

CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING
HELD AT ULBSTER ARMS
ON 27 AUGUST 2015

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|-----------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Present: | Viscount Thurso (Chair) Sir Richard Dunbar T Stitt | SWD Laird ACW MacAuslan | SWM Threipland RF Willis |
| In attendance: | EC McCarthy | A Youngson | E Constable |

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from the Earl of Caithness, J Mackay and I Cormack.

2. Register of Interests

NTR

3. Minutes of previous Meetings + Matters arising

The minutes of meetings held on 12 June and 13 July were approved.

The board's response to the Scottish Government's WFR consultation paper had been submitted and copies sent to the ASFB and to the Northern DSFB for information. The response was commended as an excellent statement of the board's position. The chairman thanked the members of the drafting group for their contributions, endorsed by Mr Threipland on behalf of the rest of the board.

4. Finance and Admin

a) Expenditure Update

Expenditure to date was in line with expectation. The majority of rating dues had been received.

b) Stocking Requests

Requests from the Dunbeath and Wick rivers to continue hatchery operations for restocking with their own broodstock in the spring were approved.

c) Consultation Activity

The list of requests received since June and follow up action taken was noted. The consultant elaborated on arrangements agreed with two wind farm developers to assist them to meet their environmental planning obligations, affecting the Thurso and Wick catchments respectively.

The SEPA survey upstream of the Old Mill on the Dunbeath had gone ahead, with good results reported.

d) Dunbeath River

Mr Threipland informed the board that the possibility of installing a fish counter was being explored.

5. Development and Conservation Committee

a) Consultant's Report

- Temperature logging on the River Thurso

The consultant had located and successfully downloaded temperature data from all 11 in-stream loggers. Initial results appeared promising for monitoring the relationship between temperature and salmon behaviour, and over time the data was expected to provide a useful aid to fish management.

Mr Threipland volunteered to make available daily temperature readings taken on the Dunbeath if this would make a useful contribution to temperature studies at any stage.

- Recording of salmon netmen's knowledge

This was a Trust project that the consultant was involved in. Work had begun but interviews had been deferred until after the end of the netting season.

- ERI smolt tracking programme

It was understood that the developers of the BOWL Moray Firth marine wind farm had withdrawn their support for the collaborative Berriedale smolt tracking project set up with ERI, SNH and the Caithness DSFB. As the Berriedale is the river closest to and likely to be most at risk from the offshore turbines the board was particularly concerned at the implications. With the proximity of the Dunbeath and the Wick rivers to the turbine array as well, the board had a direct interest in the project going ahead and ensuring that the developer fulfilled its statutory duties under the terms of its planning licence to assess fully the risks to migratory salmonids. The chairman and Mr MacAuslan were to discuss further and take up as appropriate with the organisations concerned.

Action: JT/AM

ERI proposed to go ahead with a smolt tracking project next year as part of its MSS Science plan but this would take place at the Wester instead at Berriedale and shed light on dispersal routes from that area only.

- 2015 Electrofishing programme

The survey was due to start on Saturday 29 August. Seven new sites had been added to the programme this year to accommodate requests from developers for surveys and at their expense (see para 4c). The board would benefit from an enhanced number of survey sites, the results would be integrated into its database and the findings incorporated into the final survey report. On the funding side, aside from the developer contributions, the board would cover the entire budget from its own resources. Costs were reducing year on year but were unlikely to drop below £13k.

b) Future surveys and funding

Looking ahead it was the board's objective to keep current the state of knowledge accumulated over the course of the 3 consecutive surveys. It was agreed that there should be a funding programme in place before next summer to facilitate this objective, and the first port of call for financial support should be the Rivers Trust. The consultant was asked to propose how this could best be achieved over the coming years without replicating a complete, district wide survey and the costs involved, for consideration at the next meeting and to enable the chairman to make an application to the Trust for funding.

Action: AY

6. Flow Country Rivers Trust

The Trust was assessing the feasibility of a common angling archive for the area, to be housed under one roof. The viability of the project was dependent on the willingness of proprietors to hand over any relevant material that they might hold (or provide copies in lieu). The Trust had been in touch with the proprietors of the Thurso and Wick rivers to sound out their views.

7. Any other business

There was no notified business. The meeting concluded with an exchange of views on some of the measures under consideration by the Scottish Government within the scope of the wild fisheries reform.

8. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the board was scheduled for Friday 13 November, to be held at 2.30 pm at the Ulbster Arms.