoch Burn, Keltie Water), Allan Water catchment (main stem around Nether Cambushinnie farm, Todhill Burn, Muckle Burn and main stem above Carsebreck Loch), and on the upper Devon.

Altogether volunteers and trust staff covered 32 km mainly on the Teith and Allan Water.

The data has not been analysed yet, but this should be completed by the end of February.

HABITAT ASSESSMENTS

This work is undertaken by the River Forth Fisheries Trust for the Forth DSFB.

During May and June 2017, a walkover survey of the River Teith was carried out by the Trust staff to map out instream habitat such as riffles, runs, pools along with bankside changes and pressures. This information is used to identify potential projects to allow the Board to plan target monitoring and evaluation of the fishery. During the survey, information was drawn on maps out in the field with photos recording key points on the river which is later digitized and can be overlain on other information such as bird density and electrofishing results.

The river was surveyed from Inverlochlarig to the confluence with the Forth with a number of main tributaries also included. The work hasn't quite been completed but will be completed early 2018. The data collected will then be digitised.

PROTECTING FISH STOCKS AND THE AQUATIC ENVIRONMENT

ENFORCEMENT

Due to the current level of resource, the Board currently employs one water bailiff as Superintendent who works with a coordinator seconded from the Trust. This structure has been found to be very successful over the last two years. The main reason for this is that the Board relies on volunteers to help it protect migratory fish across the district. The use of a more office based coordinator has allowed the Superintendent to be able to spend the majority of his time on external liaison, undertaking engagement and enforcement activities. This has included continued liaison with Police Scotland, SPCA, Crown Office,

Marine Scotland Compliance and Scottish Government as well as proprietors, landowners and members of the public.

The volunteer team needs to be supported and provided with appropriate training etc. and this has allowed them to be very active during the year. This activity has resulted in nets being seized, people reported to the police for illegal activity and a greater bailiffing presence on some rivers where specific issues continue. It is perceived that the greater presence acts as a deterrent to poachers and information networks have increased as volunteer bailiffs have engaged with anglers, landowners and other members of the public.

In addition to enforcement of fishing offences, the water bailiffs have also been involved with a range of other activities (often in conjunction with Trust staff) including:

Pollution/environmental issues

- Abstraction – as part of routine patrols, the local bailiff identified abstraction causing loss of water to the fish pass on Inveresk Weir (Midlothian Esks) rendering it impassable and the lack of screens preventing access to the lade. Enquiries with the local SEPA office identified that there was no CAR licence for abstraction from this weir. This dialogue has led to the abstraction being stopped and discussion toward a licence agreement. Through quarterly meetings the Trust is now monitoring the process to ensure that licence has appropriate environment conditions on abstraction, screening and fish passage. Dialogue has also continued with Scottish Water and SEPA on compensation flows from Lochs Katrine and Venachar due to be changed in 2018.
- Fish Pass blockages – The flowing fish passes were either reported as blocked to others or were dealt with directly by the bailiffs: Cambus (Devon), Preston Mill (Tyne), Bridge of Allan (Allan), Kirkton (Almond)
- Riparian damage – an area of cattle poaching on river Tyne was reported to SEPA. Initial measures have been put in place which are being monitored.
- Direct pollution events – the following have been reported to SEPA: Building rubble bags left in river Tyne after works completed, bankside collapse including rubble on Almond tributary due to poor workmanship, fish kill event on tributary of Allan due to chemical inputs, 100 tonnes of topsoil dumped next to river Tyne, severe sediment pollution in the river Esk due to pipe burst, sediment inputs into the Teith.
- Other contraventions – lack of screening for canal drain down allowing introduction of non native species into river Avon reported to SNH and Marine Scotland, continuance of pressure for a screen at the canal lade on the Almond.
- Fishing using otherwise unlawful methods – a complaint has been made to Marine Scotland that operators using unlawful methods such as electro-fishing are not complying with the conditions of their licences or obtaining the required permissions. This has led to this being raised at national level and the review being undertaken of the process.

After initial report of issues to SEPA and others these are logged and monitored by the Trust through regular meeting with SEPA River Basin Management Coordinator.

Training for volunteer bailiffs

- INNS & Biosecurity workshop – an INNS & Biosecurity workshop was provided to the bailiffs to identify INNS which might be spreading along rivers but also to highlight biosecurity issues so that volunteer bailiffs can highlight this issue to anglers and raise awareness of issues.

