

NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 28 MAY 2012

This is the 13th annual report for the North and West District Salmon Fishery Board since it was formed by the North and West District Salmon Fishery Board Designation Order in May 1999.

The Board has a statutory role to play in the protection and improvement of fisheries within its district and has actively participated on a number fronts this year.

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 endorsed by the Board through the issuing of Warrant Cards to IFM qualified or well experienced people authorising them to be Bailiffs within the District. Continuing the professional development of these individuals is a crucial part of the support that their employers can give them and the Board will continue to encourage this.

The Board works closely with and financially supports the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust to complete its salmon and sea trout related work. The number of planning application for fish farm and renewable energy projects is slowly growing and the Board unquestionably benefits from the knowledge of the Trust staff in conducting its role as a Statutory Consultee. A recent planning decision in favour of the addition of a new fish farm to pristine west coast waters is unfortunate to say the least but the contribution of the WSFT staff and also the increasing assistance of RAFTS via the Aquaculture Planning project they embarked on eighteen months ago do and will continue to ensure consultation responses are well resourced and may start to encourage regulators to be more cautious in consenting projects at all or at least more thoughtful in the way they apply conditions to consents for development that might impact upon salmonids at sea or in their natal rivers.

Last year the Board reported that it collaborates in the North and West Salmon Management group and had formed the Northern Salmon Management Group, the function of both being to apply for licences to shoot seals. The arrangements continue to work well. The majority of marksmen have now completed accredited courses to be qualified in their role, those which have not will be unable to continue to play a part in 2013. The Board encourages all Proprietors and their staff and guests to collect and submit data of seal sightings, photographs and evidence of seal marked fish to the Clerk.

The Scottish Government has introduced a Bill before the Scottish Parliament that will underpin the sustainable development of the fish farming and freshwater fishing sectors.

Key features of the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Bill include:

- New legal measures for fish farms operators – including statutory farm management agreements, requirements for technical equipment standards, and control mechanisms for the operation of wellboats
- Moves to improve the management and governance of District Salmon Fisheries Boards, making them more transparent and accountable, with powers for Ministers to intervene if that is not the case
- Safeguards for the shellfish industry, with measures to ensure shellfish waters continue to be protected from pollution once the EU Shellfish Waters Directive is repealed in 2013
- Powers to impose charges in connection to services provided by Marine Scotland in carrying out of functions relating to fish and shellfish farming, freshwater fisheries, and sea fisheries
- Some additional enforcement powers to support sea fishery officers in carrying out monitoring and investigation duties, and the extension of Fixed Penalty Notices to respond to issues of regulatory non-compliance

In view of the above and taking guidance from the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards the Board has signed up to the associations Code of Practice for Boards and now has its own website to outline the work of the Board and put into the public arena certain key information. It is conceivable that in the future the Scottish Government may supply addition guidance.

The Bill when enacted is expected to make significant changes to the governance of DFSB's and the extent of the administration as a result. At this stage it is only possible say that the Board will follow the Bills passage carefully and make sure it is fully compliant.

R Vestey
Convenor
25th October 2012
