

Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
Briefing Paper in Lieu of Annual Public Meeting and Board Meeting
(Postponed from Scheduled Date of 5th May 2020).

1. Background

Due to the current Government restrictions in relation to the Covid 19 pandemic, the decision was taken by the Chair of the Northern District Salmon Fishery Board to postpone the scheduled Annual Public Meeting and Board meeting on 5th May 2020. This briefing paper provides Board members with a summary update of the main issues which would have been included on the agenda if the meeting had taken place as scheduled. An abridged version of this paper will be uploaded onto the NDSFB website, once approved by Board members, in lieu of an Annual Public Meeting.

Documents included with the Briefing Papers:

- Minutes of NDSFB Board meeting held on 24th September 2019
- Year End Expenditure for Year Ending 31st December 2019
- Draft Budget for Year Ending 31st December 2020.
- Summary update from Alan Youngson, Scientific Consultant to NDSFB

2. Coastal Patrols and Bailiff Liaison Group

2.1 *Sea Patrols 2020*

A contract was sent to Mr David Hodge in October 2019 with a proposal for undertaking sea patrols in 2020 using his vessel, The Guiding Star. The contract proposed that the cost for Skipper & Boat hire remained unchanged from the previous two seasons.

Mr Hodge contacted the Clerk and Chair of the Board in March 2020 to indicate that he may require to increase his price for 2020 due to an increase in his costs relating to insurance and training requirements.

No coastal patrols have been undertaken to date this year due to difficulties with maintaining social distancing on board the vessel. The situation will however be reviewed regularly and the patrols undertaken as required.

2.2 *Bailiff Liaison Group*

The Bailiff Liaison Group has not met yet this season.

3. Finance

3.1 *2019 Year End Expenditure*

The total income for 2019 was £22,803 with a total expenditure of £19,817 giving a Year end profit of £2,985 and a Year End bank balance of £8,186. £13,067 was received by the Scottish Government in 2019 in relation to the 2019 NEPS programme. This figure is not included in the Year End figures as it was redistributed to the various parties who undertook the electrofishing.

3.2 *2020 Draft Budget*

A revised draft budget for 2020 was drawn up and circulated to Board members on 6th April 2020. The main proposed changes to the budget were as follows:

- The budget for coastal patrols was reduced by 50%
- The contingency budget for 2020 was removed
- A question was asked as to whether the Board were happy to pay the full FMS subscription for 2020
- A question was asked as to whether the Board were happy to pay the subscription to Fish Legal for 2020.

If the proposed draft budget is approved without changes, then an assessment rate of 6p per £RV would need to be raised in order to cover the expected expenditure.

4. **Scientific Update**

Please see separate briefing paper provided by Alan Youngson, Scientific Consultant to the Board.

5. **Tree Planting Proposal**

The Chairman has suggested that given the national interest and emphasis on riparian tree planting as a potential to combat some of the effect of climate change on river systems, it may be beneficial for the Board to have an overview of each river's plans and proposals (if any) in relation to this. A Board wide approach to tree planting may provide a clearer regional indication of current status and future plans, as well as the potential to access grant funding to help support any progression with this.

6. **Planning Applications/Consultations**

The Northern DSFB has been involved in the following planning applications/consultations since the last meeting in September 2019:

Ackron Windfarm: The Board were contacted by consultancy firms working on behalf of the proposed Ackron Windfarm company requesting ecology data and fish habitat surveys within the area surrounding the proposal. Neither the Board nor the FCRT were in a position to quote for this work and so it will be undertaken by a third-party firm.

Armadale Windfarm: The Trust were approached to undertake an electrofishing survey of the Armadale Burn as part of the preliminaries to the proposed Armadale windfarm. Time and staffing restraints prevented the Trust from undertaking this survey and it is therefore expected to be undertaken by a third party contractor.

Proposed Spaceport, Tongue: The application for a proposed space port at A Moine on the Kyle of Tongue is currently under consideration. There are a few small burns in the buffer zone where migratory salmonids may be present, but little yet is known about these burns.

7. **Any Other Business**

7.1 **Electrofishing Applications:** Applications have been received from River Naver Fisheries, the Borgie and the Strath Halladale Partnership to undertake electro-fishing surveys over the summer. These surveys will only be carried out if social distancing measures allow for these to be completed safely. It is proposed that these applications are approved by the Board subject to consulting with SNH where applicable.

6.2 **Brood Stocking Applications:** Applications have been received from the Strath Halladale Partnership and the Borgie for catching small numbers of salmon brood stock for their

hatcheries. It is proposed that consent is given to these applications by the Board subject to consulting with SNH where applicable.

Alexa MacAuslan
Clerk, NDSFB
April 2020