

**MINUTES of the BOARD MEETING of the
NORTH AND WEST DISTRICT
SALMON FISHERY BOARD held on
17th May 2022
At 1.30pm At The Macphail Centre,
Ullapool**

Present: Mr R Vestey (Convenor)
Mr D Davies (Vice-Convenor)
Mr A Balfour
Mr K Dunbar
Mr C Macleod
Ms S Harkins (Kinlochbervie Estate)
Mr D Lindsay

In Attendance: Dr S Marshall (WSFT)
Mr R Whitson (Bell Ingram – Clerk)
Miss C Middleton (FMS)
Mr C Conroy (Laxford Project)

The Convenor welcomed everyone to the first in person Board Meeting post pandemic

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mr R Bradford, Mr G Osborne, Miss L Richardson and Mrs G Rex.

2. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

3. COMPLAINTS

No complaints have been received, however there had been an FOI request that had been dealt with during the period that had involved the Information Commissioner. The issue had been resolved satisfactorily.

4. MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2021

The Minutes of the meeting held on 10th November 2021 were agreed as an accurate record.

5. MATTERS ARISING

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

6. LAXFORD PROJECT UPDATE

Due to time pressures, the agenda was adjusted to allow Chris Conroy to give his presentation.

Chris is the technical project manager for Project Laxford. He gave an overview of the AST, the owners of the Project, the key drivers causing the decline of Atlantic Salmon, the aims and objectives of the project (which have been alluded to previously).

His talk included information on the catchment audit and the effects of increasing water temperatures, the lack of tree cover and some of the impacts associated with that, also pit tagging and how the information gained from it is utilised.

Other investigations undertaken include the use of high resolution sonar, gathering information on the EDNA characteristics of the fish in the Laxford, and taking water samples for DNA analysis.

Keith Dunbar asked whether there was an aspirational increase in smolt production associated with the project. The answer was to at least halt the decline and if possible increase smolt production and ideally to increase the number of returning adult fish.

7. FISH FARMING UPDATE & FMS

Again, the agenda was adjusted to allow Charlotte Middleton to give her presentation.

Key workstreams included progressing the SEPA fresh water framework directive. Further she has been assisting with the development of the EMP process and end of cycle management, trying to ensure robustness in the process, as their management sits with Local Authorities and they are generally not well managed.

The Salmon interaction working group have been focusing effort with the Scottish Government regarding data transparency and the actual number of fish in fish farms, the lice burden and the impact of them on the environment, also escapees in freshwater production and SEPA's role in monitoring, intregression and certification.

She mentioned the west coast tracking project. Tagging of 2,300 smolts had been completed across the various catchments and the receivers had all been deployed. Last years results were available on line.

David Davies mentioned the failure by Highland Council to monitor or enforce end cycle reviews. The meetings were taking place, but the Council were not attending and asked if the Board should get involved. The answer is that the Board is not resourced, so it would be difficult to participate in a meaningful way.

8. FINANCIAL REPORT

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

The cash position at the date of the meeting was £36,584. The budgeted expenditure to the date of the meeting was £30,960, the actual expenditure was £28,817, giving an

underspend of £2,143 at that date, which was explained as timing issues for the payment of the Fish Legal subscription and underspends on some other items of expenditure.

- i. The budget was reviewed and agreed with the assessment set at 38p/£ for the coming year.

9. WEST SUTHERLAND FISHERIES TRUST REPORT

Shona Marshall's report had been circulated with the meeting papers.

Further to the report, Shona briefed the Board on the local outcomes of the West Coast Tracking Project with 100 salmon and 100 sea trout being tagged. The tracking results are on the Trust website.

The work proposed to be undertaken by the Trust in the coming year was covered in detail.

The report produced by Loch Duart Ltd was then discussed at some length with the emphasis on unacceptably high sea lice levels. Despite The Board's best efforts, they have no statutory powers and so cannot enforce measures when lice levels exceed CoGP.

AB, RW and SM to monitor in the meantime.

Loch Duart will be asked for an update on their progress for discussion at the next Board meeting.

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There being no other business the meeting was closed.

11. DATE OF QUALIFIED PROPRIETOR AND NEXT BOARD MEETING

The date of the next meeting was provisionally set Friday 11th November at 2pm.