

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 29 NOVEMBER 2013

Present: Viscount Thurso (Chair) John Mackay (Vice Chair)
Anson MacAuslan Tertius Threipland
Simon Laird Sir Richard Dunbar
Earl of Caithness Roddy Willis

In attendance: Eddie McCarthy Eleanor Constable
Alan Youngson

Apologies: Ian Cormack, Tom Stitt

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. Matters arising were covered within the meeting.

Flow Country Rivers Trust

The Board considered the draft documentation for the inauguration of the Flow Country Rivers Trust. It was reported that the Northern Board had approved the documents for their part and that the Mem & Arts had been submitted to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator. Approval from the Commissioners was not expected before the Spring. The Working Group was asked to review aspects of membership as set out in the Mem & Arts, to delete the proposed arrangements for dispute resolution between Trust and Board (MoU), and to ensure that comments previously raised by Mr Threipland had been addressed. The Board approved the papers, subject to resolution of these concerns.

Action: Rivers Trust Working Group

Spring Salmon Netting

The Board considered the letter received from Mr Pullar of Usan Salmon Fisheries (Castlehill & Murkle net salmon fishings) requesting compensation to defer the start of the 2014 netting season. This request followed a recent agreement by members of the Salmon Net Fishing Association of Scotland to lift their voluntary delay on their netting seasons. The risks to netsmen and boats venturing out in the early part of the year were questioned but from the Board's point of view there was no particular impediment to the season beginning before May and the Chairman would respond accordingly. He also undertook to check the powers of DSFBs to seek monthly catch return data direct from fisheries so that any possible impact on stocks could be monitored in a timely manner.

Action: Chairman

Admin and Finance

- Fisheries Legislation

The ASFB had issued a series of guidance notes in the wake of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act which had been issued to all Board members for information. The Board was considered to be compliant in most respects but the Chairman confirmed that any enhancements necessary to current procedure (eg. annual reporting) would be applied in the coming year.

- Finance

Income and expenditure to date was in line with expectation. Expenditure over the last quarter had been dominated by the electrofishing survey (see Consultant's report).

- Consultation Activity

The record of consultation activity for the quarter was noted.

- Changes to Register of Interests

The Earl of Caithness declared an interest as a Rod Holder of Forss River Fishings.

Consultant's Report

Mr Youngson updated the Board on the 2013 Electrofishing Project. The field survey had gone well, he was expecting the final scale data results for analysis shortly and hoped to finish the report in January. Expenditure was expected to be well within budget and he was in regular contact with his peers within the Crown Estate on progress, as joint funders. In terms of outcome the results of the survey looked very promising at this stage.

The Board provided guidance on the distribution of the completed report. The Crown Estate would be invoiced for its contribution on delivery.

Discussing the longer term benefits of the study it was agreed that a programme of repeat surveys should be undertaken over the coming years to obtain the maximum value for scientific and river management purposes, and to enhance the contribution that the Board could make to programmes such as the Pentland Salmon Initiative. The Chairman was to give further consideration as to how this could be achieved.

Action: Chairman

River Improvements Committee

Mr MacAuslan expressed the appreciation of the Committee to the entire team involved in the electrofishing fieldwork for the first class job they had done.

Inspector's Report

Reflecting back over the year Mr McCarthy singled out two noteworthy features: the value of having a boat at the Board's disposal, and the number of times he had been approached by youngsters for "just a couple of fish", which he took to be a sign of the times.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board was scheduled for Friday 14 March at 2.30 pm. Friday 23 May was set provisionally for the subsequent meeting.