



# **RIVER DOON DISTRICT** **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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## **MINUTES**

for

**Meeting of River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board**

**Thursday 16 February 2023 at 4pm,**

**Western House Hotel, 66 Craigie Road, AYR KA8 0HA**

### **1. Present**

<i>Alan Macdonald (AM)</i>	<i>Doonside Estate (Chairman)</i>
<i>Iain K Clark (IKC)</i>	<i>Gilson Gray LLP (Clerk to the Board)</i>
<i>Stuart Brabbs (SB)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Struan Candlish(SS)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>David Cosh (DC)</i>	<i>Doonfoot Fishings, Board Member</i>
<i>Martin Donachy (MD)</i>	<i>Woodlands, Board Member</i>
<i>Stuart Dorward (SD)</i>	<i>Board Member (Salmon Fishers' Representative)</i>
<i>Carlos Van Heddegem (CVD)</i>	<i>Holms Fishing, Board Member</i>
<i>Peter Kennerley (PK)</i>	<i>Auchendrane House, Board Member</i>
<i>Lawrence Dalgleish</i>	<i>Blackhill, Rozelle, Board Member</i>

### **2. Apologies**

<i>Mark Colman</i>	<i>Smithston Fishings Club</i>
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### **3. Declaration of Members' Interests**

In accordance with the Board's good governance obligations, the Board has agreed a Meetings Protocol and Policy on Members Interests. All Board Members have signed a Declaration and the Board maintains a Register of Relevant Interests, pursuant to *Section 46E of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act")*. All Board Members present were invited to declare new/amend existing interests. No such interests were declared or amended.

In addition, the Clerk notified those present of the requirements of the Meetings Protocol. It was agreed that those present would each be noted as representing the interests of their Beat or organisation; and any other additional relevant financial interest should be declared under the *2003 Act*.

No additional interests were declared.

### **4. Approval of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

The Minutes of the last meeting were read (in summary) and approved.

## **5. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting**

There remains a query regarding the High Maybole Beat of the River and the position is still to be clarified by Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board. The Clerk is to liaise (once new personnel in place, following the Valuation) regarding updating of the Valuation Roll and to request mapping, where possible.

Other transfers of beats were noted and the Fishery Assessment List to be updated accordingly.

## **6. Report from Ayrshire Rivers Trust (“ART”)**

SB presented his Report (attached). Highlights included:

Brockloch Burn was checked and there are trout spawning above it

SB noted that there had been high water constantly, which was restricting other electrofishing efforts etc.

Drumgrange & Keirs – some members have been planting trees, with permission from the landowner, but– some club members may have been uprooting the newly planted trees; and the Club and ART (on behalf of the Board) are endeavouring to encourage them to help maintain trees. ART have offered a meeting. The Board noted the positive efforts being taken by the Club to promote their stretch of the River Doon on Facebook etc.

CBEC – ART had an online meeting and they are currently less than convinced that it would be appropriate to seek instructions to proceed, because this would require agreements from landowners and there is quite a bit of resistance. There would be 6 owners in total who would be involved. ART will report if any progress can be made.

Fencing Initiative – some literature has been circulated and details have been provided to riparian owners. Subsidised or free fencing is not seen as a benefit to a number of them. Indeed, to some it is seen as detrimental to them in some ways. ART are hoping to finalise with riparian owners and will revert to the Clerk with a proposed fee on total price, management etc by ART, if this goes ahead.

ART are meeting with senior people in SEPA locally. The Board considered whether it should write to SEPA to get them to put pressure on landowners. The Board will continue to encourage landowners to meet their obligations.

There was some discussions regarding a number of tributaries, including the Drumrange Burn, Netherton Burn and Grimmett Burn and proposals to remove weirs and baffles in culverts to allow trout and salmon to get in to this area. If that were to happen, this could considerably improve those burns. The suggestion was that, if the landowner would pay 50% + VAT, the Board would consider giving authority to spend up to £5,000. ART will come back with any proposals.

ART are also considering the possibility of options for matched funding for such work or similar.

The £3k approved by Board for CBEC Report could be more than is required, but there are still ongoing discussions.

There was a discussion regarding the Patna Weirs and following Missing Salmon Alliance and Atlantic Salmon Trust highlighting issues, it was considered that smolts being held up – there are known problems of weirs slowing smolts going downstream, which allows predator birds to feast on smolts. It was noted that, at Catrine dam, nearly 25% of smolts have beak marks on them. ART are trying to find ways to ease such weirs to allow smolts to get downstream. They will start having discussions with SEPA, but they will not prioritise and are passive. The idea would be to get rid of or make big notches in the middle of such weirs.

ART are also looking at ways of fish counting on the river and considering different options. want to get means of counting

### Priorities

£3k for CBEC Report

£10k for river bank stability in the upper Doon

They are still look at Purclewan Burn and whether or not Scottish Water has stopped polluting, because it has silted up and has not got flow through.

The Board also discussed issues arising from the Electro Fishing reports. It seems that when the River Doon has good numbers etc of smolts, there are not sufficient fish returning. SB noted there were certain distinct similarities across Scotland and particularly the Ayrshire rivers. This may tend to suggest something is happening at sea, but no-one knows for certain, and the Ayrshire Rivers are currently not involved in the tracking pilot being progressed on the West Coast.