- Scale collection & reading workshop – a scale collection & reading workshop is planned for early 2018 and will teach the bailiffs how to collect and record scales but also how to read them.

Recruitment of new volunteer bailiffs

- Staff attended a meeting at West Lothian Angling Association to outline the volunteer bailiff role and to outline the process of becoming a volunteer bailiff.
- Two new volunteers have come forward to help support bailiffing in the district, their applications are being assessed.

Raising awareness:

The local bailiffs have discussions throughout the year with local clubs and fisheries to provide support on a number of matters; permitting requirements, signage, and Check, Clean, Dry information.

Throughout the year the bailiff coordinator has been using social media to raise awareness of:

1. Salmon and sea trout angling opportunities in the district
2. Promoting the fishery with a competition for the largest fish
3. Forth District Conservation Codes and their requirements
4. Other issues such as reporting of escapee rainbow trout
5. Opportunities for volunteering
6. Updates on Scottish Government consultations on Wild Fisheries issues.

Cyber intelligence is also routinely collected and passed to the Superintendent.

The Board would like to thank all the anglers, clubs, ghillies, beat owners and agencies who without constant communication within the Forth District the superintendent's job would be a lot harder to administer.

CONSERVATION POLICIES

The Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations 2014 remain in force making it an offence to kill a salmon before 1st April in the Forth District.

The Trust Biologist currently sits on the Marine Scotland Salmon Liaison Group, lobbying for issues which are important for the Forth to ensure they are considered as part of the model and advises the Board on the outcomes of the assessments for the salmon conservation regulations.

Marine Scotland Science ran the model for 2017 with some improvements. The influence of flow on rod catches was incorporated into the model using data from SEPA river gauges. Currently (and until a fish counter network becomes established in many more rivers across Scotland), stock size is estimated for each river from catch returns. Flows are known to have a substantial influence on angling success and so the introduction of flow data should theoretically improve the accuracy of the model. The issues of indeterminate angling effort and inconsistent reporting have not, however, been resolved and so stock size estimates remain inaccurate, but the best available to work with.

Another welcome improvement on the previous year's model was the consideration of each river system separately rather than lumping all the non SAC rivers together as one. This has made for a more sensible classification of some of our inner estuary rivers such as the Allan Water and the Forth.

Currently, the model does not take habitat quality into account when estimating egg deposition targets. Since many of the District's rivers suffer from patchy (at best) habitat quality, this issue is of particular concern for us and results in a gross overestimate of the number of adult salmon required to achieve maximum population recruitment. Marine Scotland are working on this and the 2019 classification will hopefully include this factor.

Finally, the model will also be expanded to include a juvenile assessment in addition to the adult assessment. This will highlight areas where juvenile densities are lower than predicted using regional variables. Many of our rivers fit into this description, and so it will help to improve the suitability of the model for the Forth District.

The resultant categories for the Forth were issued within the draft consultation:

River	Category	FDSFB Comments
River Leven	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Codes
River Tyne	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Codes
River Almond	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Codes
River Avon	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Codes
River Carron	Category 3	Changed from Category 2 In line with previous agreed Conservation Codes
River Forth & Allan	Category 2	In line with expectation and allows more consistent management
Teith SAC	Category 1	Concerns remain on the conflicting information and evidence between SNH reports and the MS category
River Devon	Category 3	In line with previous agreed Conservation Codes
Forth District Generally	Category 3	Any other water body not mentioned including the estuary
Forth District	Coastal	Continuation of prohibition of retaining salmon

At the time of writing the regulations have not been placed before parliament despite the season having already started. This has been raised as unacceptable in relation to allowing river and fishery managers to issue permits in line with the statutory regulations.

Some issues with the Conservation Regulations still remain which have been highlighted again in the 2018 consultation:

- The reliance on catch returns is unscientific
- There is no consideration of habitat in the model therefore many rivers have an over expectation.
- The constant changing of categories is bad for management of the fishery at both local and district level
- The boundaries of the Teith SAC mean that salmon swim from Cat 3 through Cat1 to Cat 2 (this has been dealt with via the Forth DSFB conservation codes.
- There is an inconsistency in the reporting condition of the Teith SAC between Marine Scotland and SNH.
- There has been no indication on how Scottish Government are intending to improve the Cat 2 and 3 rivers
- There is no consideration of the economic impacts of the categorization.

