MINUTES OF THE

MEETING OF THE RIPERIAN OWNERS WITH THE

RESCOBIE LOCH DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION ON

THURSDAY 15TH FEBRUARY 2018

Present Mr Drew Wilson Chairman

Mrs Caroline Graham- Watson

Mr Hughie Graham-Watson

Mrs Margaret Wilson

Mr David Conran-Smith Secretary

In attendance: Mr Ron Fordyce, Secretary of the RLDA

Dr Andy Vinten of the James Hutton Institute

Apologies were received from Mr and Mrs I Wilson, Mr Stewart Hamilton,

Mr Caird Millar and Mrs Lisa Jones

Item 1 Welcome by the Chairman

The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting and said how sorry he was that we were not this evening also welcoming to our annual meeting Will Jones, who tragically had died a couple of weeks earlier. We all would miss very greatly the presence of Will at our annual meetings, and in common with his large circle of friends, at events within the local community, in which he had been over the past few years a great contributor, especially in the world of field sports. All of us fellow Riperian Owners sent our condolences to Lisa and their two children.

The Chairman expressed his pleasure at being able to welcome again to our meeting Andy Vinten who he hoped would be able to update us on developments in his work in relation to drainage in the Lunan valley. That and Ron Fordyce‘s report on the RLDA past year’s activities would constitute the bulk of our meeting this evening.

Item 2 Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

Although it appeared possible that Ron had not received a copy of the Minutes it was accepted that the Minutes had not occasioned any grave inaccuracies or omissions and that they could therefore be accepted as a true record of the meeting. There had been one action, placed on the Secretary, to ensure that our two recently joined ROs, Ian and Sally Wilson, had signed as having read and approved the Minute of Agreement between the ROS and the RLDA, raised on 1st January 2015 to endure for seven years from that date. Their signing had in fact been actioned by Ron Fordyce, who agreed to forward a copy of that signing to David for him to enter in the Secretary’s file.

Item 3 Report of the RLDA

Although bookings and takings had again been satisfactory and the membership remained reasonably happy the fishing season as a whole had suffered from the continuing weed problem and a late algae bloom. The association’s loss for the year of £2,573 would have been considerably greater if it had not been for the savings achieved by stocking chiefly with rainbow trout there having been difficulty in sourcing brown trout which had resulted in of the total of the 12,986 fish stocked only 926 were brown. While weather at times caused cancellations and on two days closed the loch completely the total fish taken was on a par with last season with a total taken of 6,338 (6,582 in previous season) of which 293 were brown (609). Slightly more fish were returned 2,007 (1,601) – so certainly far from a disastrous season.

However the problem of weed growth remained worrying. The task was not so labour intensive this year as a machine was hired to remove the cut weed from the water and dump it into agricultural trailers which were supplied by local farmers. However the cost remained high at £8,000. It was a pity that the old method of controlling the weed by spreading pellets was no longer legal. However a meeting with Mr McPhail of SNH had resulted in permission being given for the Association to lay a 12 ft wide strip of hessian on the loch floor extending out past the Boathouse bay so as to keep a clear access for boats throughout the season into the deeper water fishing ground. Sinking the hessian was not easy but it was hoped that the results next season would be encouraging enough to warrant an extension of the scheme with two more strips being lain. The hessian had been sourced locally at a cost of £900 per length. The building of the new storage sheds had already proved its worth with both already nearly full.

In the middle of October the boat house had been burgled by persons unknown, but possibly a result of a tip-off from a member, with the result that £99 petty cash had been taken from the safe, together with the £50 float and a collection tin containing £132 which had been raised for the Maggie Centre, and also £10 from the tea money tin. The local police had attended with also a presence from Dundee CID who had taken DNA samples, but no further developments had been reported.

There followed some general discussion during which we learnt that the Association’s membership remained full with a waiting list of 150 though this number included about 50 who were out of touch. Although on weekdays not all the boats would be out, at weekends nearly always they were. The algae bloom had been bad and it was known that it could cause a skin rash. Although there had not been any known problems with cattle drinking on the loch edge Drew was putting troughs into his loch side fields and setting up fences to keep the cattle from drinking from it. These fences would not interfere with fishing. Finally it was agreed after considerable debate that the rent to ROs should be increased to £275.

Item 4 Input from Dr Andy Vinten

Dr Vinten started out by expressing his hope that we had all had an opportunity to complete his survey on The James Hutton Institute’s proposed improvements into the management of drainage and run-off into the Lunan from its catchment area. The hoped-for improvements were centred on a scheme for the installation of a tilting weir and water penning scheme to be located just downstream from the outlet of Balgavies Loch. The primary aim of the scheme was to provide greater flood storage upstream; this would be achieved with control of the tilting weir and management of the penning scheme, these functions to be handled by of a controlling group. Funding of the group could be through one of three possible methods: either council tax, or through a business model run by local stakeholders, or finally by a charity funded by donations. The survey had gathered 73 responses which together indicated a generally good level of support for the project, although the farming community appeared to be particularly divided on the question of the schemes’ practicality regarding its management and funding. The first option, through council tax, was preferred above the other two but seemed likely to be not entirely straightforward.

The plan generated considerable discussion. Dr Vinten felt it important to outline the parameters of the central element of the plan: the siting of the tilting weir. This would be in a new channel cut between the two parallel channels, namely the common lade (stream bed level 59 m) and the Lunan Water (bed level 58.3m). If open, the weir channel would allow for extra flow out of the Loch, thereby reducing Balgavies Loch level and providing a greater hydraulic gradient from Rescobie to Balgavies Loch. If closed, the system would function as it does at the moment. Several of those present still found it difficult to see how the management of a tilting weir located downstream of Balgavies Loch could possibly affect the water level of Rescobie Loch and catchment areas upstream from it; it seemed unlikely, that with the Balgavies Loch being 20 cms lower than Rescobie Loch, there could be any way that the level of Rescobie Loch could be reduced by the operation of the tilt; This critical but perhaps ill-informed view was that the level of Rescobie Loch would only ever be lowered if the volumetric flow from the loch became greater than the amount of run-off into it. Although there remained this doubt as to the potential benefit to ROs of the scheme proposed by the James Hutton Institute, even though it was acknowledge that this was its principal aim, there was at the same time an acceptance that management of the flow downstream of Balgavies Loch would have benefits for those affected by it.

The Chairman thanked Andy for his input which as usual had generated much interesting discussion and wished him well with his ongoing research in the tilting weir and penning scheme project. Dr Vinten suggested that it would be perhaps useful for him to arrange a visit to the site of the proposed weir for those ROs who might be interested. This was considered an excellent idea and would be followed up.

Item 5 Any Further Business

There being no further business to discuss the Chairman closed the meeting. The Secretary proposed that our next meeting should be held on Thursday 22nd November and Margaret produced delicious shortbread to have with our coffee before we ventured forth into the chill of the evening.

D Wilson

Chairman