

MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING and TRIENNIAL ELECTION of the NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD held by means of a Video Conference on FRIDAY 22nd May 2020 at 11.00 am.

Present: Mr R Vestey (Convener)
Mr D Davies (Vice Convener)
Mr R Bradford
Mr C Macleod
Mr A Balfour
Mr D Lindsay
Mr G Osborne
Ms K Bontoft
Mr K Dunbar (part)

In attendance: Ms S Harkins
Dr S Marshall (WSFT)
Mr K Dunbar (part)
Mr R Whitson (Clerk, Bell Ingram)

The Convener welcomed all present to the video conference Board Meeting and Triennial Election. The use of video conferencing facilities being critical to us, as a Board in being able to comply with Scottish Government legislation.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs G Rex, Mr C Marsham (retiring Board member).

2. TRIENNIAL ELECTION AND ELECTION OF CONVENER

At this point in the meeting, the Convener handed over proceedings to the Clerk.

The Clerk went on to explain that as required under the 2003 Act, to remain legal and competent, the Board is required to hold an election every 3 years. Failure to do so would render the Board in contravention of the Act and so it would, by default be dissolved in law.

The Clerk went on to dissolve the Board prior to the election.

The Triennial Election then took place and the following Members were elected:

Upper Proprietors.

Mr R Vestey	(Mandatory for the EH Vestey Marriage Settlement Trust)
Mr D Davies	(Mandatory for Polly Estates)
Ms K Bontoft	(Mandatory for Gualin and Dionard proprietors)
Mr A Adamson	(Mandatory for Braesgill Ltd)
Mr R Bradford	
Mr G Osborne	(Mandatory for G&R Osborne)

Lower Proprietors

Mr D Lindsay	(Mandatory for Fourth Duke of Westminster's 1964 Settlement Trust)
Mr A Balfour	(Mandatory for Scourie Estate)

Co-opted Members

Mr C Macleod
Mr K Dunbar

Convener and Vice Convener

Mr R Vestey was elected as Convener
Mr D Davies was elected as Vice Convener

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Clerk asked the Board to newly elected Board to confirm that there were no conflicts of interest. None were noted.

4. MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 6th NOVEMBER 2019

The Convener took those present through the meeting held on 6th November 2019. All actions had been undertaken.

The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and will be signed by the Convener who chaired the meeting.

5. MATTERS ARISING

The Clerk explained that there has been a problem receiving planning and SEPA applications that has now been resolved. He went on to give an update on the proposal received from SEPA by Loch Duart to increase the biomass in their Reintrad site.

Shona Marshall explained the scientific position in regard to the application and in the proposed increase. This will be forwarded to SEPA as part of the consultation process.

David Davies asked whether there had been any progress regarding the Enard Bay fish farm proposal. There has not been any progress.

6. FINANCIAL REPORT

The Clerk took the meeting through the Financial Report.

All assessments had been ingathered in line with the budget.

Expenditure had been slightly less than budget, giving a surplus of £4,688.30 at year end against a budget surplus of £1,950.

Allowing for the post meeting end of year expenditure, the year end bank balance was predicted to be £15,998.79.

7. BUDGET AND ASSESSMENT – YEAR TO 28th MAY 2021

Looking forward and given the extraordinary trading position for all proprietors in the Board area as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic, the Board are keen to do what they can to limit the 2020/21 assessment. On that basis a loss -making budget was proposed.

At 36p/£1 the income is budgeted at £30,960. Planned expenditure is £34,170 and will result in a loss of £3,210. The loss will be cushioned by utilising some of the Board's cash reserves.

The budget was approved, and assessments will be issued in due course.

8. WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST - REPORT

Shona Marshall's report had been issued in advance of the meeting and had been circulated by the Clerk.

Shona asked for questions regarding the report and work programme, there were none and the proposed work programme for the Trust was approved.

There were two points made subsequently:

With regard to hatchery stocking, Keith Dunbar asked whether any thought had been given to kelt reconditioning. The Board were not aware of this and subsequent to the meeting, Keith provided a link to the project which is being undertaken by the TDSFB. Further information can be found at <http://www.tdsfb.org/keltreconditioning.html>

Shona is keen to restart sweep netting surveys after the first phase of lockdown commences on 28th May, but is short of volunteers to undertake the work. Dougal Lindsay and Andrew Adamson offered the possibility of using staff from Reay Forest and the WildLand estates to assist.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Prior to the meeting, the Clerk had circulated two papers from Marine Scotland regarding proposed legislation to prohibit the culling of seals currently undertaken to protect both aquaculture and wild fish stocks.

Alan Balfour mentioned that it was not entirely surprising in terms of aquaculture and the ability to trade with the USA going forward, where legislation is more stringent in terms of predator control. The threat to the legitimate protection of wild fish was not expected and has the capacity to cause problems going forward.

The Clerk spoke to Alan Wells of FMS after the meeting and raised the Board's concerns with him. It is not known whether there is scope to amend the proposed legislation to ensure wild fisheries may have the option to apply to cull seals in the future. It seems contrary to common sense that the Scottish Government would further risk a species of migratory fish that are agreed to be threatened, by forbidding legitimate predator control.

David Davies mentioned that the Finfish fish farm at Inverpolly has been bought by Mowi/Marine Harvest. He is hoping that the management will improve as a result of the buy-out.

Dougal Lindsay mentioned that Grosvenor / Reay Forest are keen to support the Missing Smolt Project and have offered the Laxford to enable study to take place.

10. DATE OF AGM AND NEXT BOARD MEETING

The Board agreed that holding one meeting per year by video conference might be a positive step going forward, as it cuts our carbon footprint, and allows a wider participation. This will be looked at in the future.

Due to the Covid 19 restrictions, it was not possible to hold the Annual Public Meeting on the same date as the Board meeting as we have done in previous years. If possible, this will be held in the Autumn when the next round of meetings take place.

Therefore, The Annual Public Meeting, The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Board Meeting will be held on 4th November 2020 at the Macphail Centre, Ullapool, assuming we can meet publicly. Timings will be published nearer the time.

ACTION PLAN

Confirm Budget 20/21 RSMW

Organise Autumn Meetings RSMW

Bell Ingram
Chartered Surveyors
Bonar Bridge
Sutherland
IV24 3EA

RSMW/NW/1

May 2020