**CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 9th of June 2023**

**Present**

Chairman: Lord Thurso (LT)

Members: J Mackay(JM), M Newton(MN), SWD Laird(SL), A Macauslan (AM), D Mackay(DM)

Officers: EC McCarthy(EM), A Youngson(AY),

Observer:

**1.Register of Interests**

The current Register was presented to the board for annual review. It was noted that JM was now Chair of Wick Harbour and that SL was a Director not a Trustee of The Flow Country Rivers Trust. The register was amended accordingly.

**2.Apologies**

R Dunbar(RD), SWM Threipland (TT),), I Cormack(IC), M Blackwood (MB)

**3.Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 23rd March were approved.

**4. Matters arising**

There were no matters arising not on the Agenda.

**5.Finance and Admin**

1. The Estimates for the 2023 were approved and the rate for 2023 agreed at £0.16 in the £.
2. The 2022 annual report which had been agreed to at the proprietors meeting was noted.
3. Clerk’s report. The table of correspondence and other activity by the Clerk was duly noted.
4. The date for the Public AGM was agreed as being the 16th August at 2.00 pm at The Ulbster Arms and the Clerk was asked to undertake the necessary arrangements.
5. An e mail from the Northern Board had been received informing the Caithness Board that their membership of the Scottish Fisheries Co-ordination Centre had been transferred to the Flow Country River Trust which meant that Caithness rivers would also benefit from the membership, and suggesting that CDSFB might therefore contribute half the subscription. The board agreed but noted it would in future prefer to be asked in advance rather than given a fait accompli.
6. The valuation roll had been completed by the Assessor and valuation notices sent out.

**6.Consultant’s Report**

The board received the consultants report and noted the following:

1. The successful completion of the Wick smolt tagging project. Ihe consultant particularly noted the surprise discovery of several year classes of roach, a non native to Caithness, had been found in the river.
2. Pink Salmon were expected to arrive again this year. As many as possible should be reported to FMS via the App which could be downloaded from the internet. A plan to capture fish in the Thurso had been agreed to by SEPA. It was hoped this would go ahead shortly and help give an accurate assessment of the problem.
3. The activity of the Forss recovery group and in particular the plans to ease the passage of fish at the falls was noted. However the major problem by far remained Red Skin Disease.
4. AY then explained the several developments taking place around the emerging knowledge about *Saprolegnia.* There is now a belief that that there are various strains and that it can be very aggressive. As such it was highly recommended that all rivers practised strong bio security between rivers. FMS had e mailed indicating they wished to fund a phD student under Prof Pieter Van West at Aberdeen to look into this. They noted that FMS was required to guarantee funding for 3.5 years to enable this to go ahead. FMS therefore requested up to £5k per annum from the Caithness board as a contribution. The board discussed the problem and the request at some length. It was agreed that the potential threat from *Saprolegnia* was so grave, and the importance of starting work so imperative that they would agree. However it was agreed that in responding positively to Dr Wells the Chair should make it clear that an effective doubling of the board’s subscription was not considered palatable and that every effort should be made by FMS to raise funds from charitable and government to help defray the potential costs to the board. At the request of SL the board also considered how the contributions toward the boards payment might be made noting that some rivers were more affected than others. The board agreed to consider how best to raise funds needed from member rivers at its meeting in August.
5. The board noted the report on SmartRivers
6. The report of the 2022 electro fishing programme is now complete and available on line. The board agreed the proposed 2023 programme. In addition a late request to undertake the NEPS programme had been received and the board agreed to it provided that resources permitted. The board agreed and increase in rates per person for survey work from £80 to £90.
7. The river management plan first stage is now complete.
8. The West of Orkney Windfarm are to hold an exhibition in Halkirk and it was recommended that as many board members and others attend as possible.

**7.Flow Country Rivers Trust**

Nothing to report.

**8.Bailiff’s Report**

Fish had been observed off the coast but so far no poaching activity.

**9.Any other business**

Nothing to note.

**10.Meeting dates**

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

Wednesday 16th August 2023 2pm AGM followed by board in the Ulbster

November/December on line – to be agreed.