

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF THE

ANNUAL PUBLIC MEETING 2017

The meeting took place on Friday 11 August at the Ulbster Arms, Halkirk at 11 am. Statutory notice had been given to the Scottish Government and via the local press and the board's website.

Attendees

Board Chairman (The Rt Hon. the Viscount Thurso), Members and Officers

Dr Fiona Kinnear, Forss House Fishings Association

James Sutherland, Ghillie, Thurso River

Proceedings

The Chairman welcomed all present and thanked them for attending.

The 2016 Annual Report and the 2016 Accounts were presented. Key points included:

- a) The Wild Fisheries Review and associated planning had occupied a considerable part of the board's time and energy during 2016.
- b) A legacy of the Review was that all rivers were now required to have a fishery management plan. The board, collaborating with the Northern and Helmsdale DSFBs, had commissioned the preparation of a single overarching plan for the future scientific management of Flow Country rivers. The resulting comprehensive working document was now available to assist fisheries with future planning.
- c) 2016 saw the successful start of a rolling programme of annual mini surveys to maintain and enhance the baseline data accumulated between 2013 and 2015.
- d) The overspend showing at the end of the 2016 in the annual accounts arose from income for the electrofishing projects being received in the year following fieldwork operations with all the outlay involved. The board maintains a reserve of a year's expenditure and takes account of cross year transactions in its budgeting.

Q & A Session

Two topics were raised and discussed at some length:

- a) The value of juvenile biomass as an indicator of the state of health of fish populations and the ability of the river to sustain them.

Summary: As data is accumulated over successive electrofishing studies the board is seeing increasing evidence that biomass rather than fry numbers or parr numbers on their own provides the best picture of a river's capacity.

- b) The significance and risks associated with pink salmon appearing in Scottish rivers, including Caithness, this year.

Summary: No cause for concern. They will not be seen next year, they spawn near the river mouth, and will not be harbouring gyrodactylus salaris. Any found should be caught, killed and reported to the Consultant and Head Bailiff who are liaising with Marine Scotland on the issue.