These issues continue to be raised at local and national level via Fisheries Management Scotland and directly with Marine Scotland.

The Board continues to aim to achieve 100% catch and release of spring salmon across the District and continues to include within any conservation code the return of all fish caught before 1st June and will continue to do so. The Forth is still a recovering fishery with many pressures both historic and current and it is the responsibility of all to ensure that it is handed over to the next generation in good condition.

The board also included in the 2017 conservation codes a target catch and release rate on these rivers which have the option to retain salmon and sea trout at 85% and 75% respectively. In 2017 the following rates based on the catch returns were achieved:

River	Category	Salmon	Sea Trout	River	Category	Salmon	Sea Trout
Forth*	2	76.2%	89.5%	Leven	3	100%	100%
Teith	1	90.7%	95.1%	Avon	3	100%	73.5%
Allan	2	94.8%	93.7%	Almond	3	100%	100%
Carron	3	93.5%	93.1%	Esk	3	/	/
Devon	3	100%	100%	Tyne	3	/	/

* represents only Stirling Council Fisheries rates as no fish were reported upstream of the Forth-Teith confluence.

PREDATION

In April 2017, the Board organised its first bird count for a number of years. This was carried out in the Teith in response to comments from a number of proprietors on the river. A survey was also sent out to all the proprietors to get further views, one response was received which stated that no birds should be culled. The bird count was organised to find out if bird predation is an issue on the river, look at numbers of piscivorous birds and also to try and identify any hotspots for piscivorous bird predation on the Teith.

To organise the survey and make sure the correct information was being collected, the Scottish Natural Heritage bird survey protocols were followed. The Board did however modify it slightly so that location data could be collected to assess areas of particular concern on the river. It was important to include the full catchment to have an accurate picture of bird numbers, which required an intensive survey and required a lot of input to capture the snapshot required. The Forth DSFB would not be able to undertake this without the support of local volunteers. 46 volunteers were active on the day the majority being from local environmental groups and rangers, despite a call going to all proprietors and anglers.

80km of river and lochs were surveyed simultaneously to try and minimise double counting. In total 139 goosanders, 21 mergansers and 10 cormorants were recorded taking the total piscivorous birds counted to 170. It is however important to not take this number as the actual number as 40 of the birds recorded were in flight which means they could have also been picked up by other surveyors. This information was used to create a heat map of birds surveyed. Two notable areas were identified with Callander Meadows being a hotspot and the lower section of the river. It is thought Callander Meadows could be a hotspot due to the interactions with people feeding the birds.

A second bird count was organised for October 2017 to develop the picture but had to be cancelled due to only 7 volunteers coming forward. Assuming volunteers are available a further bird count will be organised for 25th March 2018.

There is plenty of anecdotal discussions on seals and their impact on the Fishery, these are mainly at the mouth of the Devon and within the Forth and Teith. The Board has however not received any reports directly from anglers or proprietors with specific information. There are legal and operational difficulties with the management of seals and the reason for their congregating in rivers is due to many interrelated issues to do with feeding within and without the estuary. The decision was made to start work on collating bird population information in 2017 which has been started (see above).

The Board has already had some discussions with individual proprietors in relation to the information and procedure which would be required to assess the issue and make any application for management. There are many different views on the issue, impact and the possible methods for management within the angling community let alone other external views. The board will work to deliver an evidenced based, sustainable solution through national and local dialogue.

CONSULTATIONS

By responding to consultations, the Board can influence better practices by other who undertake works in the District. The Board tried to respond to all consultations however it does not have the resource to monitor all planning and CAR applications and it is appreciative of any that are brought to it notice by proprietors and members of the public.

The Board is a statutory consultee for aquaculture. It received and responded to one application during 2017.

