

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 21 NOVEMBER 2014

Present:	Viscount Thurso (Chair) John Mackay (Vice Chair)	Tertius Threipland Ian Cormack	Simon Laird Tom Stitt
In attendance:	Eddie McCarthy	Alan Youngson	Eleanor Constable
Members of the Public:	James Mackay		

Apologies

Apologies were received from the Earl of Caithness, Sir Richard Dunbar, Anson MacAuslan, Roddy Willis.

Register of Interests

NTR

Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved.

Matters arising from previous meetings

a) Spring protection consultation

The Board confirmed its decision to leave responses to individual proprietors. The board itself would therefore make no response. It was noted that new regulations would be laid before the Scottish Parliament to come into force before the season started. [i]

b) Complaints resolution

The complaints from Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd reported at the previous meeting had been investigated in accordance with the board's Complaints Procedure. Having considered all available evidence, the reviewing panel did not uphold the substantive complaints but did hold that the language and actions of the bailiff fell short of that required. They directed this should be remedied by training. A stage 2 review to consider this response had been requested by George Pullar of Usan. This was dealt with at a meeting held in private and attended by Usan's representative Mr James Mackay, Chair of the Salmon Net Fishing Association. A separate minute of this meeting has been produced.

Admin

a) Stocking Consent

The Board had issued a policy statement on its website.

b) Reporting of Catch Returns

A draft letter requesting annual catch data from proprietors was approved for circulation.

c) Flow Country Rivers Trust

The Chairman was given delegated approval to sign the Memorandum of Understanding between the Trust and the Caithness and Northern DSFBs, subject to NDSFB agreement to proceed. The Trust was invited to confirm when all parties were ready and request signature at that time.

d) Consultation Activity

Activity over the last quarter was noted.

Consultant's Report

a) Electrofishing survey

Mr Youngson reported on progress. An interim report had been circulated and the results of scale readings were expected by Christmas. His report would include a comparison with 2013 and should form a baseline for comparison for some years ahead, thus meeting the objective of the 2-year project. Costs were reviewed and expenditure was within budget. The merits of future surveys were debated and it was agreed that the Board should consider this at the next meeting, noting that the skills were in place and that there were likely to be specific, local requirements for surveys in the future.

b) Pentland Salmon Initiative

The meeting was informed about the ERI meeting in August with Moray Firth offshore renewables developers and Boards/ Trusts regarding new options for improved salmon monitoring in the Moray Firth rivers. Nothing had emerged directly from the meeting on the topic under consideration but two possible spin-off projects are being considered. The first relates to smolt tracking at Berriedale in the context of the BOWL development and the second to development of novel counting techniques by a team of specialists from within the Board's area.

c) Thurso Fish counters / Forss survey

Mr Youngson had provided advice to Canadian scientists contracted by MSS to advise on a possible new salmon counter network for salmon. The advice was in the context of the Thurso which is among MSS' list of potential sites. He had also liaised with SEPA regarding their fish survey on the River Forss and SEPA had provided the Board with a copy of their report.

River Improvements Committee

NTR

Report on the Wild Fisheries Review

The Chairman recommended that anyone wishing to contribute their views on the report make use of the format supplied by the ASFB. At its next meeting the Board would consider whether there was a case for a collective view. There was much speculation as to when the report would be taken forward.

[Since the meeting the Scottish Government has announced that it will consult in Spring 2015 followed by a public consultation on a draft bill before the end of the parliamentary session.] [ii]

Any other business

NTR

Next Meeting

The next meeting was provisionally scheduled for Friday 13 March 2015.

Footnotes

[i] The Conservation of Salmon (Annual Close Time and Catch and Release) (Scotland) Regulations 2014
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2014/327/contents/made>

[ii] Programme for Scotland, para 266
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0046/00464455.pdf>