

MINUTES of the **MEETING of the NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD held on TUESDAY 6th May 2014 at 2.30pm at the BETTYHILL HOTEL.**

Present: Lord Iliffe (Chairman)
Mr D Lindsay
The Hon. G Lopes)
Mr J Stewart (Mandate - F Drummond)
Mr J Gray
Mr T Ward
Mr A Nicholson
Mr V Hackel (attendance by Skype)

Mr J Mackay
Mr J Mason (Mandate- P Gwyn)

Mr P Butterworth

In attendance: Mr C Cook (Clerk, Bell Ingram)
Mr M Heeps
(Head Bailiff & Fishery Manager, R Naver)
Mr S Green
The Hon. Mrs George Lopes
Mr D Buchan
Mr P Bakker

The Convener welcomed all to the meeting. He explained that in October 2013 The Hon. E Iliffe and Mrs M Stone had resigned. During the course of the meeting Mr Andrew Nicholson a Proprietor on the River Mallart and Toby Ward as a Mandatory for the Strath Halladale Partnership were duly appointed.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from; Mr M Stone, Mr P Gwyn, Mr F Drummond, Lord Joicey

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No adjustments were required to existing members declarations of interest. The Clerk undertook to circulate forms for the two new Board members to complete.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 24th SEPTEMBER 2013

The Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 24th September 2013 were approved by the Board by email following the change in publishing requirements but were re-affirmed as an accurate record.

4. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5. INTRODUCTION OF YOUNGSTOCK APPLICATIONS

The Clerk said he had received applications to introduce youngstock from The Borgie and Halladale rivers. He also had received applications for consent to electro-fish for scientific purposes from the Halladale and the Naver. Messrs Stewart, Ward and Mason gave an explanation of the background to the applications and consent was duly given subject where necessary to consulting SNH in respect of consents potentially impacting upon SAC's.

6. RIVER HALLADALE

This item is recorded in its place in the order Agenda but was discussed towards the end of the meeting. An effect of this was that a number of issues relating to the Halladale were dealt with during the course of other items.

In summary however; Mr Ward has been appointed a Board Member for the Strath Halladale Partnership. He confirmed the 2013 and 2014 assessments would be paid by the Strath Halladale Partnership. He noted that the Board approved the idea of amalgamating with the Caithness District as a solution to the Wild Fishery Review and that this, along with the review itself were sufficient reasons to take up a Board appointment as they were in line with the preference of the Strath Halladale Partnership. He accepted the position of chairman of a sub group to look consider the North Coast Sea Patrol and report back at the September meeting.

7. NORTH COAST SEA PATROL

The Clerk tabled the invoice received from the River Naver proprietors for the 2013 patrol and sought approval from the Board. Board Members who had Naver fisheries declared an interest and did not vote. Approval to pay the invoice was given by the remaining Members. There was one 'no' vote and one abstention. Mr Ward did not vote, he joined the Board as a Member later in the meeting.

Members agreed that under the Chairmanship of Mr Toby Ward a sub group would be convened to consider the North Coast Sea Patrol. The group would report to the Board at the September meeting.

The brief for the group is to:

1. To assess existing arrangements for near shore salmon protection in the NDSFB with hopefully, the assistance of the Caithness board, to obtain a clear understanding of their arrangements for near shore salmon protection in their waters to the east.

2. To make recommendations, agreeing and establishing new procedures for the NDSFB and where possible, to improve efficiencies and cost of effectiveness of the operation, again in cooperation with the Caithness board operations to the east.
3. This would include adherence to Health & Safety Policy, Intelligence, Action on poaching, liaising with the authorities, the control of seals and the oversight of netting operations to ensure compliance.

It would not be in the remit of the body to review the river watching arrangements as these are matters that are dealt with by the bailiffs and others, operating within the individual river fisheries.

The group will comprise:

Mr T Ward, Mr J Mackay, the Hon. G Lopes, Mr D Lindsay, Mr J Stewart (F Drummond), a representative of the CDSFB and ASFB, Mr M Heeps, representation from CDSFB, the ASFB and a representative of Police Scotland.

Mr Ward would seek financial details from Mr Mason as Secretary of the River Naver Proprietors as part of their deliberations.

The Board agreed that as the 2014 patrols had already commenced the patrols would run along 2013 lines and Mr Heeps would report on the 2014 season at the September meeting as usual.

8. FLOW COUNTRY RIVERS TRUST

The Convener explained that the new Trust had been successfully registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR) and had held its inaugural meeting in March. He said that the NDSFB had the opportunity to nominate a Trustee and sought the approval of the Board to the position being taken up by Vanya Hackel. Approval was unanimous.

The Convener said that James Fleming, the Trust chairman had been invited to this meeting but was unable to attend.

