**CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 18 August 2022**

**Present**

Chairman: Lord Thurso (LT)

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

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

Observer:

**1.Register of Interests**

SWD Laird – Atlantic Salmon Trust

**2.Apologies**

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

**3.Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 June were approved. All actions are ongoing.

4. **Matters arising**

There were no new matters arising

**5.Finance and Admin**

1. Admin and correspondence – table of correspondence circulated to members prior to meeting
2. Expenditure to 30th June 2022 - 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 2022.

**6.Consultant’s Report**

a. **Forss -**  SEPA have now been in touch re. Shurrery Dam and a site visit by their ecological specialist to assess the situation should follow. Separately, the Falls of Forss was inspected by Hamish Moir of CBEC Eco-engineering to assess whether it might be possible to ease fish passage using a minimalist approach, thereby preserving the falls aesthetic qualities.

**Action: Ongoing. To wait for the reports before making a decision.**

b. **Atlantic Salmon Trust –** The board had been approached by AST to discuss their wish to extend the West Coast Smolt Tracking project for 2023 to include northern rivers for the first time.

**Action: Consultant recommended for board to take part; board agreed.**

c. **Marine Scotland** – The board had also been approached by MS who wish to extend the Moray Firth Smolt Tracking project northwards in 2023 to include the Wick River.

**Action: Consultant recommended for board to take part; board agreed.**

d. **West of Orkney Windfarm -** At an on-line meeting with Xodus, the developers’ ecological consultants, in April to discuss ecological survey of the onshore development area, the Board pointed out that no provision had been made to consider any links between onshore ecology and offshore activity. As a result, another meeting is proposed for later this month to consider CDSFB’s and NDSFB’s interests re construction and operation of the West of Orkney Windfarm.

**Action: Board members to attend the next meeting.**

**e. Wick mini-survey -** A preliminary e/f survey was carried out on four sites in Wick River in July to provide an early assessment of the juvenile salmon stock following problems identified at survey in 2021. The results were very mixed but probably better than expected. These results will be used to frame the Wick component of the Board’s standard e/f survey in September and the July results will be incorporated in the 2022 Annual Survey Report.

**Action: More sites were to be done to get a clearer view. Tormsdale was surveyed with good results.**

**f. River Gradings for 2023 -** The gradings issued by Marine Scotland for 2023 show Forss being downgraded from 1 to 3 (meaning compulsory catch-and-release) and Dunbeath being downgraded from 1 to 2. Otherwise, Berriedale/ Langwell, Wick and Thurso retain Grade 1 status.

**Action: Consultant gave an explanation on how gradings were worked out.**

**7.Flow Country Rivers Trust**

JM reported that FCRT had collected samples for their invertebrate project, which had been analysed and the results were back with lots of different species identified across all rivers.

**8.Bailiff’s Report**

The Bailiff reported that it had been a strange year with fish laying off but not poachers bothering them, so this is good news.

**9.Any other business**

**Scottish Government Consultation on catch and release -** Consultantdrew this to the board members attention.

**Action: Pink Fish -Board to seek legal side of making traps and prepare something going forward. Consultant shared findings from Norwegian results.**

**Red Skin – Ongoing but to keep a note of what is happening.**

**10.Meeting dates**

The next meetings of the board will take place as stated below;

Board meeting Friday 9th December at 10am via Zoom