## **7. Report from Clerk to the Board**

The Clerk presented a verbal Report to the Board and noted the current balance of funds held at 13 February 2023 was £25,876.69.

There was a general discussion regarding budgets etc and the proposed work, as noted above.

## **8. Proposed Fishery Assessment Rates for 2023/2024 – (Doc 4)**

The Clerk presented a Report and recommended the Board fix the rate at 30p in the £. The Board unanimously agreed.

## **9. Annual Catch Returns – (Doc 5)**

An updated document was presented by the Clerk, summarized as follows:

Rod effort days:	1108
Salmon caught and released:	317 (95.5%)
Salmon caught and killed:	15 (4.5%)
Total Salmon caught:	332
Sea Trout caught and released:	43
Sea Trout caught and killed:	2
Total Sea Trout caught:	45

## **10. River Watch Scheme**

Reports were presented and it was agreed to renew the Contracts for River Patrol Coordinator and River Watch Coordinator. The Clerk was instructed to convey the thanks to Alan McDowall and Alan Shannon and to confirm arrangements to renew at same rates and to extend the period covered by the Patrols.

## **11. Procedures for Annual + Triennial Meetings of Qualified Proprietors**

The Clerk outlined the procedures for the forthcoming meetings and it was noted all of the Board Members were willing to stand for re-election.

## **12. Draft Annual Report**

The Clerk outlined the proposed areas of responsibilities for production of documents for the Draft – Deadline for submissions: Friday 10 March 2023

## **13. Updates / Consultations:**

The Clerk highlighted and the Board noted the following:

- (a) *“Something Fishy”* an Interview by Iain K Clark, Clerk to the River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board - in the January/February Issue of *Ayrshire Magazine* –
- (b) Scottish Government Wild Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan 2023 – published 1 February 2023
- (c) Press release by Fisheries Management Scotland re Scottish Government Wild Salmon Strategy Implementation Plan 2023 – published 1 February 2023

## **14. Dates of Next Meetings**

Annual + Triennial Meetings of Qualified Proprietors: Thursday 23 March 2023, 7:30pm

Annual Public Meeting: Thursday 20 April 2023, 7:30pm

## **15. Any Other Business**

The Board noting that it was working its way towards the target of birds culled in accordance with the Board's licence, namely:

11 Goosanders  
4 Mergansers  
4 Cormorants

It was noted there were dozens of carcasses from kelts noted in the river, which is a good sign that they have spawned.

The FMS conference is on 31 March 2023 in Aviemore.

There were discussions regarding plans to build an Aerobic Digestion plant – combination of cow waste and grain – scrubs methane and then feeds into network. This is between Auchendrane – by road – next to burn – from A77 – hits river between Brae and Nether Auchendrane. The main dangers are of accidental spillage – 60,000

tonnes per annum – 8,000 lorry loads per annum. ART will respond to that and liaise with the Clerk as appropriate.

The meeting concluded at 17:37

*Documents Appended*

- (1) Ayrshire Rivers Trust - Biologists Report for River Doon



Ayrshire Rivers Trust

*working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs*

### **16<sup>th</sup> February 2023 - Biologists report for the River Doon DSFB**

There is little to report for the Doon over this winter period which is typical for the time of year. No detailed assessment can be made of spawning success until later in the season and ART will deliver the routine surveys in order to assess this in due course. However, despite constant high water, ART staff did observe salmon spawning in traditional upper river sites near Waterside.

We checked for signs on the Brockloch gravel beds that we cleaned at the back end but didn't see anything but of course the high water may have obscured visibility.

#### **Drumgrange and Kiers AC and upper river tree planting**

Club members have been active planting trees where they have permission from landowners and have managed to secure trees and guards from their own sources.

Unfortunately, there doesn't appear to be agreements between club members over this and deliberate attempts have been made to uproot some of the trees planted.

ART have been approached by a member of the Club committee and we have offered to meet with them to provide guidance, support and our time to help with some bank stabilisation and education for their members as to why these approaches should be implemented. Unwillingness to accept change has previously been a problem for some club members and it is essential that the committee manages to convey the justification for change to their members if any worthwhile improvements are to be made on the main river. Hopefully the club and ART can achieve some progress with this.

#### **Chapelton Burn (restoration options)**

ART met with CBEC staff to discuss the commissioning of the Morphology and restoration options report that we secure agreements from the DSFB to fund (circa £3000).

It became clear during the meeting that ART would hold off from instructing CBEC to proceed until we revisited several hesitant landowners whose support would be required should any worthwhile progress be achieved.

ART have met with several landowners, some more supportive than others. We will complete this process and assess the feasibility of progressing with project development before instructing CBEC to continue. While this may appear hesitant, it is essential we have landowners 'buy in' before continuing.

#### **Doon Fencing Initiative Update**

We will provide a verbal update at the meeting on how advanced each individual fencing project is and when we may expect new fencing to be erected.

We need to clarify how ART will recover our costs and I propose we follow the 2017 examples when delivered fencing for a percentage of the overall cost (20%). This worked well previously and allowed ART to identify, organise, project manage all aspects, sign off and report to the DSFB.