

MINUTES OF MEETING

of

HELMSDALE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

held at Kildonan Lodge, Sutherland

on Sunday, 11 May 2014 at 09.30 am

PRESENT

Sir John Nutting Bt QC
Sir A Heber Percy
Neil McCorquodale
William Southall
Lucy Reeves
Donald Sutherland
Robert Mackay

IN ATTENDANCE

Sir Michael Wigan - Fishery Manager
Norman Wright - Clerk
Jeremy Clay
Alasdair Laing - Chairman of the Association of Salmon
Fishery Boards

CHAIR

Sir John Nutting took the Chair

APOLOGIES

Apologies received from Mrs M E Clay

MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Last Meetings held at Kildonan Lodge, Helmsdale, Sutherland on Sunday 12th of May 2013, having been circulated, were approved, and then signed by Sir John Nutting.

MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

ACCOUNTS

The Accounts for 2013, having been circulated, were approved. The Accountants, who are Saffery Champness, Inverness will undertake an Audit, at a cost of £600. Once this has been completed, the Accounts will be placed on the Board's website, and a copy transmitted to the Scottish Ministers.

REPORT FOR 2013

This had been circulated previously, and was approved. The Report will be placed on the Board's website and a copy transmitted to the Scottish Ministers.

CATCHES and RUNS

Up to the end of April 2014, a total of 143 Salmon had been caught, compared to the 10 year average of 162. The highest catches had been on Beat Six.

In September 2013, the Counter had recorded 1200 fish in one day. There had been no compensation water for two weeks beforehand and the fish had been lying in the lower river waiting for a spate.

CATCH and RELEASE

Up to the end of April 2014, the total number fish released was 112, a return rate of 80%.

OPEN WEEK

In January 2014, instead of Open Days, there was a full week. An estimated 200 people took part. The Fishery Manager calculates that they brought in over £50,000 to the local economy. This event is of major benefit to the local community. The Open Days/Week are the third factor, along with the Dam and the Counter, which make the Helmsdale different from most other rivers.

RIVERBANK WORKS

There are two projects this year, involving works at the Tail of the Bay and Croftland at Marrell. Some years ago, a stone revetment was placed at Marrell, but it needed updating. Mr Moran, the Crofter, gave permission for us to cross his ground and he is very pleased with the works. Thanks are due to Torrish Estate for providing the rock used at Marrell.

DAM

The Fishery Manager confirmed that the Dam inspection had been carried out and everything was up-to-date. Sir John Nutting advised that he had met Dr Andy Hughes, the Inspector when he was visiting the Dam, and he had confirmed that very satisfied.

HATCHERY

This year 160,000 unfed Fry were put out. The Fishery Manager confirmed that we have a SEPA Licence to take water from the burn to the Hatchery. We also have a Licence from them to obtain Broodstock. There was a discussion about the Hatchery following upon comments made at the Annual Public Meeting yesterday, by Professor Verspoor and the Notes provided by Professor Gage. Mr Laing noted that Opinion is moving against Hatcheries, and it may be more difficult in the future to obtain a Hatchery Licence. Our present costs for the Hatchery are low. Noted that obtaining Broodstock is a major social function, with 56 people on the Approved List. Research is to be considered on the key question of whether the Hatchery is damaging the River.

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

A draft of the proposed Complaints Procedure had been circulated already. The Aquaculture and Fisheries (S) Act 2013 came into force in September 2013 and this is the first Meeting at which new procedures could be considered. The draft is based on recommendations by

the Association of Salmon Fishery Boards, and was approved subject to 1 amendment. Complaints by telephone would not be accepted, instead they would have to be lodged by email or letter. No dedicated web site would be required - all communications would be sent to the Clerk. The Complaints Procedure will be intimated to the Scottish Ministers and also placed on the Board's website.

REGISTER OF FINANCIAL INTERESTS

The Clerk circulated copies of a Briefing Note from the Association dealing with Register of Financial Interests. Relevant interests to be declared, are defined as:-

- A) interest in a Salmon Fishery
- B) gifts, or hospitality received in connection with a Board Function
- C) interest in a development with the potential to impact upon migratory salmonids within the District
- D) the provision of financial, management or consultancy services to the Board

Prior to this Meeting, the Clerk had consulted with individual members of the Board, and only four Directorships to be noted. The Clerk will compile and keep a Register of Members Financial Interests, which will be placed on the Board's website.

HELMSDALE and DISTRICT ANGLING ASSOCIATION

Donald Sutherland reported that a recent Meeting with 20 attendees, William Jappy was appointed Chairman, Peter Quail as Secretary and himself as Treasurer. The Board will provide what assistance it can. Sir John Nutting said that he will donate the Achentoul rods in January 2015, as did Lucy Reeves for Suisgill. The Association is made up of members who are interested in Trout, and Sea angling, as well as Salmon so they will not need a lot of water.

AOB

(a) Moray Firth Windfarm.

Sir Michael Wigan reported that Consents had been granted for seven different operations. These Consents contained no conservation measures, other than a statement that there will be monitoring. Mr Laing advised that there was a lot of work going on in the background involving the Association of Salmon Fishery Board.

(b) Meetings in 2015

Discussed and decided that the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and the Annual Public Meeting, would both take place on the same day in May 2015.

NEXT MEETING

The next Meeting of the Qualified Proprietors will take place at 2.30 pm on Saturday, 9th May 2015 at KILDONAN HALL, Helmsdale, followed thereafter by the Annual Public Meeting.