Finance and Constitution Committee Questionnaire

The Forth District Salmon Fishery Board (Forth DSFB) has a statutory remit to protect and enhance the Forth Fishery, in relation to migratory Atlantic salmon and sea trout. Within the Forth District there is a large proportion of Crown owned salmon fishings and therefore the decisions made in relation to their management could affect the value of the fishings and the management decision-making of the Board. The Forth DSFB’s income is directly related to the value of the salmon fisheries within District. Mismanagement of the fishings could lead to additional requirements from the Board in terms of enforcement of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003.

We are only responding in relation to Salmon fishing rights. A member of Crown Estates Scotland sits on the Forth DSFB and has expressed a possible conflict of interest and has had no part in this response.

Consultation

1. Did you take part in any consultation exercise preceding the Bill and, if so, did you comment on the financial assumptions made?

Yes, but there was insufficient information relating to salmon fishings (which were included in the rural estates figures) to comment.

2. If applicable, do you believe your comments on the financial assumptions have been accurately reflected in the FM?

Whilst we understand the requirement for the Crown properties to make decisions on assets in relation to their market value, we believe that there is an argument for the social and community benefits of the crown salmon fishings to be considered in more detail. There may be an argument in certain circumstances for the fishing to have nil value. However, we also believe that the use of crown salmon fishings is currently under-utilised in the Forth District and that any costs associated with reductions in rental cost may be offset by the realisation of rents in other parts of the District. This is partly reflected in the paper but not fully explored.

3. Did you have sufficient time to contribute to the consultation exercise?

Yes.

Costs

4. If the Bill has any financial implications for your organisation, do you believe that they have been accurately reflected in the FM? If not, please provide details.

There are no financial implications indicated for our organisation, however as the income to the Forth DSFB is directly related to the value of the salmon fisheries, poor management through devolution could impact on the organisation. Poor management of leasing could result in additional work required by the Forth DSFB
for the enforcement of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003.

5. Do you consider that the estimated costs and savings set out in the FM are reasonable and accurate?

We consider that there could be additional burden to the Forth DSFB as expressed above if devolution to a local level is not undertaken in a way which results in consideration of wider catchments issues. We consider that this therefore should preclude breaking up the management of the salmon fishings to a smaller component than District/catchment level size.

6. If applicable, are you content that your organisation can meet any financial costs that it might incur as a result of the Bill? If not, how do you think these costs should be met?

With good management we would not anticipate any costs to the organisation, however we would expect should there be costs associated with poor management which results in loss of income to the Forth DSFB that these cost should be met by the devolved manager.

7. Does the FM accurately reflect the margins of uncertainty associated with the Bill's estimated costs and with the timescales over which they would be expected to arise?

Valuation of fisheries may be also subject to national changes in legislation and regulation. This is not mentioned. There may be more uncertainly with the value of salmon fishings than with some other Crown assets as the basis of the valuation is more difficult to ascertain.

Wider Issues

8. Do you believe that the FM reasonably captures any costs associated with the Bill? If not, which other costs might be incurred and by whom?

There will be cost to any community groups who wishes to ‘bid’ for devolved management. This is not reflected.

9. Do you believe that there may be future costs associated with the Bill, for example through subordinate legislation? If so, is it possible to quantify these costs?

Don’t know.