

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
HELD AT ULBSTER ARMS
ON 13 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Viscount Thurso (Chair) SWD Laird SWM Threipland
J Mackay ACW MacAuslan RF Willis

In attendance: EC McCarthy E Constable

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from the Earl of Caithness, Sir Richard Dunbar, T Stitt and I Cormack.

2. Register of Interests

NTR

3. Minutes of the previous Meeting

The minutes of meeting held on 27 August were approved.

4. Matters arising

a) Smolt tracking programme (BOWL/ERI)

Mr MacAuslan confirmed that Berriedale was no longer being considered by BOWL Moray Firth marine wind farm developers and that the Conon would be the focus of its environmental assessment of migratory salmonids instead. ERI was proceeding with plans for the alternative, scaled down smolt tracking programme scheduled to take place at the Wester in 2016.

b) Wild Fisheries Review (WFR)

Board members continued to demonstrate a keen interest in the reform process and to play an active role in the restructuring of the DSFB. The board favoured an FMO with the Flow Country at its core, to include all the rivers arising therefrom and flowing to the North and East, and it was agreed that the Chairman should pursue a dialogue with the neighbouring DSFBs (Helmsdale and Northern) before the next meeting to discuss this geographical grouping. The Chairman proposed that a relatively low-cost management model would serve such an organisation, with expertise bought in when required, and undertook to set out suggestions for the board to consider at the next meeting.

Action JT

c) Kill licensing

All present confirmed that they were aware of the latest plans issued by the Scottish Government.

5. Finance and Admin

The clerk reported that expenditure remained as forecast. At this stage it was anticipated that costs for this year's survey would fall within budget. Details of consultation requests and other exchanges between the board and external organisations since August were noted.

6. Development and Conservation Committee

a) 2015 Electrofishing survey

The fieldwork had been completed successfully and a preliminary summary of findings issued to board members shortly afterwards.

Two reports would be issued on completion of findings and analysis: one to cover the data for 2015 along the same lines as in the first section of the 2014 report, and a second to pull all 3 years data together. The main task for the Consultant is to work out what the maximum proven capacity of each site is to support biomass density. This will provide a rigorous basis for comparison in future years when the option will arise to survey a smaller, more strategic set of sites, rather than the full set examined to date. The aim of the second report is to provide a standard benchmark that will be good enough to last indefinitely.

b) Future surveys

A protocol for determining sites to be surveyed in the years ahead is to be prepared by the Consultant for the board to consider at the next meeting.

Action AY

7. Flow Country Rivers Trust (FCRT)

The FCRT had agreed to provide funding for the acoustic tags for ERI's smolt tracking project.

The board was updated on the Trust's current thinking and plans with regard to the WFR and noted that it would wish to be "associated" with the local FMO eventually.

8. Any other business

NTR

9. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the board was scheduled for Friday 11 March at 2.30 pm at the Ulbster Arms.