

# NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

## ANNUAL REPORT – 2024

---

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the report is to summarise the work undertaken by the Northern District Salmon Fishery Board (NDSFB) during 2024 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 2024

#### 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. The Board held its triennial elections on 8<sup>th</sup> May 2024 and a list of current Board members (Upper & Lower Proprietors) is published on the NDSFB website.

#### Meetings

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

8<sup>th</sup> May 2024: Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors, Annual Public Meeting and Northern DSFB Board Meeting

25<sup>th</sup> September 2024: Northern District Salmon Fishery Board Meeting

Dates of Forthcoming Meetings:

7<sup>th</sup> May 2025: Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors, Annual Public Meeting and Northern DSFB Board Meeting

24<sup>th</sup> September 2025: Northern District Salmon Fishery Board Meeting

Both meetings will be held at the Bettyhill Hotel and minutes of the meetings will be made available on the NDSFB website.

#### Annual Report and Accounts

The draft accounts for Year Ending 31st December 2024 will be considered by the Board at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on 7<sup>th</sup> May 2025, along with the draft Annual Report. Once approved these documents will be posted on the NDSFB website and copies 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.

### ENFORCEMENT

The coastline of the Northern Board area has been actively patrolled during the 2024 season by the Northern DSFB Bailiffs on foot and using drones. In addition, five coastal patrols have been carried out on D Hodge's vessel, the Guiding Star, with an NDSFB Bailiff on board.

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 for their help and support in this venture.

## **RENEWABLE ENERGY / PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

Alan Youngson has continued to support the Board in reviewing the scientific study/evidence produced by developers of both renewable energy projects and other 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:

**Achrugan Wind Farm:** A scoping opinion was submitted in May 2024 for the construction and operation of 14 turbines with a total generating capacity of approximately 50MW. The Board responded to the scoping opinion with concerns raised about the proximity of some of the proposed turbines to the River Strathy and one of its tributaries.

**Baledigle Wind Farm:** A scoping opinion was submitted in June 2024 for the construction and operation of 13 turbines. The Board responded to the scoping opinion raising concerns about the potential impact on the spawning areas of the upper reaches of the River Halladale, and the potential shadow flicker effect on the river.

**West of Orkney Wind Farm:** A Youngson and the Clerk continue to be involved in discussions with the developers regarding this proposed offshore wind farm. Representatives from the NDSFB, FCRT and FMS met with the developers in February 2025 to discuss the potential impact on the migration of both juveniles and adult salmon through the proposed array.

**River Naver Road Bridge:** The Marine Directorate issued a license for in-river working in the River Naver at Bettyhill, between the dates of 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024 to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2025 to allow for the construction of a replacement, two carriage way road bridge. The works have been delayed over the winter and the contractors have since asked for an extension to the license until 15<sup>th</sup> April 2025. A further marine license for in-river working will be applied for from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2025 to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2026 to allow for the removal of the existing bridge.

## **HABITAT ISSUES**

The Northern DSFB has continued to help fund the 3-year PhD on saprolegnia in salmon, and some of the Northern Board rivers have supplied water supplies to support the research project throughout 2024.

Water temperature monitors continue to be deployed and downloaded throughout the Naver and Halladale catchment areas.

Several Estates and landowners within the Northern DSFB area are either preparing to undertake peatland restoration, or are in the process of doing so.

In September 2024 the Board wrote to The Highland Council and Nature Scot regarding peatland restoration work at Nam Breac South, Forsinard RSPB. The Board highlighted the fact that it had not been consulted as part of the planning application despite the works taking place up to the riverbanks of the Dyke during spawning season.

## **FLOW COUNTRY RIVERS TRUST/SCIENTIFIC ADVICE**

The Flow Country Rivers Trust continues to promote research and education in the conservation of freshwater fish within the Flow Country.

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

The Northern DSFB continued to work in conjunction with the Flow Country Rivers Trust to produce our Fisheries Management Plan (FMP). The Fisheries Management Plan is available

to view using the following link. [Scotland's Fishery Management Plans](#) Special thanks to Eleanor Constable for her work in pulling this together.

We continue to be indebted to Alan Youngson for his help and advice to Board members in relation to scientific matters.

## **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. In addition, the Board consented to the River Halladale starting a hatchery and stocking programme. 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 catchments of the Rivers Naver, Borgie, Kinloch and Halladale for the purpose of juvenile salmon stock assessment.

The National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) did not take place in 2024, however the Rivers Borgie, Naver, Kinloch and Halladale undertook their own electrofishing surveys throughout the summer as part of their established programmes.

## **LOOK AHEAD TO 2025**

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.

Chair  
Northern District Salmon Fishery Board

---