

Beauly District Salmon Fishery Board

Board Meeting

Date: 13 March 2026

Location: Bidwells, Inverness & Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Alastair Campbell (AC), Charles McAndrew (CM) via Teams, Ruth Watts (RW) via Teams, Hamish Hope (HH), Jim Braithwaite (JB) via Teams, Eugenie Haniel (EH), Donald Fraser (DF), Ali Skinner (AS), Victoria Rothroe (VR) via Teams.

MINUTES

1. Apologies

None.

2. Minutes of the Board Meeting – December 2025

The minutes of the December 2025 Board Meeting were approved.

A review of the December 2025 action points was undertaken:

- CM confirmed that, although he was previously not interested in joining the Ness and Beauly Fisheries Trust (NBFT), he has since changed his position and intends to attend the NBFT meeting at the end of March on behalf of the Board. No amendment was required to the December minutes, but this was noted for the record.
- HH actions were confirmed as completed or superseded.
- RW confirmed that information relating to Ballach had been shared and that the email from Iain Malcolm regarding PIT tagging had been circulated.
- RW confirmed that all funding information relating to PIT tagging had been provided to the Board. AC noted it would be helpful to receive an updated financial projection.
- RW confirmed that the Board response regarding Black Bridge had been submitted. AC advised that SSE is expected to submit a formal planning application for Black Bridge in June, separate from the Fanellen application.
- RW confirmed discussions with CC regarding fish lift timings; however, the evidence required to justify changes was not available and the issue remains unresolved.
- HH confirmed that budget-related had been completed.
- AC confirmed he had reported back to LBFS regarding vacating the current office premises.

- NBFT update: RW and HH confirmed there is currently limited progress. The Trust is considering whether to expand its remit, and Neil Cameron intends to step down as Chair. JB advised that the Ness Board intends to retain two Trustees to safeguard their interests and suggested Beaully should do likewise. AC noted the need to clarify whether Trustees would be Board nominees or drawn from the wider catchment.
- RW provided an update on the alternative seal deterrent trial. Contact had been made with Rob Harris, but no progress has been made. EH queried whether further engagement could be beneficial. RW advised that funding may already be committed, but further information will be sought.

Action: HH to circulate an up-to-date confidential summary of current catch numbers to the Board.

Action: RW to seek further information from Rob Harris on the alternative seal deterrent trial and circulate to the Board.

3. Biologist Update

AC proposed additional agenda items for discussion ahead of the forthcoming SSE liaison meeting, including bird licensing, burn clearance, and key discussion headlines.

3.1 Electro fishing report

RW confirmed no further additions to the draft electrofishing report and invited questions. RW advised that results show no current production limitation and that juvenile densities are higher below dams.

Extensive discussion followed regarding:

- Availability of historic habitat data.
- Use of benchmarks and historic sites.
- Whether evidence sufficiently supports gravel augmentation proposals.
- The relationship between the electrofishing report, sediment management proposals, and the commissioned KAYA report.

CM and EH raised concerns that the electrofishing report extends beyond factual results into opinion and proposal, and that it had been shared externally before full Board review. EH expressed strong concern that the report, in its current form, would not withstand scrutiny.

RW explained the rationale for the content, noting the report was prepared in response to requests from LBFS and intended to support KAYA's work. RW acknowledged the document is clearly marked as draft and agreed amendments can be made.

The Board agreed that:

- The electrofishing results should be clearly separated from sediment management proposals.

- The Board must review and agree documents before they are shared externally.
- KAYA's independent findings are critical before progressing proposals.

Action: Board members to submit written comments and proposed amendments on the electrofishing report to RW.

Action: Electrofishing results to be refined as a standalone factual report for Board approval before wider circulation.

Action: Sediment management proposals to be developed separately following receipt of the Kaya report.

It was explicitly agreed and minuted that, for the upcoming SSE liaison meeting, discussion will focus on electrofishing data and smolt matters only; broader scientific commentary and sediment proposals will not be discussed.

