**CAITHNESS DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

**MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING: 22 March 2024**

**Present**

Chairman: Lord Thurso (LT)

Members: R Dunbar(RD), M Newton(MN), SWD Laird(SL), A Macauslan (AM)

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

Observer:

**1.Register of Interests**

Nothing new to register – current to date enclosed

**2.Apologies**

D Mackay(DM), I Cormack(IC), J Mackay(JM)

**3.Minutes of the last meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 December were approved. All actions are ongoing.

**4. Matters arising**

All on going

**5.Finance and Admin**

a.Consider draft Accounts for year ended 31 December 2023

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

b. Consider Expenditure Estimates for 2024

The draft Estimates were considered and approved in principle. It was recommended that the assessment rate should remain the same as last year at 16p in the £, board agreed.

c. Consultation activity

A table of correspondence was circulated to and viewed by the board, there was nothing urgent arising or to be questioned.

**6.Consultant’s Report**

a. Pink Salmon

eDNA surveys for pink salmon were conducted by SEPA and by the Board for FMS. The surveys showed that pink salmon were surprisingly widespread in Scotland and more widely distributed than previously indicated. The maps of distribution detected using eDNA were circulated.

b. Roach in Wick River

Roach were reported in the Wick catchment for the first time in 2023. eDNA samples have been obtained to pinpoint where the roach are and if they are the only exotic species present. The samples are being analysed by UHI in Inverness (WAA will cover the costs).

c. Caithness Management Plan

The Management Plan has been completed, funded by FMS, and can be viewed at <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/fea0d3b128b346488c4b24ca99fb091d>

d.CDSFB Annual EF Report for 2023

The annual EF report was briefly delayed due to an arising need to read scales obtained in 2023 from smolts in Wick river during the smolt tagging project. Completed report will be circulated in due course.

e. Temperature loggers

Thurso temperature loggers were downloaded IN December, taking advantage of a downturn in river flow. The data confirmed that, after the end of June when it was warm, temperatures were much lower compared with recent years, going back to 2018 and therefore more conducive to the welfare of salmon.

The funding received some time ago from FMS for logger downloads, and ring-fenced by the Board for this purpose, is now depleted and only £383 remains. AY suggested that the residual sum is transferred to FCRT and added to the separate ring-fenced amount that the Trust holds to allow twice-yearly downloading to carry on into the future. Board Agreed

f. Saprolegnia

The University of Aberdeen project on Saprolegnia which is being led by Prof van West is now underway. On behalf of the Board, AY has committed to obtaining bi-weekly water samples and supporting environmental information from the Rivers Wick, Thurso and Forss for a period on one year – 26 visits in all. FCRT contacted West of Orkney Windfarm for funds to cover anticipated outlays on mileage and postage.

g. Tormsdale windfarm

A Further Environmental Information (FEI) update from the developer of Tormsdale became available on 26th February through the ECU. The deadline for any Board response to the new documents is 6th April. Sub Committee had a meeting and produced a response. This was formally approved by the board. JT and SL redeclared their interests and made no comment.

A request was made to contact the developer to have a direct conversation with them, Board approved.

h. Wick smolt tagging 2023

Preliminary results of the 2023 smolt tracking project in Wick River were presented on-line, at a SCOTMER meeting by Dr Adam Piper of the Zoological Society of London, who carried out the work under contract for the Marine Directorate of the Scottish Government. The video has been made available to the Board via Dropbox.

**7.Flow Country Rivers Trust**

It was noted John Mackay is standing down as Chairman and Anson Macauslan will be standing in his place.

**8.Bailiff’s Report**

The Bailiff reported that things had been quiet.

**9.Any other business**

Nothing to note.

**10.Meeting dates**

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

Wednesday 14th August 2023 2pm AGM followed by board in the Ulbster

Friday 6th December at 10am via zoom