**CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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

**Present**

Chairman: Lord Thurso (LT)

Members: SWM Threipland (TT), SWD Laird(SL), J Mackay(JM), D Mackay(DM)

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

Observer:

**1.Register of Interests**

No new interests to be registered.

**2.Apologies**

A Macauslan (AM), M Newton(MN), I Cormack(IC), R Dunbar(RD),

3. **.Minutes of the last meeting**

1. **Approval**

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June were approved. All actions are ongoing.

**4.Finance and Admin**

1. Admin and correspondence – table of correspondence circulated to members prior to meeting
2. Expenditure to 30th June 2021 - A table of Expenditure was circulated to and viewed by the board. It could be seen that expenditure was on track to the final estimated budget of 31 December 2021.

**5.Consultant’s Report**

1. **Forss/Scottish Water**

Discussions with Scottish Water continue over the supply of compensation flow to the lower River Forss from Shurrery Dam. Due to the on-going drought and the low level of Loch Shurrery, there have been intermittent problems in ensuring that minimum compensation levels are maintained but the difficulties have, so far, been overcome by the operators. **Action: wait for new board to be formed then write to them with suggestions of hatchery**

1. **Red Skin Disease**

Red Skin Disease/ Saprolegnia has again been a cause of mortality among potential spawners over the summer. The disease itself is probably fairly widespread but mortality rates have differed among the various rivers with only some being affected to an extent that will be reflected at spawning later this year. The reasons for these disparities are unknown. The results of lab tests on samples of both juvenile and adult fish obtained earlier this year from in the River Forss by MS Fish Health Inspectorate are coming in. So far, nothing of particular note has been emerged on the cause of the disease. **Action: to keep monitoring the situation**

1. **Pink Salmon**

Pink salmon have again been a minor feature of catches. Their possible presence was anticipated since they have a fixed two-year life-cycle and, like 2017 and 2019, this has been an odd-numbered year. Indeed, with climate change, pinks may come to be a recurring irritant for southern rivers. **Action: to formulate a plan next time they appear, liaise with SEPA and Nature Scotland**

1. **The MS NEPS EF Survey**

The MS NEPS e/f survey is on-going. Good progress has been made and the programme (30 sites) should be completed without difficulty by the end of the month. NEPS is fully funded.

1. **The 2021 Board EF Survey**

The 2021 Board e/f survey is planned for the week beginning 30th August. The following set of sites is proposed. The basic set of six key sites which are surveyed every year – Shurrery (Forss), Rumsdale (Thurso), Clow (Wick), Culvid (Dunbeath), Gobernuisgach (Berriedale) and Wag (Langwell) Four sites at Rangag, Tacher, Inshag and Westerdale on Thurso River to test the maximum capacity of these sites to hold 1+ parr after the record fry year evident in 2020. Two new sites to provide information on fish densities within the Tormsdale windfarm area. Three additional sites on Forss at Cnoc-glas, Torran and Lythmore to fully check the current status of the Forss population. Two additional sites at Aultibea and Braemore to keep an eye on developments at Berriedale/ Langwell. This will be a total of 17 sites and the final cost will therefore be about the same as for 2020. As usual, a small amount of discretion is requested to be able to solve any problems that may arise.

**6.Flow Country Rivers Trust**

**Insect Survey** – JM gave update and confirmed confirmed good news that the trust had secured a grant for the Insect Surveys.

**7.Bailiff’s Report**

EM reported it had been a difficult few weeks with fish stuck at mouth of river, which would continue to be an issue until there is more water. EM confirmed that along the coast had ben quiet.

**8.Any other business**

None

**9.Meeting dates**

Date for next Board Meeting – set for 12 November via zoom, later changed to 1 December as MB was not available for original date.