**CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 18 June 2021**

**Present**

Chairman: Lord Thurso (LT)

Members: SWM Threipland (TT), SWD Laird(SL), M Newton(MN), I Cormack(IC), J Mackay(JM),

R Dunbar(RD).

Officers: EC McCarthy(EM), A Youngson(AY), M Blackwood (MB)

Observer:

**1.Register of Interests**

No new interests to be registered.

**2.Apologies**

D Mackay(DM), A Macauslan (AM)

**3.Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2021 were approved. All actions are ongoing.

Tormsdale - Lord Thurso (LT) and SWD Laird(SL declared their interest as before. Lt then handed over to JM who confirmed there was not much to update about this matter and confirmed correspondence had been sent to Steve Mackie to say board will be back in touch with him once they had submitted their application for the project. LT took back the chair and continued with the board meeting.

**4.Finance and Admin**

1. Approve final Estimates 2021 - Agreed
2. Confirm Assessment Rate 2021 (agreed to stay the same as previous year) - Agreed
3. Annual Report 2020 -Agreed
4. Admin and correspondence – table of correspondence circulated to members prior to meeting
5. Proprietors AGM - meeting was held prior to board meeting.

**5.Consultant’s Report**

1. **Red Skin Disease**

Update on incidence and current distribution. FMS app for reporting is on its way.

**Action: Disease is still a problem on various rivers nationwide, but in Caithness mainly the Forss. Board to keep applying pressure to find solution.**

1. **Shurrery Dam**

AY circulated notes on meeting and subsequent discussions with Scottish Water and SEPA. This note goes into some detail so that it can form part of an accurate record for the Board’s file as discussions progress. If the Board agrees, AY will pass the note on the Scottish Water and SEPA for their own records. **Action: Board agreed**

As a result of discussions so far, Scottish Water will trial a temporary (2 days) reconnection of upper and lower catchments during a summer spate (by opening all the penstocks on the fish-pass) if the opportunity arises and on request. The aim is to enable fish to ascend more easily to the upper river when a period of dry weather and low water breaks. Installation of a Denil pass on the eastern end of the dam would be the optimum permanent solution for the free passage of adults but costs are stated to be a problem for Scottish Water. To keep things moving, I suggest that the Board requests that Scottish Water should cost the exercise in order to further consider the options.

**Action: Chairman to write to Scottish Water re costings.**

1. **Forss:** Screening of juveniles by Marine Scotland Fish Health Inspectorate

Due to be carried out on 8th June. This exercise has been carried over from autumn, 2020 when continuous high water prevented sampling.

**Action: Forss have given samples. MS given permission to retain live fish from the Thurso river in Halkirk Hatchery for them to test. Board to wait for the results from MS and FHI.**

1. **Board electric-fishing survey, Sept 2021**

Suggested provisional programme for early September. Forss (4 sites). All 4 previous sites (including Board’s key Shurrery site) to assess status of fry resulting from spawning in 2020. Thurso (5 sites). Board’s key Rumsdale site + sequence of 4 sites (Rangag, Tacher, Inshag and Westerdale) that were saturated with fry in 2020, taking this unusual opportunity to define saturation values at the 1+ parr stage. Wick (2 sites). Board’s key site at The Clow + potentially more appropriate replacement key site at Inshag1 Dunbeath (1 site). Board’s key site at Culvid. Check current status of Berriedale/ Langwell which was relatively weak in 2020. Berriedale (2 sites) being the Board’s key site at Gobernuisgach + Braemore. Langwell (2 sites) being the Board’s key site at Wag + Aultibea. Proposed total = 16 sites in all and, as previously, a minimal level of discretion is requested so that the team can respond to any issues that arise. **Action: Board agreed**

**Tormsdale –** Board thinks survey previously done by Steve Mackie may not be quite right – does board want to obtain some data of its own? LT handed chair to JM, discussion was held and agreed they would like to do some surveys of their own.

**Action: AY to get back to board with a proposal plan in due course.**

1. **2021 MS National Electric Fishing Programme**

Announcement has been delayed by the Scottish election and purdah but MS has stated that the programme is now funded and certain to go ahead if the Boards/ Trusts can respond. The programme if fully funded. It is probably expedient for the Board to support the NEPS programme. Jamie McCarthy, who now leads the Board’s e/f team, considers both the NEPS work and the Board’s own work could be achieved with some additional support from the now semi-retired members of the previous e/f team. Ben Falconer is to assist Jamie with this. **Board Agreed**.

AY suggested CDSFB should pass the handling of funds from NEPS to FCRT and the admin work should also be done by FCRT. **Action: AY to put a project proposal on paper and liaise with MB for board to look at and make a decision at the next meeting.**

1. **Mapping pressures on Salmon.**

The Salmon Pressures Map being constructed by Marine Scotland has been updated on behalf of the Board. The map shows where pressures such as predation, water quality, habitat degradation are judged to be issues and will display the outputs on a Scotland-wide basis as an aid for policymakers etc. The final output will made available on-line.

1. **MS proposed Scale sampling programme for adult fish** – finance attached. AY doesn’t think CDSFB need to participate.

**6.Flow Country Rivers Trust**

**Smart rivers project** – JM gave update and confirmed the project had very good results. Also training for smart rivers had been done via zoom. To complete operatives by July. AY done proposal for new funding to do surveys supported by foundation Scotland for wild fisheries.

**7.Bailiff’s Report**

EM reported it had been fairly quiet. Couple of suspicious boats but to be expected.

**8.Any other business**

None

**9.Meeting dates**

Date for Annual Public Meeting & next Board Meeting – as previous set, the date to hold this meeting was scheduled for Wednesday 18th August 2021 at 2pm