The Clerk answered a question from Mr Lopes that the Board had made a financial commitment to the Trust £5,000 per annum for the next three years starting in 2014.

9. WILD FISHERIES REVIEW

River Naver Proprietors and Mr Mackay shared with the Board their thoughts on the meetings they had both had with Andrew Thin in respect of the Wild Fishery review.

The Clerk explained that Mr Thin has made a request for written submissions (Members to refer to email from the Clerk dated 2nd May 2014) in particular asking for a response to four questions:

Leadership and Governance – *Please give us your thoughts on the kind of governance structure that you believe might best achieve this (strategic leadership, direction and monitor progress), including how best to ensure a direct line of sight back to Scottish Ministers and the national public interest. Thoughts on whether there may be an existing public body or similar organisation that might be adapted to assist with this task would be helpful.*

Management and Delivery – *Please give us your thoughts on the sort of delivery mechanism/s (public, private and/or third sector) that might be appropriate here, with particular emphasis on the characteristics highlighted in the April progress bulletin (Members to see email from the Clerk dated 29th April 2014). Thoughts on how this might link back to the governance structure would also be appreciated.*

Resourcing – *Please give us your thoughts on both income generation and resource deployment, bearing in mind the characteristics implied in the April progress bulletin. Ideas about potential new income sources, and suggestions about how best to ensure that resource deployment aligns fully with national and regional strategic priorities, would be much appreciated.*

Cross Cutting – A number of issues they need to consider will not fall into the above categories – *Please give us your thoughts on these and any other issues you think are of relevance*

Members discussed and agreed that the Clerk would circulate consultation to the Board members listing Mr Thins questions to enable a Board response to him to be compiled by the Clerk for submission by the end of the month.

10. RENEWABLES PROJECTS UPDATE

The Clerk explained that Strathy South Windfarm proposal was expected to be put before the relevant Highland Council planning committee by Planners in June. Strathy Wood and Craig Riabhach would reach that point in the autumn. Representations had been made by the Board in response to consultation requests from the Energy Consents Unit and Highland Council regarding Strathy Wood and Craig Riabhach. An objection is still in place in respect of Strathy South with the Energy Consents Unit.

A discussion took place with Mr Nicholson regarding the Clebrig Hydro Scheme. The Clerk had received a letter from SEPA on the day of the meeting saying they were minded to grant the licence on certain listed conditions, a key one being abstraction control. Mr Nicholson was aware of the contents of the letter and is to contact SEPA asking them to withdraw the letter on the basis that its terms make the project unviable. The Clerk agreed to contact SEPA to seek confirmation they have withdrawn the letter.

Mr Nicholson said he was open to consider monitoring and mitigation arrangements and as there would be no construction for at least two years he was happy for the Clebrig burn to be added to a list of studied areas.

11. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk tabled the financial report for consideration. He explained that he had now received a number of Assessments since the production of the Budget/Actual statement.

The Clerk drew Members attention to the bank balance and reminded the Board of the decision to meet the first annual commitment to the Fishery Trust from bank reserves rather than include it in the 2014 budget and collect money for it through the 2014 Assessment. The bank balance was insufficient for this purpose and so the payment of the 2013 assessment arrears by the Halladale and Melvich bay fishery owners was necessary to enable the commitment to be fulfilled.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Mr Nicholson said he was aware that the Rossal Forest was on the market and the Board discussed and agreed that he should clarify with Mr Mason, as Secretary to the River Naver Fisheries, what the situation was (done) and for him to contact SNH/vendors/etc to put down a marker that any felling and replanting plan will need to reflect the FWPM impact etc as has happened on the Oykel. The risk is that a possible purchaser would not know and make false assumptions on lack of relevant data.

Mr MacKay led a discussion about the lifting of the voluntary arrangement adopted by salmon netmen not to fish in the early part of the season. He discussed the issue of compensation for not fishing. It was noted by the Chairman that Mr MacKay had been asked for his detailed proposals on this matter for discussion at the meeting but that none had been supplied.

13. DATE OF AGM AND NEXT BOARD MEETING

The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Board Meeting will be held on the 23rd September 2014 at the Bettyhill Hotel. The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors will start at 2pm and be followed by the Board at about 2.30pm.

ACTION PLAN

Issue declaration of interest forms to new Board Members	CRWC
Contact SEPA regarding the Clebrig Hydro Scheme	CRWC
Organise payment of Halladale Arrears	TW
Progress NCSP working group and report at September meeting	TW
Compile and issue a response to the Wild Fish Review Group	ALL/CRWC
Contact vendors of Rosal Forest/SNH etc.	JM / (AN)
Contact Bettyhill Hotel for the September meeting	CRWC