

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 23 NOVEMBER 2018

HELD AT THE ULBSTER ARMS

Present

Chairman: The Viscount Thurso PC
Members: SWM Threipland, J Mackay, SWD Laird, I Cormack, R. Willis, D Mackay
Officers: EC McCarthy, A Youngson, E Constable
Guest Speaker: Dr A Wells (FMS)
Observers: Mrs A MacAuslan (NDSFB), Ms M Blackwood

1. Co-option of Salmon Angler Representative

The board appointed Donald Mackay of Thurso Angling Association as Co-optee.

2. Register of Interests

No changes

3. Apologies

Sir Richard Dunbar, A MacAuslan, M R Newton

4. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 August were approved.

5. Annual board subscription to Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS)

Alan Wells, CEO of FMS, attended the meeting to address board concerns regarding continued membership of FMS. He gave a presentation highlighting FMS's unique lobbying role within the Scottish Government and elaborated on the range of services provided for and on behalf of the salmon and freshwater fishing sector before taking questions from attendees. Dr Wells then left the meeting for the board to deliberate, with the Chairman promising to let him know the conclusions.

The disproportionately high cost of membership for the few services of apparent benefit to the CDSFB currently remained a bone of contention for some board members but on balance it was considered in the long term interest for the board to remain allied to FMS. Next year FMS would be reviewing the basis on which on future fees are calculated (currently 5-yearly fish catch figures); in the meantime the board agreed to commit to the £5000+ levy fixed for 2019.

Action:

- Chairman to email FMS with thanks and committing to next year's subscription
- Within the next week, board to consider "What can FMS do for us?" and notify Chairman accordingly
- Chairman to follow up formally with FMS thereafter.

6. Matters arising from last meeting

All actions had been completed and there were no matters arising.

7. Finance and Admin

a) Clerk's report

The board was briefed on routine finance matters and the latest requests for consultation and advice.

b) Change of accountant

The board approved a move of accountant from Reid & Fraser to Victor T Fraser, to coincide with the new clerk (and VTF employee) taking up post in January

8. Consultant's Report

Key points arising from the consultant's report and discussion:

a) River conditions

The Caithness rivers had experienced record low levels of water and high temperatures this summer. Encouragingly, initial observation indicated that juvenile fish numbers had held up well despite this.

b) 2019 River gradings

Marine Scotland (MS) had published proposals for consultation and the consultant had responded on behalf of the board. The Grade 1 designation for all Caithness rivers more accurately reflects the true condition as evidenced by board's understanding of both adult catch rates and juvenile survey data. Good news that these grades are to remain in force 2 years, hopefully enabling MS to further hone the modelling data used to determine the gradings.

c) EF surveys

The MSS 2018 national EF survey programme and CDSFB's own programme of electrofishing had been successfully completed. Scales taken for MSS sites had been sent to Pitlochry for the further study. The consultant planned to incorporate data from all sites within his report and would also consider the ramifications of the dry summer on the survival and performance of parr and fry.

d) Conductivity meter

The board's water conductivity meter had failed so approval was given for the purchase of a replacement (cost c. £700).

9. Flow Country Rivers Trust report

Future activities:-

- Maintain the temperature loggers in the river Thurso on behalf of MSS for a further year
- Establish a capability against invasive plant species, to be coordinated by Andrew Heath working with SNH.

Also planned:-

- Preliminary testing of rivers for acid flushes. Follow-up studies on findings from the Berriedale water chemistry testing exercise
- Insect surveys, in the context of a food source for fish, with a focus on Gammarus (freshwater shrimp)
- Mapping of the western extent of the shelly till glaciation.

10. Bailiff's Report

Verdict on 2018, speaking for all, that it had been a very poor year for fishing.

11. Any other business

NTR

12. Meeting dates

The next meeting is planned for February or March, date to be agreed.