

NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2015

This is the eighth annual report for the Northern District Salmon Fishery Board since it was formed by the Northern District Salmon Fishery Board Designation Order in September 2006.

BACKGROUND

The Board has a statutory role to play in the protection and improvement of fisheries within its district. The Board does not employ any members of staff and therefore supports services or activities carried out by others which in its view are appropriate and appear to assist it to fulfil its role. The control of poaching and illegal netting activity is an activity which the Board endorses by the issuing of Warrant Cards to qualified Bailiffs within the district.

A REVIEW OF 2014/5

GOOD GOVERNANCE

The NDSFB website (<http://northern.dsfb.org.uk>) continues to be maintained, listing the Board Members, all notices of meetings, minutes of meetings, annual reports and audited accounts along with additional relevant publications.

Meetings

The last Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors was held on the 23rd September 2014. The next meeting will be held at the Bettyhill Hotel on the 29th September 2015.

The last Annual Public Meeting was held on the 12th May 2015.

Board meetings took place on the 23rd September 2014, the 12th May 2015 and the next one will take place at the Bettyhill Hotel on the 29th September 2015.

All meetings were notified to the public by posting on the NDSFB website with the Annual Public Meeting also advertised in the Northern Times on 17th April 2015; The Scottish Government also received a copy of the notices.

Annual Report and Accounts

Once approved these will continue to be posted on the NDSFB website and sent to the Scottish Government.

Complaints

At the time of preparing this report NO complaints had been received.

Members' Interests

Board members continue to declare new/amend existing interests at the start of Board meetings and all such interests are recorded in the minutes of those meetings.

NORTH COAST SEA PATROL

The North Coast Sea Patrol has been active this year coordinated by the Head Bailiff on the River Naver Matt Heeps and supported by fellow NDSFB Bailiffs Richard Wright and Duncan Paul. The patrol is a collaborative venture to deter illegal netting at sea which intercepts fish on the way to their natal rivers in areas that are not normally monitored by Proprietors of fishing rights within the District. Sea patrols have been conducted across the full extent of the District's coastline with a total of 13 sea patrols completed to the end of August 2015. A supporting Coastal Foot Patrol was carried out for 8 of the 13 Sea Patrols. All Water Bailiffs within the NDSFB area continue to keep in close contact with each other throughout the season. The NDSFB wishes to record its thanks to all the Water Bailiffs of the Northern Board as well as the local Constabulary for their help and support in this venture.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

In 2013, the Board adopted as policy the procuring of a peer review of all scientific study/evidence produced by developers of renewable energy projects in support of their planning applications – in so far as that scientific study/evidence relates to the statutory brief of the Board.

During 2014/2015, an independent scientific review has been conducted by Alan Youngson in respect of the following:

Strathy South Wind farm,
Strathy Wood Wind farm

Strathy South Windfarm

Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE) applied for planning consent to Scottish Ministers under S.36 of the Electricity Act for 77 turbine at Strathy South in 2007. They submitted an addendum to their application in July 2013 to reduce the turbines to 47. The Highland Council rejected the application in June 2014. This rejection led to a public inquiry which took place between April and June 2015. The Board submitted a further written submission on the impact of salmon and sea trout in March 2015. Hearing Sessions and an Inquiry session were held between April and June 2015. Final closing submissions by objectors were to be submitted by 18th August 2015 with the final closing submission for the applicant due on 1st September 2015. The Reporter will then finalise his report for submission to Scottish Ministers.

Strathy Wood Windfarm

E-on applied for planning consent to Scottish Ministers in November 2013 under S.36 of the Electricity Act to develop a windfarm near Strathy which would include 26 turbines with an installed capacity of 78 MW. After taking the advice of Alan Youngson, the NDSFB lodged an objection to the development with the Scottish Government Energy Consents and Deployment Unit and the Highland Council on the 6th February 2014. In May 2015, E-On made revisions to the proposed design which included a reduction in the number of turbines to 18 with an installed capacity of 59.4MW. Further Environmental Information was submitted to support this revision and following advice from Alan Youngson, no further objections were made regarding this revision.

FLOW COUNTRY RIVERS TRUST

The Flow Country Rivers Trust (Reg. SC467897) continues to promote research and education in the conservation of freshwater fish within the Flow Country. Current projects include working closely with the Pentland Salmon Initiative to look at the impact of marine renewable energy on the migratory patterns of salmon. Additionally, the FCRT is liaising with the Peatlands Partnership with regards to drain blocking and deforestation projects.

The NDSFB made its second payment of £5,000 to the Trust in March 2015 as part of an agreed three year funding programme to assist the early years of the Trust.

The Board is kept informed of the Trust's progress through annual reports and regular verbal updates at NDSFB Board Meetings.

INTRODUCTION OF YOUNGSTOCK

Consent from the NDSFB for the introduction of salmon young stock to rivers within the District is a legal requirement.

In the last year the Board consented, following consultation with SNH where needed, to the introduction of young stock to the River Borgie by Mr Jim Stewart and the River Halladale by the Strath Halladale Partnership. No other applications were received.

ELECTRO-FISHING

Written consent from the NDSFB to carry out electro-fishing in rivers within the District is a legal requirement.

In the last year the Board consented, following consultation with SNH, to electro-fishing work being conducted within the River Naver catchment for the purpose of juvenile salmon stock assessment.

The Board also consented to electro-fishing work being conducted in the River Halladale catchment to establish a benchmark of fish populations and the River Strathy catchment as continuing monitoring by the developers of Strathy North Windfarm.

WILD FISHERIES REFORM

In October 2014, a Report of the Wild Fisheries Review Panel was published detailing the panel's findings and recommendations. Following this report, the Scottish Government produced in May 2015 a consultation paper entitled 'Wild Fisheries Reform: A Response to the Report of the Wild Fisheries Review'. The consultation period ran until 7th August 2015 and the Board submitted a Board response to the various questions posed in the consultation, as well as contributing to the joint ASFB/RAFTS response to the consultation.

As part of the Wild Fisheries Reform, the Board has had initial discussions with its neighbouring Boards regarding the potential geographic make up of any future Fisheries Management Organisations (FMOs).

LOOK AHEAD TO 2015/6

Looking ahead to next year the Board will continue to monitor and make representations on developments that may affect salmon or salmon fisheries within the District in fulfilment of its statutory brief, including the impact of ongoing and any future renewable energy projects.

The Board will hold its triennial elections on 29th September 2015 where Board Members will be elected for a 3 year period to September 2018.

The Board will continue its work to ensure the best outcome for the conservation and improvement of freshwater fisheries as the Wild Fisheries Reform progresses towards legislative change.

Chairman
Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
