

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 13 MARCH 2015

Present:	Viscount Thurso (Chair) John Mackay (Vice Chair) Anson MacAuslan	Simon Laird Ian Cormack	Roddy Willis Tom Stitt
In attendance:	Eddie McCarthy	Alan Youngson	Eleanor Constable

Apologies

Apologies were received from the Earl of Caithness, Sir Richard Dunbar and Tertius Threipland

Register of Interests

NTR

Minutes of previous meetings

The minutes of the Stage 2 board Review of Complaints from Usan Fisheries Ltd held on 21 November were agreed as correct. The minutes of the routine board meeting held on the same day were approved.

Matters arising from previous meetings

NTR

Finance and Admin

a) 2014 Draft Accounts

The draft accounts for the year ending 31 December 2014 were approved.

b) 2015 Draft Estimates

The draft expenditure estimates for 2015 were considered. A provisional figure of 36p in the £ was proposed as the rate for 2015 to cover expenditure, subject to finalisation at the next meeting when plans for the year were further advanced.

c) Admin and Consultation Activity

The board took note of activity since December.

d) Qualified Proprietors Annual Meeting

Following a proposal by the Clerk it was agreed that the annual meeting of proprietors should be held in June this year, rather than in August as previously. This would enable the board to meet its reporting commitments under the 2013 Aquaculture and Fisheries Act (Part 2) in a timely manner.

Consultant's Report

a) 2014 Electrofishing Survey

The board considered the findings of the latest survey. The results had been highly encouraging, with juvenile numbers found to be even higher than in the 2013 survey (40% better in terms of fry density) and the condition of the population generally as satisfactory as could be. The board acknowledged the benefits of carrying out surveys over two consecutive years and the value of such high quality data for its own understanding of the local situation as well as for the wider scientific community. The merits of further surveys were discussed, with strong support in favour of conducting another this year, funding permitting.

b) River Improvements Committee (RIC)

The electrofishing surveys had been the focus of the committee recently and were likely to form the basis of future projects for the foreseeable future. There was concern about the lower than expected salmon population in the River Wester and possible causes. An initial plan was agreed to identify the various river

owners and register the board's interest in the event of trees being felled along the course of the Wester which could cause further damage to both river and loch. Other topics raised by the board for consideration by the committee included data sharing with other scientific bodies and monitoring the safe passage of smolts out to sea.

The chairman proposed that as they were all part of the same team now input from consultant and RIC should be combined for future board meetings. A rebranding of the team with a label better suited to its scientific and environmental function was also recommended.

Action: RIC

Inspector's Report

The inspector reported that it had been a quiet winter. There was a brief discussion about reaction to the new catch and release regulations which came into effect in January.

The chairman informed the board that the Procurator Fiscal would not be pursuing the police case against Usan Salmon Fisheries Ltd for failing to remove leaders before close time last August. Marine Scotland had recently established a forum to consider issues affecting boards in relation to netsmen and the weekly close time; Mr Laird was representing the CDSFB chairman who had been invited to take part in the dialogue.

Rivers Trust

The board considered the annual report of the Flow Country Rivers Trust, following its first year of operation.

Wild Fisheries Review (WFR)

a) Future fisheries management organisation

Mr MacAuslan drew the board's attention to plans by the ASFB/RAFTS to set parameters for the future financial needs of a Scottish Fisheries Management regime, predicated on the model suggested in the WFR of a small central unit and single tier local management bodies (FMOs). The board expressed its opposition to the proposed management model, and after some discussion the chairman undertook to write a short holding letter to the Chairman of the ASFB to indicate concern and request that a proper consultation take place with DSFBs before the ASFB signed up to any regime on behalf of its members.

Action: Chairman

b) Conservation measures

Regarding the Scottish government consultation on conservation measures seeking views on the proposed ban on the killing of wild salmon in Scotland except under licence (along with an accompanying carcass tagging scheme to ensure compliance), it was agreed that it was not appropriate for the board to make a joint response to this. Proprietors, angling associations etc. were expected to take this up individually in light of their respective circumstances. Members were reminded that the last date for views to be submitted was 30 April (details on the Scottish Government website: kill licence consultation).

Any other business

It was noted that a new generator would be required for any future electrofishing survey. This would be considered at the next meeting in the context of project plans and expenditure.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the board was to be held in June to coincide with the proprietors' annual meeting (see above). Members were asked to notify the Clerk of their availability so a date could be fixed and notice of the annual meeting promulgated to all proprietors.

Action: All