

NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2018

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the report is to summarise the work undertaken by the Northern District Salmon Fishery Board (NDSFB) during 2017/2018 and plans for the forthcoming year, with particular regard to the board's statutory functions and responsibilities.

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 2017/8

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 following meetings were held during the period of this annual report:

26th September 2017: Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors
26th September 2017: Northern District Salmon Fishery Board Meeting
8th May 2018: Annual Public Meeting
8th May 2018: Northern District Salmon Fishery Board Meeting

Dates of Forthcoming Meetings:

25th September 2018: Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors
25th September 2018: Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
Both meetings will be held at the Bettyhill Hotel and the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors will incorporate the triennial elections which will take place to elect Board Members for the period 2018 - 2021.

All meetings are notified to the public by posting on the NDSFB website with the Annual Public Meeting also advertised in the Northern Times; The Scottish Government also receives a copy of these 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 coastline of the Northern Board area has been actively patrolled during the 2018 season by the Northern DSFB Bailiffs. Patrols have been carried out on D Hodge's vessel, the River Naver Fisheries vessel, the Kinloch/Wildland vessel and the Strath Halladale Partnership vessel.

The patrol is a collaborative venture to deter illegal netting at sea which intercepts fish on the way to their natal rivers. Sea patrols were conducted across the full extent of the District's coastline.

The NDSFB wishes to record its thanks to all the Bailiffs of the Northern Board as well as Mr D Hodge and the local Constabulary for their help and support in this venture.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Alan Youngson has continued to support the Board in reviewing the 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 the annual review period, the following proposals/developments have been active:

Decisions Reached:

Strathy South Windfarm: on 27th April 2018, the Scottish Government approved the construction and operation of a 39 turbine wind farm at Strathy South.

Hydro Scheme, Kinloch: Approval was granted for construction of a 95kw run-of-river hydro-electricity scheme on Allt Ach an t-Strathain. A Youngson confirmed at the time of the application that this would have no impact on migratory salmonids due to impassable falls downstream of the site.

Ongoing Applications/Constructions:

Drumhollistan Windfarm: A joint site inspection/local inquiry has been conducted covering the Drumhollistan and Limekiln Wind farms (Only Drumhollistan relates to the Northern DSFB interests). The reporters expect to have their recommendations ready for sending to Scottish Ministers by the end of September 2018.

Meygen Tidal Project: Phase 1a saw the installation of four 1.5MW turbines start producing power in April 2018. Further turbine installations are expected on confirmation of future funding.

HABITAT ISSUES

The RSPB are continuing to fell large tracts of The Dyke forest to the immediate west of the River Halladale. This woodland is adjacent to the Dyke River, one of the main spawning rivers for the Halladale. The work and its potential impact on the river is being closely monitored by the Environmental Research Institute (ERI) in Thurso and members of the Strath Halladale Partnership.

There have been no sitings to date this season in the Northern Board area of Pacific pink salmon, however Bailiffs and Ghillies continue to remain vigilant to this.

FLOW COUNTRY RIVERS TRUST

The Flow Country Rivers Trust continues to promote research and education in the conservation of freshwater fish within the Flow Country. During 2017/2018 the Trust has produced the following interesting and informative report:

- Conductivity Measurements in the Northern Rivers, April - June 2018

The Board has committed match funding of £2,000 towards a Leader Project application by the Environmental Research Institute (ERI) to examine new ways to provide continuity in the provision of scientific advice and support to river interests in the North.

The Board continues to be kept informed of the Trust's progress through annual reports, newsletters 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 Marine Scotland and SNH, to electro-fishing work being conducted within both the River Naver catchment and the River Halladale catchment for the purpose of juvenile salmon stock assessment.

In addition, consent was granted by Marine Scotland to carry out electro-fishing at the 30 sites identified through the National Electro-fishing Programme (see below).

SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT/MARINE SCOTLAND MATTERS

Armadale Tagging Project: In May 2018, Marine Scotland produced the final report on the results of the acoustic tagging project undertaken at Armadale in July/August 2017. There has been no further announcement regarding any future research projects on mixed stock fisheries.

National Electro-fishing Programme: In April 2018 Marine Scotland announced their intention to undertake an Annual National Electrofishing Programme. 30 sites (a mixture of single pass and multi-pass sites) were identified within the Northern Board region broken down by the following catchment areas:

Halladale: 6 sites

Strathy: 2 sites

Naver: 16 sites

Borgie: 5 sites

Kinloch: 1 site

The electrofishing has been undertaken by the Naver and Halladale Bailiffs as well as by A Youngson and the Board wishes to record its thanks to all those involved in completing this programme. The results will be updated on the SFCC database and genetic/scale and water sampling was also carried out as part of the programme.

LOOK AHEAD TO 2018/9

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.

The Board will continue its work to ensure the best outcome for the conservation and improvement of freshwater fisheries liaising with Fisheries Management Scotland and other organisations as required, particularly in relation to the National electrofishing programme.

Chairman
Northern District Salmon Fishery Board