Whilst not a statutory consultee for other developments and activities the Board (via the Trust) routinely responds. In 2017 the Board responded to the following types of applications:

- Wild Fisheries – Scottish Government consultations – 1 (Salmon Conservations)
- Other Scottish Government consultations – 2 (Crown Estates devolution and Planning Scotland Act changes)
- Wild Fisheries – UK Government – Salmon consultation
- Local Development Plans – 2 (Stirling Council and West Lothian Council)
- CAR Licences* - SEPA do not routinely consult with the Forth DSFB on CAR Licences. Most engagement is with developers who are asked to discuss the application before these are submitted. This has been found to a more positive way of ensuring that the works proposed do not have a negative impact on the fishery.
- Marine Scotland Licences (Dredging activities) – 6. Concerns on smolt migration routes raised. The Forth DSFB has limited information on migration routes, therefore it is difficult to be specific on any impacts.
- Other – Off Shore Wind Farms (Fife Coast) – initial meeting with developers on fish monitoring
- Informal discussions – The Trust is often approached by members of the public, fishery owners, other agencies, to feed into consultations which may have an impact on the Fishery. These are handled by the Science Team at the Trust, but sometimes revert back to the Forth DSFB if a more formal response is required.

* Due to a change in SEPA policies the requirement for SEPA to consult DSFBs and Fisheries Trusts was missed off – this, through intervention of the Board's Clerks and FMS, has now been resolved.

PROJECTS RUN BY THE RIVER FORTH FISHERIES TRUST

GENERALLY

The Board continues to provide funding to the RFFT by way of a donation. This again was £60,000 and for 2017 it looks like RFFT have increased this investment many times over (2016/17 £254,147, 2017/18 £580,000). In 2017, the Trust has been involved in the following:

- Monitoring and scientific data gathering by electrofishing and habitat surveys to inform management policy and plans – >100 sites surveyed
- Continue working relationships with statutory bodies, government agencies, communities and fishery proprietors / organisations across the District together with relevant funding partners to support implementation of projects arising
- Following changes with Scottish Government thinking on Wild Fisheries Reform, engaging directly and via FMS on influencing change (including all species management).
- Provide technical advice on policy and operational matters.
- Through targeted educational programmes raise awareness of the water environment and its wellbeing within the catchment.
- Review and respond to consultations (planning etc.) and pollution incidents providing advice and training as may be necessary, at both national and local level.

CATCHMENTWIDE PROJECTS

The Trust continues to manage and develop a number of catchment wide programmes of work funded by a number of other organisations including Scottish Government, SEPA Water Environment Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, and other local funders. These are:

- Allan Water Improvement Project – Integrated catchment management and works to address issues such as flooding, barriers, INNS, etc. Including landscape restorations and management, barrier improvements working with Transport Scotland, brash bank restoration to stop erosion, tree planting to improve the riparian corridor and provide in stream texture. (Main funder: Scottish Government, SNH, SEPA WEF and FCS) (Budget: 2017: £30k core funding, supported by SRDP/ACES funding)
- RiverLife: Almond & Avon – 7 major restoration projects and associated community works, education, training and awareness raising. Now in delivery phase. New fish pass complete at Kirkton, nearly complete at Fair-a-Far. (Main funders: Scottish Government, SEPA WEF, City of Edinburgh Council, West Lothian Council and Heritage Lottery Fund) (Overall budget: £6.7m: 2017 £1.675m; 2018 £1.68m; 2019 £1.5m; 2020 £0.83m)
- Forth Invasive Non Native Species Programme (phase 5) – This was delivered in 2017 with limited funding. Treatment continues on the Allan Water, Carron, Almond and Avon. Due to SNH withdrawal of funding, the Trust is having to scale this programme down accordingly. Management of Invasive Non Native Species is being integrated where possible into other projects, eg Allan Water Improvement Project.
- RiverLife: Leven & Ore - Discussions are ongoing with Fife Council, SEPA and HLF on a project within the Leven and Ore catchments.
- Callander Landscape Project – led by the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National park, the Trust was invited to become a partner in the project to deliver the River Restore elements. These include installation of green bank improvements, managed grazing measures and the creation of an Aquatic Learning and Conservation Centre. The outcome of stage 2 funding application from HLF will be known in March 2018.

The Trust has also run a number of smaller projects, including, installation of brush banking and tree planting on Balvaig with further works planned for 2018.

The Trust also responds to informal consultations from Scottish Government, SEPA, Forestry Commission, Network Rail, Local Authorities, Scottish Water and SSE. The process of dealing with these plus ongoing liaison with agencies, local authorities and statutory energy suppliers, as well as local groups and stakeholders, allows the Trust to influence works being undertaken which affect our rivers and also contribute to policy and decision making.

