

MINUTES OF MEETING
of
HELMSDALE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
held at Kildonan Hall, Helmsdale, Sutherland
on Saturday, 12th May 2018 at 10.35am

PRESENT

Neil McCorquodale
Sir John Nutting Bt. QC
Sir Algernon Heber-Percy
William Southall
Alexander Darwall
George Stephenson
Donald Sutherland
Robert Mackay

IN ATTENDANCE

Sir Michael Wigan Bt. - Fishery Manager
Norman Wright - Clerk

CHAIR

Sir John Nutting had resigned last year with effect from 31st December 2017. Neil McCorquodale was confirmed as the new Chairman.

APOLOGIES

None

MINUTES OF LAST MEETINGS

The Minutes of the Last Meeting held at Kildonan Hall, Helmsdale on Saturday, 6th of May 2017, having been circulated previously, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

None

ACCOUNTS

The Audited Accounts for the year to 31st January 2018, prepared by Saffery Champness, Chartered Accountants, Inverness were tabled, considered, approved and signed by the Chairman.

REPORT FOR 2017

The Clerk's Report for 2017, was tabled, considered, approved and signed by the Clerk.

BAILIFFS

The current Bailiffs confirmed as Peter Quail, Robert Henderson and John Macleod.

TRIENNIAL ELECTION – 2019

Prior notification that the term of the current committee ceases in May 2019, and there will be a Triennial Election then.

AOB

The Clerk advised that the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) comes into force on 25th May 2018.

- To ensure compliance, N J D Wright as Clerk was appointed as the Officer responsible for Data.
- An information audit of the information held shows that it is restricted to the names and address of relevant parties and there is no sensitive information. Concluded that only a Public Task Data Base is required.
- Data Handling Policy was circulated and approved.
- Privacy Statement was approved and distributed to all relevant parties.
- Copies of the Data Handling Policy and the Privacy Statement would be posted on the Board's Website.

NEXT MEETING

This will be held at 11am on Saturday 11th May 2019 at Kildonan Hall, Helmsdale.



MINUTES OF THE FIFTH ANNUAL MEETING
of
HELMSDALE DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
held at Kildonan Hall, Helmsdale,
on Saturday, 12th May 2018 at 10.45am

PRESENT

Neil McCorquodale
Sir John Nutting Bt. QC
Sir Algernon Heber-Percy
William Southall
Donald Sutherland
Robert Mackay
Alexander Darwall
George Stephenson

IN ATTENDANCE

Sir Michael Wigan Bt. - Fishery Manager
Norman Wright - Clerk
Peter Quail - Head Bailiff
Attendees – Lady Heber-Percy, Mrs D. Darwall, Brian Lyall, John McLeod, Mrs M. Quail, Mrs Y. Grant, Anson MacAuslan, John Young.

CHAIR

Neil McCorquodale took the Chair.

APOLOGIES

None

MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

The Minutes of the Fourth Annual Meeting held on Saturday, 6th May 2017 having been circulated previously, were approved and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING

A question was raised as to whether FMOs were now defunct. Officially, the Scottish Government has this matter on hold, but they are still keen for Boards to produce larger units by merger.

CATCHES

For the whole of Scotland, 49,000 salmon were caught last year, which was 80% of the 5 year average. 90% of those caught were released. Thus over 5,000 fish were retained from the total. 2014 was the lowest rod catch ever. In 2015 and 2016 there was a recovery, but 2017 was down again. On the Helmsdale, the total catch for the Upper Beats and the Lower Water was 1,879. On the Private Water, the release rate was **96%**, however on the Lower Water this was about **50%**.

The number of Sea Trout recorded was 202. All Finnock caught are released. *The Fishery Manager will prepare a Policy for Sea Trout, operational from 2019 onwards*

There was a discussion about the rate of release on the Lower Water. This will be addressed at the Autumn Meeting, but in the meantime, inform anglers in the Village that change is on its way, to comply with Conservation Grade requirements. The Fishery Manager has already initiated tightening up by requiring that Outlets ensure full personal details, including Postcodes, are entered on the Permits.

There was an invasion of pink salmon from Norway. They had been introduced there about 50 years ago for food. Initially, there were concerns but these came to nothing, as they had already spawned and had departed before our spawning took place. 2017 was remarkable for the number of large fish, 22 over 20 pounds.

CONSERVATION GRADES

The Fishery Manager reported that our **Conservation Grade is 1**. Initially, we were graded 2, but were successful on appeal, along with 5 other rivers. There are now 28 rivers in Scotland graded 1, up from 22.

There are 218 graded rivers in Scotland and the majority are Grade 3. The system of measurement for grading has changed. Electro Fishing results are a factor and there is now an obligation to produce such results, without which rivers automatically graded 3. Peter Quail reported that he had received details of 15 sites to be checked, these have been chosen at random by Marine Scotland. However, the sites appear to be favourable to us and will be checked in addition to the usual yearly inspections.

RESEARCH

Fifty scales were taken last year. The project is to obtain 1,600 readings over 10 years and this is deemed to be a sufficient sample. Thus if want to retain our hatchery, we need more scale readings. The Fishery Manager is looking for an increase in samples including from killed salmon and also big fish.

HATCHERY

Another successful year in 2017. 150,000 released in April which is about 3 weeks later than usual. The later release, and now milder weather, so hope to have good survival. All equipment at the Hatchery is functioning well

ELECTRO FISHING

15 to 20 sites are checked yearly and this commenced in 1986. From 2006, sites measuring 100 metres have been checked, and this year's inspection will start in July. In addition to the usual sites, an extra 15 will be checked as requested by Marine Scotland. The Electro Fishing Team will also carry out contract work and help out with other Districts. The Fishery Manager reported that the Scottish Government had provided Helmsdale & Brora with additional money for Electro Fishing.

SEALS

We are part of the Outer Moray Firth Seal Group. The licence to shoot was restricted by withdrawing authority for the last 3 months of each year. However Roger Knight, Spey Director appealed and we now have a 12 month season. Helmsdale can control a maximum of 6 grey seals. Control is difficult in the harbour and Peter Quail reported that there had been problems obtaining permission to access beaches, whilst carrying firearms.

OPEN DAYS

This was a great success and 180 plus tickets were issued covering the whole of the river. There was discussion about the length of the open days and whether there should be a restriction to below the Falls. Noted that the Open Days provide a substantial benefit to the Village, estimated to be £60,000.

DAM

The Fishery Manager reported that along with Badanloch and Loch Choire, repairs had been effected to the bridge, so that it is now secure. *Noted that a sign to be put up at the Dam concerning unauthorised access.*

NETWORK RAIL

The bank above the Wood Pool requires reinforcement, and Network Rail are now on site. They will be putting up a temporary bridge over the river and hope to complete the works by the end of September. The embankment is to be reinforced with large stones and also gabions. Noted that night working could affect fish in this stretch of the river.

AOB

1. The Fishery Manager reported about the Beatrice Wind Farm. There are 84 turbines and will go online in July of this year. Situated 8 miles out, so you only see it on a good day.
2. The Chairman introduced Yvonne Grant, who has taken over the Fishing Tackle Shop in Helmsdale, and she reported on the range of fishing tackle held and also ranges of clothing.

3. Peter Quail reported about anti-poaching forum involving Representatives from the Halladale, Borgie, Naver, Helmsdale, and the Wildlife Protection Officer, which he is to join.

NEXT MEETING

The next Annual Meeting will be held on 11th May 2019 at 11.15am in Kildonan Hall, Helmsdale, Sutherland