

**MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING of the  
NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT  
SALMON FISHERY BOARD held on  
Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> November 2021  
at 10.30 am by Zoom**

Present: Mr D Davies (Vice-Convener)  
Mr K Dunbar  
Mr A Balfour  
Mr R Bradshaw  
Ms S Harkins (Kinlochbervie Estate)  
Mr T Kirkwood  
Ms K Bontoft

In Attendance: Dr S Marshall (WSFT)  
Mr A Harrington  
Mr R Whitson (Bell Ingram – Clerk)

The Vice-Convener welcomed all present to the video conference Board Meeting.

**1. APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Mr D Lindsay, Mr C McLeod, Mrs G Rex, and Mr R Vestey.

**2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 21 MAY 2021**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

**4. MATTERS ARISING**

All matters arising had all been dealt with in the intervening period since the last meeting.

**5. FINANCIAL REPORT**

The Clerk gave the meeting an overview of the present financial position.

The cash position is £41,473.92. There are outstanding assessments totalling £7,812, all of which are being pursued and should be paid well in advance of the end of financial year.

David Davies asked that in future when reporting the financial position that this should include budget versus actuals to the date in question, which the Clerk will attend to going forward.

## **6. WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST REPORT**

Shona Marshall's report had been circulated with the meeting papers. There were no questions or additions.

It was determined a good point in the meeting to discuss the Laxford Project and Alastair Harrington gave a synopsis of the scope and purpose of the project as a collaboration between Reay Forest Estate, The Atlantic Salmon Trust, Marine Scotland and the West Sutherland Fisheries Trust. The aim was to better understand the Laxford catchment and deliver impactful outcomes for migratory fish based on strong scientific evidence. The initial three-year project forms part of a longer, 10 year process:

- Phase 1, which has started comprises a catchment audit.
- Phase 2 being catchment restoration including planting, introduction of nutrients, and studying predation.
- Phase 3 being monitoring and detection such as a pit tagging.

The long-term outcome is that the Laxford will become an indexed river and be able to share the outcomes with other rivers in the country.

## **7. FISH FARM UPDATE & FISHERY MANAGEMENT SCOTLAND ("FMS")**

At this point, Charlotte Middleton joined the meeting. Charlotte gave an overview of key work being undertaken by FMS, including regulatory work such as response to Scottish Government sea lice risk assessment.

From a planning point of view, fish farms were discussed and a number of fish farm applications are now being rejected, not just on environmental issues, but also as a result of visual concerns and the effect on a pristine landscape, which is encouraging.

There are three new fish farm applications being considered in the Clyde area presently. SEPA are considering CAR licence applications.

There is a greater emphasis on EMPs when considering planning applications at the moment and the tie in with Trusts, however, longer term, EMPs will probably drop out of the consideration process and SEPA's involvement will increase with a greater emphasis on CAR licences and the CAR licence process.

There were a number of questions with regard to EMP enforcement and the future of EMPs. EMP enforcement should be a council obligation; however, as with many other issues regarding local authority overview, the councils are not properly resourced at present so it does require other bodies to maintain a watching brief.

The second question relating to CAR licences is also a resource issue. Given SEPA are also under-resourced, and by not having the correct staffing to manage these CAR licences is a concern.

There was then an element of discussion with regard to introgression and the damage caused to wild fish populations by escaped fish farm stock. There is the general feeling

that more work needs to be done, both to prevent fish farm escapees and also in terms of follow-up and punitive action against fish farmers who allow substantial escapes to take place.

The discussion then moved on to the Loch Duart / Clashnessie Bay sea lice issue and the report prepared by Sonja Brown was discussed. It was agreed that Shona Marshall would continue to liaise with Loch Duart and keep the Board apprised as to the progress being made with regard to their sea lice control measures, and to assist where possible to avoid a repeat of the same issues in future rotations. FMS issue sea lice data on a weekly basis and that can be made available to the Board should they wish to view it.

Sonja Brown will be asked to report at the next Board meeting as to progress with regard to future plans and any other concerns.

The situation is exacerbated by the Scottish government's strong support for the fish farming industry, and all present are concerned that the growth of the fish farming industry will continue to create issues with sea lice and other ecological damage, all of which will have negative affect on the wild fish population.

## **8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

David Davies briefed the meeting on the Finfish hatchery at Inverpolly, which is now owned by MOWI. MOWI are looking at a recirculation system for holding brood fish on the fresh water site. They had also enquired about piping fresh water from the Polly over to the sea site but this had been declined.

Tim Kirkwood explained that MOWI had made their best offer at the time. The brood stock plans were now probably abandoned, but they will continue to keep the site as a small production site.

There being no other business the meeting was closed.

## **9. DATE OF AGM AND NEXT BOARD MEETING**

The date of the next meeting was provisionally set as Tuesday, 24 May 2022.