



RIVER DOON DISTRICT **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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MINUTES

of the

Meeting of River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board

Tuesday 5 December 2023 at 4pm,

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

1. Persons 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>Mark Colman</i>	<i>Smithston Fishings Club</i>
<i>David Cosh (DC)</i>	<i>Doonfoot Fishings, Board Member</i>
<i>Martin Donachy (MD)</i>	<i>Woodlands, Board Member</i>
<i>Peter Kennerley (PK)</i>	<i>Auchendrane House, Board Member</i>

2. Apologies

<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>Lawrence Dalgleish</i>	<i>Blackhill, Rozelle, Board Member</i>

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. Minutes of Previous Meetings

The Minutes of the previous meetings of 6 December 2022 and 16 February 2023 (previously circulated) were unanimously approved.

5. Matters Arising from Previous Meetings

None

6. Report from Ayrshire Rivers Trust

SB presented his Report (attached). Highlights included:

There was a discussion regarding woodland planting on land sold by Smithston Farm and this was understood to be mainly coniferous, but there is broad leaf planting on the area nearest the river, creating a 'buffer zone' compliant with accepted practice.

Two projects related to the Brockloch had been undertaken with the assistance of a contribution from the Board. There are now solar panels and solar pumps in place + fencing. They have seen trout spawning there already.

Near the new roundabout at Maybole, Salmon were seen spawning in very deep water, which is encouraging.

Regarding the Board's Fencing Initiative, getting fencers is really difficult. ART are having to book a year ahead. The full £10,000 contribution set aside by the Board will be spent. ART recommend that the Board consider doing further similar work.

Work has been undertaken at the Nether-ton Burn stabilising severe erosion. ART installed a wildlife channel and removed a weir downstream. This will all get planted up during the winter with trees, which should be quite beneficial longer term. They have seen trout in that burn. They have not yet completed baffles in the culvert – to aid travel through a difficult culvert. They are also trying clipex fencing – steel posts and wires – which may be a more cost-effective fencing solution.

One of the fencers is coming back in February 2024, when they will move on with the second fencing contribution.

ART will also recommend other areas for works.

There have been reports of Grayling found in the River Doon. They are a non-native species. The suggestion is that they may have been deliberately introduced. It is a criminal offence to introduce another species not native to this catchment. ART will continue to monitor and keep the Board informed. Although the places where winter grayling are found are unlikely to be where salmon are spawning, they could potentially be competing with juvenile salmon for food or habitat. The Board had to consider its options. The Board resolved that it had to take a stand to prevent a population establishing. The recommendation from ART, which the Board accepted unanimously, was that is that they recommend any Grayling found in the River Doon ought to be killed as a non-native species.

IKC to update the Board's Code of Conduct for the new Season to reflect that it is a criminal offence to introduce another species not native to this catchment; and that the Board highly recommends anyone catching such species, they should kill them

7. Report from Clerk to the Board

The Clerk presented a detailed written Report to the Board. There were no questions arising.

There was a discussion regarding the meeting which David Cosh attended with Drumgrange & Keirs Angling Club. This was a positive meeting with their office bearers, who are supportive of catch & release. A suggestion was made that the Board might

facilitate a new Award, instead of a Salmon Competition, with a possible prize draw of 4 tickets from Ayr Racecourse to be donated by Alan Macdonald. Board Members, including MD agreed to circulate some suggestions for IKC to speak further with the Office Bearers of the Club.

8. Correspondence/Actions since Previous Meeting

These were included in the Clerk's Report. There were no questions arising.

9. River Doon River Watch Scheme

The Clerk updated the Board on a limited number of incidents which had been reported over the summer and autumn months. This was coordinated by the River Watch Coordinator and the River Patrol Coordinator, and involved contact being made with Police Scotland. IKC emphasised the importance of good intelligence, with the correct, accurate and timeous Information being provided, in order to assist any investigation or enforcement actions. The patrols would continue to be made throughout the spawning season into the New Year as contracted with the River Patrol Coordinator.

10. Update re Fishery Assessments

The Clerk reported the summary of the position regarding the Assessments as follows:

	RECOVERED BY GGLLP	% RECOVERED	OUTSTANDING
Arrears (excl queried/disputed)	£0.00	0.0%	£0.00
Fishery Assessments 2023/2024 recovered	£16,917.60	93.3%	£1,223.60
TOTAL RECOVERED (excl queried/disputed)	£16,917.60	93.3%	£1,223.60

There was some discussion about the possibility of the fishing rights for the queried/disputed beat(s) to be transferred to the Board. This will be considered for another meeting.

11. Financial Update

The Clerk advised that the current balance of funds held at 5 December 2023 was £31,505.42, with anticipated expenditure to 31 December 2023, leaving an anticipated balance of £28,705.42. After deduction of the agreed sum to retain as reserves of £10,000, that left a balance of £18,705.42 for the 2023/2024 Project Work (which included the £10,000 allocated for the Fencing Initiative). The further recommendations from ART and the Clerk would be further discussed next year, in the run up to the Annual Meetings.

