

NORTHERN DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT – 2025

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the report is to summarise the work undertaken by the Northern District Salmon Fishery Board (NDSFB) during 2025 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 2025

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. Membership of the Board changed as follows in 2024:

Resignation of Members: Mr. Sebastian Green (Upper Proprietor, September 2025), Mr. Tim Kirkwood (Upper Proprietor, September 2025)

Appointment of Members: Mr. James Hole (Upper Proprietor, September 2025), Ms Lana Richardson (Upper Proprietor, September 2025)

An updated list of current Board members is published on the Northern DSFB website.

Meetings

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

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

24th September 2025: Northern District Salmon Fishery Board Meeting

Dates of Forthcoming Meetings:

6th May 2026: Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors, Annual Public Meeting and Northern DSFB Board Meeting

23rd September 2026: 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 2025 will be considered by the Board at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on 6th May 2026, 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 2025 season by the Northern DSFB Bailiffs on foot and using drones. Additionally, some patrols of the coastline using canoes have been undertaken.

Incidences of illegal netting were reported to Police Scotland.

The NDSFB wishes to record its thanks to all the Bailiffs of the Northern Board for their help and support in watching the coastline of the Northern DSFB region.

RENEWABLE ENERGY / PLANNING APPLICATIONS

The Board continues to review 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:

Bettyhill Wind Farm 2: The Board responded to the draft Water Quality and Fish Monitoring Plan commissioned by the Developers as part of the pre-construction requirements .

Havbredey Offshore Wind Farm: A scoping opinion was submitted in April 2025 for the construction and operation of up to 110 floating wind turbine generators (WTGs) off the North West of Cape Wrath with an expected point of convection to the grid along the North Coast. The Board responded to the scoping opinion raising concerns about the potential impact on the migratory impact of both juvenile and adult salmon.

Strathy South Wind Farm: The Board responded to a request for comment on the proposed grid connection for the approved Strathy South Wind Farm.

Woodcock Hill Wind Farm: A scoping opinion was submitted in November 2025 for the proposed development of 11 wind turbines and a battery energy storage facility (BESS) within the River Halladale catchment area. The Board submitted a response indicating that fish surveys required to be conducted as part of the planning process. Additionally, the Board's concerns were noted regarding the potential environmental impact of the BESS

River Naver Road Bridge: The Board continued to liaise with The Highland Council regarding the ongoing replacement of the River Naver Road Bridge with a further license for in-river working granted from 1st October 2025 to 15th March 2026.

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 2025.

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

In addition, some estates and landowners are undertaking planting of forestry and woodlands.

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.

Alan Youngson retired from his role as Scientific Advisor to the Board during 2024 and the Board wishes to record its sincere thanks to Alan for all his help and contributions to the Board during his tenure. Alan continues to provide advice on an ad hoc basis.

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 Nature Scot where needed, to the introduction of young stock to the River Borgie and the River Halladale. 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 Nature Scot, to electro-fishing work being conducted within catchments of the Rivers Naver, Borgie, Kinloch, Strathy and Halladale for the purpose of juvenile salmon stock assessment.

The National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) did not take place in 2025, 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 2026

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
