

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 12 JUNE 2015
HELD AT THE ULBSTER ARMS, HALKIRK

Present:	J Mackay (Chair)	A C W MacAuslan	R F Willis
	S W M Threipland	S W D Laird	T Stitt
In attendance:	E C McCarthy	A Youngson	E Constable
Observers:	J Pullar		

Apologies

Apologies were received from Lord Thurso, Lord Caithness, Sir Richard Dunbar and Ian Cormack.

Register of Interests

NTR

Minutes of previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 March were approved.

Matters arising from previous meeting

Mr Laird updated the board on the Marine Scotland (MS) forum to address issues surrounding the weekly close time for netmen. Steps are being taken to produce a workable protocol to improve relations between boards, bailiffs and netmen, and as well as with the Sea Shepherds where they are present.

Finance and Admin

a) 2015 Assessment Rate

The figure of 36p in the £ was confirmed as the rate for this year.

b) Development and Conservation Committee

The team comprising the River Improvements Committee, which included the Consultant, would be known as the Development and Conservation Committee from now on.

c) Consultation Activity

The board noted the consultation requests received over the last quarter and subsequent actions. Mr Threipland thanked the Chairman and Consultant for ensuring that there were adequate safeguards in place to minimise risk to salmon during the recent refurbishment work at Dunbeath harbour.

Development and Conservation Committee

a) 2015 Electrofishing Survey

There was unanimous agreement that this project should go ahead. Strong support had been expressed at the last meeting for a third survey, and with sustainability now of a major issue since the Wild Fisheries Review (WFR) the need for maximum scientific data at a local level was considered more necessary than ever. The costs were reviewed and alternative sources of funding considered, such as community windfarm funds, but the plan should be for a full repeat of the two previous surveys.

The Inspector and Consultant had investigated replacement options for the defunct generator. The Inspector was tasked with ordering a new one in time for the survey to begin.

Action: Inspector

b) ERI / Berriedale smolt tracking programme

In April a survey of the Berriedale river was carried out to establish if smolts of sufficient size and number were catchable for a smolt tracking project planned for 2016. Large smolts are required to carry the tags. It was successfully proved that electro-fishing can be used and smolt traps are not required. Sufficient large fish are present. Smolts will be caught in April 2016 and tagged and released. They will be tracked via an array of 20 listening stations placed on the sea bed off the river mouth.

There was discussion about the benefit of extending the tracking programme to include the Dunbeath but it was considered unlikely to be of value at this stage, due to the high costs of purchasing additional listening stations. Mr Threipland informed the board that the Dunbeath was due to take part in a genetic programme with the University of East Anglia.

c) Archiving of scientific reports

The Consultant had inherited a pile of reports from his predecessor, Mr Shearer, including a large number of historic electrofishing reports. It was agreed that these should be retained by the board and a list of the reports lodged with the Clerk for reference. The board reiterated its interest in the Rivers Trust archive project to collate and safeguard fish records from across the area for long term use within a single facility.

Flow Country Rivers Trust

The board noted the minutes of the latest Trust meeting, held in May. Since then a grant has been received from The Fishmongers' Company Fisheries Charitable Trust towards the project to record the views of those netmen still living with knowledge of the movement of salmon in the vicinity of the Pentland Firth and interviews will begin shortly.

Future fisheries management

a) NDSFB-ASFB meeting 12 May

The CDSFB was invited to attend a meeting between the Northern DSFB and the ASFB chairman Alistair Traill to discuss the Scottish Government response to the WFR following its expected release. Mr Mackay attended on behalf of the board and reported back from the meeting, but owing to a delay in publication there had been little new information and hence limited discussion.

b) Board response to the Scottish Government consultation paper on Wild Fisheries Reform

The government response to the WFR was published on 15 May as "Wild Fisheries Reform: a response to the report of the Wild Fisheries Review". It is a consultation paper, inviting responses by 7 August, and includes 38 questions for consideration. The board discussed at some length the implications of the proposed management reforms and Mr MacAuslan provided feedback from a recent meeting of the ASFB/RAFTS joint working group on the subject.

It was agreed that the questionnaire called for a board response, rather than individual proprietor responses, in this instance. Whilst accepting that change was inevitable the board wanted to take whatever steps it could to mitigate the effects of those changes of most concern. With regard to proposals for geographical changes, consideration should be given to an early exchange of views with other boards in the North Highland area. Given the tight timescale a special meeting to formulate the response was provisionally planned for Monday 13 July for all board members with an interest to attend (Clerk to confirm arrangements with the board Chairman).

Action: Clerk

Any other (notified) business

No other business had been notified.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the board is planned for late August to coincide with the Annual Public Meeting. The Clerk will be in contact to fix a date.

Action: Clerk