12. Annual Catch Returns

The Clerk gave a general update to the Board on the Annual Catch returns received so far (23 out of the expected 34 Returns i.e. 67.6%), with 2 where no returns are expected due to ownership queries:

Year		2023
Salmon & Grilse	Released	172
	Killed	35
	Total	207
	% Catch & Release	83.1%

The figures are being constantly updated and will be presented to the Board at the next meeting. The Board agreed there is scope to approach Qualified Proprietors to approach syndicates for more accurate statistics and to encourage the reporting of Rod Effort.

13. Annual Meetings

(a) Dates

The Board agreed to fix the following dates for the Annual Meetings:

Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors: Thursday 14 March 2024, 7:30pm

Annual Public Meeting: Thursday 25 April 2024, 7:30pm

(b) Preparation of Annual Report

It was agreed that this would be discussed at the next meeting

(c) Annual Accounts

The Board confirmed authority to the Clerk to collate the necessary papers and instruct Azets to prepare the Annual Accounts to 31 December 2023, when the Year End had passed.

14. Any Other Business

The Clerk received correspondence regarding the granting of a CAR Licence in the Kilbrandon Sound, and the Board noted it was very disappointed with this decision. The Board remains determined to object to any applications for licenses for salmon farms; and to continue to respond to appropriate Consultations.

There was a discussion prompted by SB regarding a possible initiative being explored by ART on behalf of a number of the Ayrshire River Boards which would see an innovative and potentially highly beneficial project which could result in adult smolts being released into the river at spawning time. This is in its early days but the Board were warmly receptive to exploring this further.

It was noted that the Monkwood Beat was likely to be sold soon and the new proprietor would be ascertained in due course. Also the Hollybush House Beat was likely to be sold in January 2024.

15. The Board agreed the following Dates of Next Meetings

(a) Board Meeting: Thursday 22 February 2024, 4pm

(b) Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors: Thursday 14 March 2024, 7:30pm

(c) Annual Public Meeting: Thursday 25 April 2024, 7:30pm

The meeting concluded at 17:11

Report from Ayrshire Rivers Trust Appended



Ayrshire Rivers Trust

working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs

Ayrshire Rivers Trust
Braeside,
Burnbrae Lodge,
Mauchline,
KA5 5HE

Ayrshire Rivers Trust report for the River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board Meeting 5th December 2023

ART are moving office this week. Our new address from 1st December 2023 will be: - No.2. Crosshill Cottages, Near Mauchline, KA5 5HJ

Our old telephone number will be retained although this will take 30 days to transfer from our old provider. In the meantime, we will forward a temporary number to the Clerk or Stuart can be reached at any time on 07894264044

Electrofishing Results

Electrofishing results across Ayrshire were down in 2023 however there were still productive areas within the Doon. The full report has not been written as yet (28/11/23) but hopefully will be available for the meeting on the 5th December although this cannot be guaranteed.

Restoring habitat and function

Through our restoration project funded by the Sustainable Aquaculture Fund (provided by the aquaculture sector), the Brockloch Burn has been fenced in key problem areas to restrict livestock access and allow the freshwater habitat to recover. Gravel cleaning was performed and additionally, gravity fed watering troughs with solar pump back up's have been installed. This belt and braces approach was undertaken to overcome many objections from one landowner in particular who otherwise was not prepared to allow the fencing to take place.

A culvert heck will be installed shortly to prevent blockages and the project will then be complete. We have observed trout spawning within the last week and soon expect a few salmon to migrate to the upper reaches to do the same.



New fencing going in on Brockloch

Further upstream, near the uppermost accessible stretch, an extremely silty ditch has recently been fenced by the landowner and this too will help speed up recovery. ART intends to install silt traps on this ditch once the landowner's permission has been secured.

It is within the areas fenced and worked by ART and the Maybole Bypass developers that we believe most of the salmon on the Chapelton Burn are produced and thus the aim is to increase productivity through habitat restoration and protection. ART will continue to monitor fish stocks and make improvements where we can. We also suggest that there may be benefit for the DSFB to consider contributing additional funding in 2024 to allow another 240m+ of burn to be secured.



Newly installed fencing and gate in severely degraded salmon habitat on Brockloch Burn

DSFB Fencing

Elsewhere two priority areas requiring fencing have been identified and agreed with landowners and when combined, these will use the allocated DSFB contribution of £10,000 that was agreed earlier this year.