EDUCATION

The Trust continues to work with schools across the District delivering Fish in the Class and INNS activities, which are always very popular. In 2017, 14 primary schools and two secondary schools were engaged with.

RESEARCH

Further partnerships are being developed with tertiary educational organisations within and beyond the District including Stirling, Edinburgh and Edinburgh Napier Universities, Rivers and Lochs Institute and Inverness College, who are supporting a number of projects ranging from genetics to project monitoring to training provision.

CONSULTANCY ACTIVITY

Funding of the Trust activities is always an issue. The Trust has therefore developed a more active consultancy ability, so that it can charge commercial undertakings for both data, assessments, fish rescues and delivery of small works. This has led to the Trust working on a range of projects both within and without the District, adding to capabilities of the staff and contributing to the funding of the Trust to support the work within the District.

SPECIFIC TOPIC

FISH MIGRATION

The issues relating to fish migration into and through many of the rivers within the District continues to be a concern. This issue has been identified as having the following three general concerns:

- The lack of regulation of these barriers – which is distinct (although clearly related) to the lack of fish passage. Without licencing there is no ability to regulate nor are owners of these structures aware that there is an issue.
- The economic (and social) impact on owners of salmon fishing rights above these structures, the consequential impact on the valuation of the Forth Fishery and on the income of the Forth DSFB.
- The social impact of aggravated and sometimes violent criminal activities associated with poaching and the impact on angling and members of the public in the District often due to the presence of an unregulated barriers.

The rivers of the Forth District have a legacy of issues in relation to the passage of fish both resident and migratory. For some rivers this is acute such as the Biel, Tyne, Esks, Leven, Devon and Almond, where the barriers are low down in the systems and this is preventing fish in any numbers reaching any spawning grounds. For others, the issues are in-stream affecting the ability of fish to utilise all available spawning opportunities, such as the Teith, Allan and Carron.

The owner of the structure is responsible for obtaining a licence from SEPA for the impoundment. This is regulated by SEPA as part of the requirements of the Water Framework Directive and is part of the River Basin Management Planning system in Scotland. All barriers should have a CAR licence which should require effective fish passage. The system is complicated by there being three types of barriers – historic (with no economic gain by the owner; eg redundant mill weir), operational (where there is economic gain eg hydro) and assets (whether the barrier provides some other benefit eg. a bridge apron). SEPA deals with these separately. The Forth has high number of all these types of barriers and many are on SEPAs priority list either for enforcement via CAR or for funding (if historic). SEPA works on a 6 year cycle and deadlines for compliance are either 2021 or 2027.

SEPA have advised that a CAR Licence can be reviewed if new information is available or there is a significant other change which means the conditions of the licence are not being met. Where either of these are suspected the Trust will challenge SEPA and ask for a review however it is very difficult to evidence a negative and this has been raised as an issue. There is no mechanism to directly appeal against a licence nor are the requirement for what qualifies as an acceptable fish pass particularly clear. This is also being raised at national level.

Because of this, working and influencing SEPA (who have a statutory requirement to regulate instream structures) and Scottish Government continues to be a priority across the District. Despite various processes for prioritization and delivery via the Water Environment Fund Team, progress is slow and the impact on the Forth DSFB continually ignored. The Board has started a process of raising the issues of these barriers directly with Scottish Government and at a higher level in SEPA. The actions (or often non-actions) of SEPA impacts directly on the salmon fishing proprietors use of their hereditary rights, which in turn impacts on the valuation and consequence income of the Board.

Since 2013, the Trust has asked for reviews or raised issues in relation to fish passage in the District for the following specific barriers:

Belhaven (Biel), Knowes, Preston Mill and Victoria Bridge (Tyne); Inveresk (Midlothian Esks); Leith Dock Gates (Water of Leith); Westfield (Avon); Fankerton (Carron); Lanrick and Calair (Teith); Ashfield, Tullibarndine, Buttergask and A9 culverts (Allan); Cambus (Devon); and Methil and Balgonie (Leven). All with varying success depending on the conditions attached to the licence or other factors, including SEPAs national policies and their requirement to support sustainable economic development, planning and ownership issues.

