**CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 13 March 2020**

**Present**

Chairman: Lord Thurso

Members: SWM Threipland, D Mackay, R Dunbar, I Cormack, SWD Laird, A Macauslan and M Newton,

Officers: EC McCarthy, A Youngson, M Blackwood

Observer: -

**1. Register of Interests**

A discussion was had regarding Tormsdale windfarm, to which the chairman is a beneficiary of and remained absent from the discussion.

**2. Apologies**

J Mackay and R Willis

**3. Minutes of the last meeting**

1. **Approval**

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 November were approved. Actions are ongoing.

**4. Finance and Admin**

**a) Consider draft accounts for year ended 31 December 2019**

The draft Expenditure & Income accounts and the Balance Sheet were approved and are to be x formally presented at the Proprietors’ AGM in June.

1. **Consider Expenditure estimates for 2020**

The draft Estimates were considered and approved in principle. It was recommended that the assessment rate remain at 17p in the £, as per previous year.

1. **Consultation activity**

A table of recent correspondence from November 19- March was circulated to and viewed by x x the board. Consultant to respond on behalf of Board to Scottish Government’s consultation x on its Draft Sectoral Marine Plan for Offshore Wind Energy – the main point at issue being the x lack of detailed consideration of salmon migration routes in the draft version of the Habitat x Regulations Appraisal (HRA).

Consultant to pass map of proposed marine windfarm development areas to the Clerk x for circulation to Board members.

1. **Board meetings schedule**

A discussion was held to view the possibilities of having fewer board meetings. It was x decided that the board were to keep the current number of meetings at four, for 2020 and x review this again at the last meeting of the year, in November.

**5. Consultant’s Report**

**a) Mapping pressures on wild Atlantic salmon in Scotland**

This project was sprung by MS in late December completed in January. Description as paraphrased from FMS. “The purpose of this project is to provide fisheries managers with a common platform to share local knowledge and to identify and quantify the primary factors limiting Atlantic salmon production in Scotland. Ultimately, outputs from this process will be available for use by local managers to inform and target management action and also to provide important evidence for policy development at a national level. It is intended to place the final pressure maps and an application which allows the results to be summarised by catchment on the Fisheries Management Scotland website.”

Consultant to inform Board when the MS Mapping Pressures on Wild Atlantic Salmon tool becomes publicly available on-line.

**b) 2019 Electric Fishing report**

Completed in February. Main points are –

* In 2019 fry levels were overall about 50% of expected values due to the poor spawning observed in 2018.
* Levels of parr (ie. potential smolts) in 2019 were generally as expected (excepting Forss).
* The effect of low fry recruitment in 2019 on parr levels in 2020 will not be uniform. Wick and Thurso rivers were mostly adequately stocked with fry in 2019 and should be fine for parr in 2020.
* Elsewhere, the effect of the poor spawning in 2018 will be greater but mostly fleeting given 2019’s reportedly good spawning.
* Parr levels in 2019 were lower in the Forss than expected for reasons that are now at least partly understood.
* For this and other reasons, Forss will need special attention in 2020.

Report was circulated to board with then amin details being detailed as above. Board was happy with this and report was published on the CDSFB website

**c) 2020 Electric Fishing project**

* 6 Standard key sites (ie. one on each river) as usual.
* Plus 5 extra sites on Forss +1 extra on Dunbeath because both rivers took big hits in 2019 for different reasons and their 2020 status needs to be checked.
* There is a 50:50 chance that the MSS NEPS programme will be repeated in 2020. If so, NEPS will likely include some sites on Forss at no cost to Board.

Provisionally agreed but to be considered again at the next Board meeting when it will be known whether the MS National Electrofishing Programme (externally funded) is to be repeated in 2020 and which sites are proposed for survey

1. **Forss**

* The consultant will continue to liaise with SEPA to make sure that Forss catchment is free of identifiable environmental problems.
* The Board should request a review of Scottish Water’s arrangements at Shurrery Dam given Dounreay’s decreasing reliance on the dam for a water supply. The last such review was carried out about 20 years ago.

The consultant to draft a letter to Scottish Water for the Chairman re. a request for review of operations at Shurrery dam and its impact o the River Forss given the decreasing reliance of Dounreay on the dam as a source of water. Alan and Eddy to follow up with Scottish Water in due course.

Draft letter to Fish Health Inspectorate for Chairman re. information on general findings resulting from sampling of diseased fish in 2019 on the River Forss and in other Scottish rivers.

Consultant to liaise with SEPA re. environmental monitoring of River Forss.

1. **Hatcheries/Stocking**

* New SG policy developed without outside consultation is posted on line.
* There is a possibility that SG will consult belatedly on the new policy.

Consultant to alert board when there is an update on this.

**6. Flow Country Rivers Trust**

1. **Annual report 2019**

The Trust’s 2018 annual report had been circulated to inform board members about recent x activities and future plans

**7. Bailiff’s Report**

Bailiff reported that it had been very quiet, but there was still need to maintain a presence

**8. Any other business**

None to note

**9. Meeting dates**

The next meeting of the board will take place on Friday 26 June 2020 at 11am in the Ulbster Arms.