3.2 Smolt Project

RW confirmed that permission has been granted by Tom Chetwynd to deploy the smolt trap, subject to confirmation from Upper Beaully proprietors. RW to confirm with EH.

Funding requirements were discussed in detail. RW confirmed:

- £10,000 application submitted to HIEF
- £14,000 still required, likely via crowdfunding or third-party contributions
- Potential Marine Fund application remains an option

EH suggested submitting parallel funding applications to mitigate risk. AC agreed, subject to workload and timing.

CM asked for clarification on how the statistical analysis of the Smolt Project will be carried out. It is understood that BioSS have agreed that smolt numbers can be used from various years instead of just one. The Board need to understand and agree with the reasoning of this approach. The Board need to fully understand to justify spending.

Action: RW to explore submitting an application to the Marine Fund and report back to the Board.

Action: RW to confirm proprietor permissions for smolt trap deployment.

Action: RW to request an email from BioSS explaining their reasoning and approach.

3.3 Sediment Management

Sediment Management was discussed under 3.1 electro fishing report.

3.4 Seal Licence

RW confirmed the seal licence now sits with LBFS and that the marksman is approved. The Board agreed to continue pressing Marine Directorate regarding licence deadlines.

Bird licensing coordination was discussed and marksmen agreed. It was agreed that coordination between parties is essential and that licence conditions must be fully complied with.

4. Bailiff Update

AS provided an update on burn inspections following recent spates. No significant blockages had been observed, but further checks are planned. Discussion focused on coordination, volunteer involvement, and safety considerations.

Action: Board to coordinate a list of volunteers to assist with burn inspections following spates.

AS provided an update on patrol activity, use of drone and thermal equipment, contractor interactions, and seasonal staffing. The Board noted the value of new technology for efficiency, safety, and monitoring.

Signage was discussed. It was agreed that consistent signage across the catchment would be beneficial. The Board agreed to offer signage to proprietors to inform public that fishing is strictly private.

Action: AS to propose wording, costs and quantities for standardised signage.

It was discussed and agreed to fit vehicle trackers to Board vehicles for health and safety purposes.

Action: HH to provide information on a suitable app to the Board. AC has a potential alternative.

5. Conservation Policy and Catch & Release

The conservation policy and catch and release policy are to remain the same.

Action: HH to update the Board website once.

Action: RW to circulate the updated policy to proprietors.

6. Budget and Draft Accounts

The draft 2025 accounts were discussed. The 2026 budget has minor changes to be made prior to adoption.

Action: HH to provide AC with clarification on sundry expenses and trading debtors prior to sign-off.

7. Operational Matters

7.1 Role of Clerk Update

HH is liaising with potential Clerk replacements. A new job advert is being drafted to be provided to candidates and listed on the FMS website.

7.2 Office Premises

Lease arrangements, legal review, and storage container procurement were discussed. The Board are awaiting the draft lease of the new office premises.

7.3 Seasonal Staff

It was agreed Reece Paton would be hired as the Seasonal Bailiff again for 2026. His hours will reduce from 5 days to 3 days due to other commitments he has.

CM asked if the Board had been successful with arranging a Trainee for 2026. RW had not received an update but has been actively chasing.

8. SSE

A liaison meeting between BDSFB and SSER is planned for 18th March 2026. The Board will discuss:

- Smolt Protocol.
- Data which is yet to be provided to the Board.
- Funding.
- Unseasonal flows.
- Bailiff access to dams.
- Fish passage.
- Sediment Management.

JB noted that the unseasonable flows are still dangerous and queried whether the Angling Club need to write to them. It was agreed that at this stage that communication with SSE should remain with the Board.

It was confirmed that AS still need to contact SSE staff prior to accessing dams for bailiffing purposes unless there is an emergency.

9. AOCB

None.

10. Date of Next Meeting

Date of next meeting is 22nd June 2026.