The SEPA WEF programme has unfortunately slowed down and at the time of writing this we await SEPA's confirmation of their funding priorities (or re-re-prioritisations). The following barriers are still within the River Basin Management Plan 2016-2021 (RBMP2) for easement by 2021 including Midlothian Esks (13), Almond (7), Tyne (10), Avon (1), Leven (8), Bannockburn (2), Allan (6), other coastal burns (7). It is not clear what SEPA WEF's plan to deliver these are. The majority of these still are not regulated by SEPA. To date, two have been delivered on the Almond.

The Trust has had some success by working directly with the owner of the barriers in the Allan Water with constructive dialogue held with Transport Scotland/Bear Scotland as well as Tulibardine Distillery. This progress has been possible due to the Trust having a dedicated project officer within the catchment.

In the meantime, the Trust has also been key to working with City of Edinburgh Council and West Lothian Councils on delivering improvements on the Almond by being able to lever additional funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund. These works are funded direct by Scottish Government to the local authorities which has some issues but has allowed the works to progress.

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GOVERNANCE

The Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 requires all District Salmon Fishery Boards to operate in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

The Forth DSFB prepares a report each year in compliance with the Guidance on Good Governance Obligations:

- Section 44 (1) requires preparation of a report and a statement of accounts (which shall be audited) relating to the activities of the Board. The report and accounts are to be considered by an annual meeting of qualified proprietors.
- Section 44 (1A) requires the clerk of the Board to arrange for the final report and audited accounts to be published and a copy of these to be sent to Scottish Ministers. Publication is to take place as soon as practicable after the annual meeting of proprietors.
- Section 44 (1B) defines the final report and audited accounts as those submitted for consideration at the annual proprietors' meeting or, if they are revised following that meeting, the revised versions.
- Section 46A requires that the annual report contains specific information: a summary of the activity carried out by the Board under their statutory functions in the reporting year; a summary of the proposed activity of the Board for the year to come; information on complaints made to the Board during the reporting period (their number, a statement of the nature of each and how it was disposed of); and a
- statement of how the Board has complied with the good governance requirements of the 2003 Act during the course of the reporting year and how they propose to comply in the year to come.

As part of this the Forth DSFB voluntarily adheres to the Scottish Government's District Salmon Fishery Boards Guidance on Good Governance Obligations (August 2013).

This section of the report details how the Forth DSFB meets the terms of the reporting requirements:

MEETINGS

The Forth DSFB holds meetings on an approximately quarterly basis at various locations throughout the District. All meetings are open to the public and are advertised on the Boards website (www.fishforth.co.uk/fdsfb). The subsequent minutes of these meetings are also published on the website. Closed sessions may be required for the discussion of matters of a sensitive nature.

It has been agreed that an attendance record will be kept and the attendance for year 2017 has been as follows:

Member	Attended	Not attended
Fen Howieson (Chairman) (Mandated: Cambusmore)	4	1
Fiona Simpson (Mandated: Crown Estates)	3	2
Aly Dickson (Lanrick)	0	5
Tony Cameron (Leny)	4	1
John McKenzie (Mandated: Allan Water Angling & Improvement Association)	5	0
Scott Mason (Mandated: Stirling Council)	2	3
Robert Baird (Anglers' Rep)	3	2
Chris Thomas (Anglers' Rep)	4	1
Jason Walls (Anglers Rep)	4	1

COMPLAINTS

The 2013 Act requires all District Salmon Fishery Boards to establish a formal complaints procedure. A copy of the complaints procedure is available on the Boards website.

There has been 1 complaint received to date during 2017, this related to the actions of a volunteer water bailiff, the matter was investigated and the actions of the water bailiff were found to be commensurate with his duties under the Act. A formal response was not possible as the complainant did not provide contact details, the information is registered and available should it be requested in the future.

DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

All members of the Forth DSFB are asked to complete and keep up to date a declaration of interests relevant to their position on the Board. The most up to date register is available by request to the Clerk of the Board.

The Forth DSFB has been registered as a data controller with the Information Commissioner since 15th July 2014.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES AND DISCLOSURE

The Board produced their Equal Opportunities and Disclosure statements, which again are available on the Boards website.