Netherton Farm has long been a problem area leading to extensive damage of the Netherton Burn, once an important spawning tributary. With a recent change of ownership, ART staff have worked closely with the new landowner to agree the extent of fencing required and the buffers necessary to secure the DSFB's contributions. The Board will shortly be issued an invoice and confirmation that the fencing has been erected. In this instance, a Clipex metal post fence is being erected and we hope this provides greater longevity than traditional post and wire for slightly lower cost per metre. Two small bridges are also being constructed as part of these works.

ART combined this fencing with additional work alongside Netherton Burn as part of another aquaculture funded project that will be completed in 2024. This project aims to limit and hopefully stabilise severe erosion at a landslide upstream of Netherton Farm. We also installed an overflow wildlife channel adjacent to the burn through an already very wet area. This reduces the velocity of high flows in spate conditions against the toe of the landslide thus

reducing the erosion. Numerous trees will be planted over winter with approximately 50m of green engineering to be added in spring 2024.



Severe landslide causing heavy siltation in the Netherton Burn. This entire area will be fenced to exclude livestock



Creating a new 'wildlife channel' that will carry water during high flow events thus reducing pressure on the landslide.

Again, next spring, ART will install baffles in the road culvert to enable migrating salmonids easier access to the upper burn and better habitat. This and the removal of the small weir just upstream will enable free passage for all species, both up and downstream. (The weir has already been removed by ART in September).



Removing the old weir that prevented fish access to the upper reaches of Netherton Burn

An additional stretch of fencing has been instructed on the Drumgrange Burn near Patna that was severely impacted by livestock poaching. Due to the shortage of good fencers and high demand, this will not be installed until around February next year however, it is in the pipeline and should use up the remaining 2023 DSFB budget that was agreed.

Again, this fencing requires a bridge crossing to enable it to be installed.

The Chapel Burn

Work at the Chapel (aka The Dunaskin Burn) was discovered by ART staff after it was well underway. This had previously been discussed with the head of Ayrshire Roads Alliance (ARA) in 2022 and they were made aware that there was a need for consultation and fish rescue prior to work proceeding.

ART raised concerns with both contractor and ARA and immediately we stepped in and removed fish from the work area. We also required much more robust silt protection to be put in place and indeed supplied the contractor with our own silt fences to enable this.

The contractors admitted that omitting a fish rescue had been an oversight on their behalf but also changes at ARA had contributed with the former head of department retiring and a new engineer taking over. ART has arranged a meeting with ARA to discuss these issues and ensure much better communications and protection in future. ARA has welcomed this meeting.

Work was delayed through design changes and looked likely to run into the spawning period however, the contractors hit further problems and when oil seeping from the old rail yard started emerging from excavation, work stopped immediately and the ground capped with concrete. The work was abandoned after making the banks good. A new design is being developed that will not require any additional earthworks and ART will be involved in scrutinising and approving the final works.

ART informed Iain Clark of the problems and agreed to initiate discussions with ARA to ensure such failures don't happen again. We will keep him updated of progress.

National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS)

We conducted a suite of 30 quantifiable electrofishing surveys, invertebrate and water sampling for Marine Scotland Directive (MSD) across Ayrshire during the summer as the local component of the NEPS surveys. The results from these surveys will be analysed by MSD and used to inform decision making for future conservation gradings.

eDNA assessment Loch Doon

Early results from the eDNA sampling at Loch Doon confirmed that it is unlikely that American Signal Crayfish have been stocked into the reservoir. There were background signals for this species but it is considered unlikely that they are present. We await the full suite of analysis that will reveal all species encountered.

Grayling

Grayling are not known to be present in the Doon however previously on 2 occasions we have received reports from Stephen Cosh that he has encountered this species in the lower beat. These fish may have been washed out of the Ayr in high water and taken up residence in the lower Doon. However, grayling cannot overcome barriers easily and the Alloway Mill Weir is likely to be the uppermost limit they could migrate to, but not beyond.

This summer, ART staff received a report of a grayling caught at Patna by an angler. We didn't receive corroborating photos but this information came through a Stinchar Board member who vouched for the integrity of the angler and his ability to correctly identify this species. It seems possible that someone has removed a few grayling from the Ayr and translocated them to the Doon around Patna. This is illegal and to be discouraged.

Sandbagging on Lower Doon

We are aware a few sandbags appeared on the lower river recently and feel we could help with a more beneficial solution to relatively minor bank collapse/erosion. We are unaware of who installed these sand bags but suggest that any owners wishing our assistance need only ask our advice and we are certain we will be able to assist in some way.

Muck Water

Erosion on the Muck Water at Craigen Gillan Estate will be addressed by ART early in 2024. There is approximately 30m of bank collapse to be addressed.

Spawning 2023

Staff observed salmon spawning near Waterside as the temperature plummeted last week. This is considered early for the Doon. We will keep an eye on important locations and record any redds or activity we spot. Any DSFB member wishing to accompany us is welcome. Please just get in touch and we will try to arrange a suitable day.