

**MINUTES of the MEETING of the NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD held on  
WEDNESDAY 28<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022 at 2.10PM**

**At THE BETTYHILL HOTEL**

**Present:** Mr Toby Ward (Chairman)  
Lord Iliffe (Naver)  
Mr S Green (Naver)  
Mr P Gray (Naver)  
Mr D Buchan (Naver)  
Mrs L Lyle (Naver)  
Mr A Nicholson (Mallart) (via videoconferencing)

**In Attendance:** The Hon G Lopes (Naver)  
The Hon Mrs S Lopes (Naver)  
Ms L Richardson (Kinloch)  
Mr A Muat (Bettyhill Angling Club)  
Mr A Youngson (Scientific Advisor)  
Mr A Coyne (Naver)  
Mrs A MacAuslan (Clerk)

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr A Stone, Mr V Hackel, Mr R Sweeting, Mr J Stewart and Mr T MacDonnell.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No adjustments were required to the existing members' declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022 were approved as an accurate record.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

No further matters arising were raised other than those already tabled on the agenda.

**5. COASTAL PATROLS & ENFORCEMENT**

**5.1 *Sea Patrols 2022:*** The Clerk reported that D Hodge had undertaken 12 patrols this season; this was one extra than the Clerk had previously emailed. The 12 patrols were covered within the agreed sea patrol budget and the £1,000 contingency budget.

The patrols had been undertaken on a variety of days and at different times.

**5.2 *Arrangements for 2023 Patrols:*** The Chairman advised that W Grant is moving to Thurso and will not be available for sea patrols in 2023. The Chairman proposed that Bailiffs from the Northern DSNB rivers become involved in next year's patrols, with D

Hodge as skipper. This was approved in principle and the Clerk undertook to discuss this arrangement with D Hodge.

The Chairman also confirmed that the Halladale boat could be made available for additional patrols if required, and L Richardson confirmed that the Kinloch boat will be in the water from beginning of June.

## 6. FINANCE

6.1 **2022 Year End Income & Expenditure:** The Clerk referred to the year-to-date spreadsheet circulated with the agenda. The Clerk reported that Loch Choire are still to pay their assessments for 2021 and 2022. The Clerk will continue to apply pressure via Bell Ingram for these to be paid. There were no further comments regarding this.

6.2 **Draft Budget for Year ending 31<sup>st</sup> December 2023:** The Clerk referred to the draft 2023 budget circulated prior to the meeting. The draft budget proposes an assessment poundage rate of 20p per £RV, however the FMS subscription costs are due to increase by 5% for next year and the poundage may therefore need to increase to 21p per £RV as per 2022. It was agreed that the 2023 draft budget would be agreed at the Board meeting in May 2023.

## 7. SCIENTIFIC UPDATE/ FLOW COUNTRY RIVERS TRUST

**River Gradings in 2023:** A Youngson advised that the Northern DSFB river gradings were as expected for 2023. A Youngson explained the process for assessment river gradings and how the gradings were achieved.

**Archiving of Scientific Data:** A Youngson advised that the electrofishing for 2022 has been completed on all rivers except for the Strathy. The findings have not yet been written up, but A Youngson advised that the Board can have confidence that the rivers are uniformly well stocked. All electrofishing is carried out in the same way across the Board and a narrative will be produced alongside the reports to describe the process, before being made available to the archives.

Electrofishing associated with wind farm construction on the Strathy was discussed and the Clerk undertook to confirm the situation with regards this.

**West of Orkney Windfarm:** A Youngson advised that he and the Clerk have been in regular contact with the West of Orkney Windfarm developers. Smolt tracking projects have been confirmed on both the West Coast and East Coast for 2023. If the opportunity arose, A Youngson enquired whether the Board would give their consent for acoustic receivers to be placed on the North Coast and 100 smolts tagged as part of the project. The Board provided their support to this proposal.

**Invertebrate Sampling:** A Youngson advised that the results of the Spring sampling are available and provide a good insight into the health of the rivers.

8. **FISHERIES MANAGEMENT SCOTLAND**

The Clerk advised that she had attended a regional FMS meeting online in August 2022 and a note of this meeting had been circulated.

The potential for FMS to appoint someone to co-ordinate the offshore wind farm developments has been discussed, and potential funding sources for this are being investigated.

The Clerk also advised that the AGM for 2023 will be held in person with Inverness being considered as a potential venue.

9. **PLANNING CONSULTATIONS/APPLICATIONS UPDATE**

The Clerk advised that the planning applications which the Board have been active with over the past year are noted in the 2022 Annual Report.

**River Naver Road Bridge:** G Lopes raised the issue of the road bridge replacement scheme across the River Naver. A Youngson confirmed that he has reviewed the planning application documents. Nature Scot and SEPA will also be statutory consultees. G Lopes asked whether a single span bridge had been considered; the Clerk advised that further information on construction methods were still awaited.

**Bettyhill Wind Farm 2:** Lord Iliffe enquired as to when full planning would be submitted for this proposed wind farm. The Clerk reported that it was due to be submitted in November 2022, and G Lopes confirmed that no turbines would be sited within the River Naver catchment.

10. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

10.1 **Riverwoods Funding Application:** The Clerk advised that the first stage application deadline for the Riverwoods' Investment Readiness Pioneers funding was 31<sup>st</sup> October 2022. The focus of the funding was on community involvement; after discussion it was agreed to submit an application. S Green advised that he would be interested in being involved in the application.

10.2 **Vagastie Water Abstraction:** D Buchan provided the meeting with a background to the current water abstraction from the Vagastie. A Youngson was asked for his help in potentially securing the full flow back to the Northern DSFB catchment area. A Youngson advised that he had had informal discussions and it was agreed to wait until the next meeting to see if any formal approach should be taken.

10.3 **Season Dates:** The Chairman advised that informal discussion amongst some Board members had taken place regarding a possible extension to the rod and line season, after 30<sup>th</sup> September. It was confirmed that any change would require a fixed date to be stated, however G Lopes proposed that the Board could have an agreement that rivers were only fished up to the first Saturday of October. After discussion, it was agreed to leave the end of season date at present.

11. **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meeting of the Northern DSFB will take place on **Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2023** at the Bettyhill Hotel. The Board meeting will follow directly on from the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Annual Public Meeting which will commence at **2.00pm**.

**LIST OF ACTIONS ARISING FROM MEETING ON 28.09.22**

1.	Discuss 2023 sea patrol arrangements with D Hodge	Clerk
2.	Contact Bell Ingram regarding outstanding Loch Choire assessments	Clerk
3.	Investigate electrofishing arrangements for Strathy as per windfarm developments	Clerk
4.	Submit application to Phase 1 of Riverwoods funding	Clerk/S Green
5.	Confirm venue arrangements for next meeting	Clerk

ATM/NDSFB  
Sept 2022