REPORTING TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT

It is a requirement that the Forth DSFB submits its accounts and annual report to Scottish Government. For 2016 this was completed in December 2016

Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors

The date of the meeting for the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors was moved from November to February to allow for the inclusion of the catch return data in the annual report, thereby providing more accurate and up-to-date information. A summary of the accounts is included in the report and available for any proprietor to review prior to the date of the meeting.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

The income for the Forth DSFB comes almost exclusively from the salmon fishery assessment. For the collection of the assessment for 2017 (invoiced on 1st April) the valuation roll was extracted on 17th March 2017. For 2017 the income is based on the 2010 valuation. A budget for the year was agreed by the board on 21st February 2017 resulting in the assessment being levied at the £1.60/£1. This was no change from the proceeding year.

The day to day management of the DSFB finances is handled by Managed Estates on behalf of the Board. The accounts are independently inspected by Douglas Home & Co. Copies of the inspected accounts can be obtained by contacting the Clerk.

A full revaluation of the fishery was undertaken by the four valuation offices which cover the District. proprietors should have been notified of the new valuation directly by the valuation office. The valuation is based on a number of factors including at its base the rental value of the fishery, the location of the fishery, its catch return numbers and those within the river system as a whole.

There have been some issues in relation to the valuation and the notification which the Clerk has attempted to address.

- The valuation offices were informed that some proprietors did not appear to have received their notifications.
- There is some discrepancies between the areas which is not unexpected but where rivers are in two district valuation offices there may have been some double counting. Raised with the salmon fishing coordinator to raise with the offices.
- The valuation offices have been advised by the salmon fishing coordinator to value the coastal nets at zero, this has not occurred in the Forth.
- There seem to be some anomalies in relation to estuarine netting values.

The Board has endeavoured to ensure that the process of re-valuation has been undertaken consistently and raise any Districtwide issues however it is the responsibility of all proprietors or occupiers to make appeals or query individual fishery values.

The Forth District Fishery is currently valued at £134,260 (2010 - £92,215).

The Board is required to use this figure as the basis of the assessment it collects. The assessment itself is based on an agreed budget for the year. The poundage is the rate in the pound to raise the amount agreed in the budget. The amount raised will have to take into account a number of variables including appeals and the results of the issues noted above and the Board will set a contingency so that it does not keep having the change the poundage annually which has a negative effect on river and fishery owner ability to plan.

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

**Income & Expenditure
For the Year End 31 March 2017**

	Period to 31/03/2017		Period to 31/03/2016	
Income				
Fishery assessment	144,936		136,404	
Donation	-		600	
Sundry receipts	584			
Interest received	12		14	
		145,522		137,018
Expenditure				
Rent	-		2,854	
Insurance	2,545		2,728	
Wages	-		11,211	
Other operating leases	4,677		5,067	
Subcontractors	40,647		15,600	
Office expenses & telephone	998		873	
Subscriptions	2,830		3,606	
Vehicle/boat upkeep & travel	6,299		6,191	
Sundry expenses	5,622		3,337	
Training & subsistence	678		450	
Clerk's contract costs	17,892		17,579	
Accountancy	1,998		1,848	
Bad debts	-		160	
Bank charges	-		34	
Donations	60,000		66,269	
Depreciation fo tangible fixed assests				
Plant and Machinery	232		310	
Motor vehicles	-		140	
Computer equipment	43		154	
Profit/loss on sale of tangible fixed assets	300		1,214	
		144,761		139,625
Net Profit/Loss		761		(2,006)

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Balance Sheet
31st March 2017

	Period to 31/03/2017		Period to 31/03/2016	
FIXED ASSETS				
Tangible Assets		820		1.394
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors	5,232		3,596	
Cash at bank & in hand	97,529		97,315	
	102,761		100,911	
Creditors	3,653		3,138	
		99,108		97,773
NET CURRENT ASSETS		99,928		99,167
RESERVES				
Development reserves		32,000		32,000
Retained earnings		67,928		67,167
		99,928		99,167

LOOKING FORWARD

With the demise of the aspirations of the Wild Fisheries Reform, the Forth DSFB needs to take stock and consider the future difficulties with fulfilling its remit. The Forth District is the fourth largest in Scotland but the income available from the salmon levy fall short of the required resource. By working with the River Forth Fisheries Trust part of the moneys raised are being multiplied and delivery is being seen on the ground. However, the Trust is limited on what it can obtain additional funding for and these items are the core activities of the statutory remit of the Forth DSFB, including the main enforcement and monitoring work. This issue must be continued to be raised with Scottish Government.

