

NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2013

This is the sixth 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 2012/3

GOOD GOVERNANCE

This year the NDSFB adopted The Code of Good Practice for District Salmon Fishery Boards produced by the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards.

The commencement date for the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 was the 16th September 2013 and introduced a number of significant changes and obligations to the governance of Boards. According to Marine Scotland:

'The purpose of the obligations is to enhance openness, transparency and accountability of the management of salmon fisheries by DSFBs. The obligations seek to mainstream existing best practice by DSFBs to ensure that all Boards act in a manner consistent with bodies operating in the public sphere. It is not the intention that the obligations seek to micromanage the business of Boards.'

The Board introduced the obligations of the 2013 Act at the 16th September, including a Complaints Procedure which will be formally adopted at the Board meeting on the 24th September, a Register of Members interests and the commencement of the reporting of notices of meetings, annual reports and annual accounts to the Scottish Government. An annual public meeting will now be held, the first of which is currently proposed for the middle of next year.

Meetings

The last Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors was held on the 25th September 2012. At the 2012 meeting a triennial election of the Board was conducted. The list of Board members and Co-opted members can be found in Appendix 1 at the end of the report. The next meeting will be held at the Bettyhill Hotel on the 24th September 2013.

Board meetings took place on the 25th September 2012, the 30th April 2013 and the next one will take place at the Bettyhill Hotel on the 24th September 2013.

The September meetings were all notified to the public by posting on the NDSFB website on the 2nd September 2013 and the Scottish Government received a copy of the notices on the 9th September 2013.

The minutes of meetings and annual reports and annual accounts approved by the Board are or will be posted on the NDSFB website – northern.dsfb.org.uk

Annual Report and Accounts

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

Complaints

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

Members' Interests

Board members will now be expected to declare new/amend existing interests at the start of Board meetings and all such interests will be recorded in the minutes of those meetings.

NORTH COAST SEA PATROL

The North Coast Sea Patrol has been active this year coordinated by the River Naver Superintendant Chris Conroy up until his departure in July and to date by his replacement Iain McMyn. 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 and foot patrols were conducted across nearly the full extent of the District's coastline with a total of 20 sea patrols completed to the middle of September. Two coastal watchers were once again employed concentrating on the area around Bursa Island and Strathy Point as before but were more mobile this year stretching their reach between Talmine and Melvich. A total of 50 patrols were conducted by the coastal watchers up to the end of August. The Sea patrols have been very visible and the professionalism and successful enforcement work of previous years and close liaison with the Police is believed to have contributed to a lack of any major incidents this year. As in previous years the Board wishes to record it's thanks to the local Constabulary for their help and support in this venture.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Pentland Firth

The Board continues to take an active interest in marine renewable projects and invited Pelamis Wave Power to attend its April meeting to update members on the project and hear its concerns regarding the continued health of salmon and salmon fisheries during and post construction should permission to develop be given. The Board adheres to the view that any development must have as a core principle that the current and future fortunes of salmonid populations will not be affected and works closely with the ASFB and other groups to this end. The Board was represented at the Pentland Firth and Orkney Waters migratory salmonid workshop promoted by the Crown Estate in April, the purpose being to reinforce the need for salmonids to be fully considered in the planning process and in the scientific research work being conducted by the Scottish Government as part of the development process into matters such as electro magnetism, noise and other issues that may effect the migratory patterns of salmonids including sea trout and their use of coastal waters. The theme continued with representation on the Stakeholder group set up to inform the sector of the developing research strategy, which met at Faskally research centre on 26th July.

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 are understood to be considering whether to approve or reject the application later in the year. An approval will go to Scottish Ministers for a licence to be issued with conditions attached. A rejection will lead to a public enquiry. The NDSFB have been recently consulted on the addendum and are considering how to respond at this time.

Creag Riabhach Windfarm

Creag Riabhach Windfarm Limited is proposing to develop a windfarm on the Altnaharra Estate which would include 32 turbines with an installed capacity of 96 MW. As the proposed wind farm has a generating capacity of over 50 MW it falls under Section 36 of the Electricity Act 1989 and requires planning permission from the Scottish Government. A Scoping Opinion has been sought from the Scottish Government regarding the information to be provided within the Environmental Statement (ES) which will accompany the planning application. An application for Planning permission has not been lodged at this time. The Board continues to monitor but has not been consulted by the Highland Council, the Scottish Government or Developer.

Clebrig Burn Hydro Scheme

The Proprietor of the Clebrig Estate is investigating the possibility of using the water resource of the Clebrig Burn for a Hydro-Electricity Scheme. The Clebrig Burn runs into Loch Naver towards its southern end. The site for the turbine house would be approximately 200m up stream of the loch and the site of the intake weir under consideration is about 1.5km upstream of the loch. The burn is a known spawning ground for salmonids and electro-fishing work has recently been consented to investigate this in more detail. The Proprietor will attend the next Board meeting to brief the Board more fully on their proposals. An application for Planning permission has not been lodged at this time. The Board continues to monitor but has not been consulted by either the Highland Council or Developer.

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FLOW COUNTRY RIVERS TRUST

Work continues in collaboration with the Caithness District Salmon Fishery Board and others on the development of the Flow Country Rivers Trust. The aim of the Trust as drafted will be:

"To advance for public benefit the conservation and enhancement of native freshwater fish (including migratory salmonids) and their environments (to include the flora and fauna proximate to the rivers and stillwaters) primarily but not limited to the inland and coastal waters connected to or forming a part of the 'Flow Country' of Caithness and Eastern Sutherland including but not limited to the jurisdictional areas of the Caithness and Northern District Salmon Fishery Boards".

The Board will report further to Proprietors as matters progress.

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, to the introduction of young stock, salmon fry, to the River Mudale and its tributaries by the River Naver Proprietors. 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 in the River Naver and its tributaries and in the Clebrig Burn, both for the purpose of juvenile salmon stock assessment. The Board consented to electro-fishing work being conducted in the River Borgie by SEPA due to the risk that their sampling work on brown trout parr may impact upon salmon and sea trout.

LOOK AHEAD TO 2013/4

Looking ahead to next year the Board will continue to monitor and make representations on developments that may effect salmon or salmon fisheries within the District in fulfilment of its statutory brief; notably the energy development programme in the Pentland Firth and onshore projects such as Creag Riabhach and Strathy South windfarms and the Clebrig Estate hydro-scheme.

The Board will discuss terms for the continuation of the North Coast Sea Patrol in 2014 with the River Naver and other fishery proprietors.

The development of the Flow Country Rivers Trust will hopefully continue to its final creation.

AND FINALLY

The Board would like to thank Chris Conroy for his considerable contribution and help to the Board in his capacity as the River Naver Superintendent and coordinator of the North Coast Sea Patrol and wish him well in his new appointment.



Chairman
Northern District Salmon Fishery Board

24.09.13

Appendix 1

Northern District Salmon Fishery Board

(Correct at 24th September 2013)

Chairman:

Lord Iliffe

Upper Proprietors:

Mr Fred Drummond, Mr Dougal Lindsay, Mr Vanya Hackel, Mr Jim Gray, The Hon. George Lopes, The Hon. Edward Iliffe, Mr Michael Stone and Mrs Marina Stone.

Lower Proprietors:

Mr James Mackay and Mr Phillip Gwyn.

Co-optee:

Representative of Salmon Anglers, Mr Paul Butterworth.

Clerk

Crispian Cook MRICS, Bell Ingram Limited.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of stylized initials that appear to be 'MR' followed by a large, looped flourish.