The expenditure of the Board has been kept at the same level for four years, despite inflation and other costs going up. The Board needs to recognize that this level of budget is not sustainable. The Board relies on the Trust for the provision of offices (and all that goes with that) as well as other support. Whilst this is to some extent paid for by the funding given to the Trust, the Board is currently buffered from the realities of increases in expenditure should it need to provide these services itself.

The Forth DSFB is reliant on the salmon levy to fund governance, enforcement and monitoring, a key activity must therefore be where possible support the development of existing and new fisheries. This requires SEPA to regulate our rivers better and for the Board with the help of the Trust to take advantage of changes in other areas, including the devolution of the Crown Estate Scotland.

The promotion of the Forth Fishery will continue working with others to raise awareness of the opportunities available within the District. Work will continue to explore the possibilities for media driven and other opportunities including working with Fisheries Management Scotland and other on national projects.

Data collection will continue and with it advances in technology need to be balanced with ensuring solutions are sustainable and do not become a drain on the Boards limited resources. Better and easier methods of collecting catch data will be a priority although work will continue on other methods of collection including counters, use of drones etc.

The enforcement team will continue to be developed, opportunities will be pursued towards the development of river networks, similar to those piloted on the Tyne & Esks, where there is local support. Training and coordination for all bailiffs will continue to develop the existing team and to support growth and development of bailiffing across the District. This will be undertaken together with development of national changes and ensuring that the Board does not have liabilities which it should not accept.

The Board will continue to meet on a quarterly basis, with an Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and also public meetings, when required. Good governance is a key aim and the Board and staff will continue to work within the Code of Good Practices.

The work of the Board and the Trust within the Forth District will be promoted to raise awareness of the improvements being made. The Board will continue to work with proprietors, fishery managers and clubs and associations to assist them to promote their fisheries and ensure that the quality and quantity of the Forth Fishery is recognized.

Forth District Salmon Fishery Board

thanks the following for their support in its work:

River Forth Fisheries Trust

Directors 2017

Fen Howieson (Chairman)
Aly Dickson
Jamie Muir
Angus Watson (resigned)

Dennis Toon
Mike Baillie-Hamilton
Graeme Hedger (stepped down)
Fiona Simpson

Trust Manager: Alison Baker

Senior Biologist: Jo Girvan

Biologist: Sylvian Barry

Project Development Officer: Jonathan Louis

Allan Water Improvement Project Officer: Lawrence Belleni

Project Officer (FINNS/Education): Amy Fergusson

Trossachs Water Vole Project Officer (seconded to Forestry Commission):

Ryan Greenwood/Steve Willis

Ecologist/Morphologist & Consultancy: Tommy McDermott (TrexEcology)

RiverLife Coordinator: Kate Comins

Rievrlife Capital Projects Officer: Scott Robertson (EnergeticPM)

RiverLife Volunteering Coordinator: Lorna Oldershaw

RiverLife Community Engagement: Jamie Ormiston

RiverLife Project Assistant: Luke Park

Financial & Office Manager: Amelia Heath

Website: <http://www.fishforth.co.uk/rfft>

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/RiverForthFisheriesTrust/>

Twitter - @ForthFishTrust

Funders:

All Forth District Salmon Proprietors (195 Fisheries)

Scottish Government
Scottish Environment Protection Agency
Heritage Lottery Fund
Falkirk Environment Trust
LandTrust
Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park
Forestry Commission Scotland
Larbert & Stenhousemuir Angling Club
East Lothian Angling Association
Rural Payments Inspectorate

River Avon Federation
Gary Lowes
West Lothian Angling Association
Friends of the River Tyne
Williamston Primary School
Linlithgow Primary School
Falkirk Council
City of Edinburgh Council
West Lothian Council

Fishery Managers, Ghillies, Club and Association Committee Members

The many landowners who allow access and work to be undertaken

And our many volunteers who give up their time.

Clerk to the Board: Alison Baker

Forth District Salmon Fishery Board
The Clubhouse
106 Biggar Road
Edinburgh
EH10 7DU

Website – www.fishforth.co.uk/fdsfb

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ForthDistrictSalmonFisheryBoard/>

Twitter - @ForthDSFB

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