



RIVER DOON DISTRICT **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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MINUTES

of

Meeting of River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board

Thursday 12 December 2024 at 4pm,

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

1. **Persons Present**

<i>Alan Macdonald (“AM”)</i>	<i>Doonside Estate (Chair)</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 (“SC”)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Mark Colman (“MC”)</i>	<i>Smithston Fishings Club, Board Member</i>
<i>David Cosh (“DC”)</i>	<i>Doonfoot Fishings, Board Member</i>
<i>Lawrence Dalgleish (“LD”)</i>	<i>Blackhill, Rozelle, 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>

2. **Apologies**

Peter Kennerley (“PK”) *Auchendrane House, Board Member*

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 new interests were declared.

Martin Donaghy updated his declaration to advise that he had decided to step down from being a Director of Ayrshire Rivers Trust.

4. **Approval of Minutes of the Last Meeting – (Doc 1)**

The Minutes were unanimously approved as follows:

Proposed: MD
Seconded: SD

5. **Matters Arising from Previous Meeting**

None

6. **Report from Clerk to the Board (IKC) – (Doc 2)**

The Clerk presented a Written Report. There were no questions arising.

7. **Correspondence/Actions since Previous Meeting**

(a) Website

The Clerk reported that the Board's website has now been updated with assistance from CE Project Management and the domain name will be hosted thereafter by Ayrshire Rivers Trust going forwards. This will allow the Clerk to update the Website more easily with posts etc, which will be done over the next couple of months for the forthcoming 2025/2026 Salmon Fishing Season.

(b) Various correspondence with DRAX/SEPA re maintenance work, freshets etc

The Clerk reported generally on the correspondence in this respect.

(c) Consultation Responses:

The Clerk reported that, through the Board's membership of FMS, they have submitted the following on behalf of the FMS Membership, representing the Board:

- i. FMS Submitted a Consultation Response on the Flood Resilience Strategy – August 2024
- ii. FMS Consultation Response - Fisheries Management Measures within Scottish Offshore Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – October 2024
- iii. FMS Consultation Response to NatureScot's Consultation on Species Licensing 19 November 2024

(d) FMS Guidance (through Fish Legal) to DSFBs re Freedom of Information Law

The Clerk advised that another benefit of FMS Membership was the above Guidance received from FMS, obtained from Fish Legal.

(e) FMS Survey

There was a general discussion about fencing/treeplanting being part of the essential work – ART will respond to the details on this.

(f) Various correspondence from FMS over the year

The Clerk explained that, due to the volume of correspondence now being received from FMS (and others), it would be of considerable assistance if someone might be prepared to be added to the mailing list for FMS Updates and to coordinate consideration and response. MC agreed to assist in this regard and IKC is to see whether a mail direct can be setup for this purpose.

(g) Correspondence from Mark Gibson re hatchery

Correspondence had been received from Mr Gibson regarding whether it was possible to use hatchery for hydroponic growing of grain for feeding to poultry. The Board discussed and determined that it might still like to retain the possibility in future of using this in future – even though they don't currently require this at

the moment. This is In case the regulation guidance from Scottish Government changes. IKC to confirm that we are unable to assist.

(h) SEPA Sea Lice Regulatory Framework Stakeholder Workshop

In similar vein to the above, the Clerk indicated that there continue to be a number of consultation workshops etc, but it is impossible for the Clerk to attend these within the limited time and budget available. The Clerk asked the Board for a volunteer who might be prepared to deal with such issues and relations with SEPA. MD agreed to assist in this regard and IKC is to see whether a mail direct can be setup for this purpose.

(i) Correspondence from Scottish Water re Loch Riecawr and Loch Finlas Drawdowns

SB reported that they had wanted to inspect the dam wall and he had challenged them on that directly and was waiting to hear back. They recommended that the work should not be done before September/October. He is not sure if they can wait long. This has an impact, releasing water, which could potentially wash out redds. ART will continue to liaise.

(j) Bird Count/Cull

SD reported that the Board had secured a NatureScot Licence from 1 November 2024 to 30 April 2025 to cull 15 goosander, 2 red-breasted mergansers, and 8 cormorants.

The Clerk commended AM and SD for their work in this respect. SD reported that it is clear NatureScot are cracking down on evidence and data and what will be required. It is important that the Board gathers this evidence and we make sure the licence is used. Plans were being made to carry out the bird count/cull across 4 beats with guns and 2 with scarers. This has to be coordinated scaring. SD will coordinate with the other Board Members, and those who have firearms licences.

8. **Fishery Assessments – (Docs 3 & 4)**

The Clerk presented a Report on Fishery Assessments.

IKC acknowledged that there had been some teething issues with the introduction of an additional ONLINE automated payment system.

The Clerk had produced a Frequently Asked Questions Document, which had been updated (there was an erroneous paragraph referring to the wrong rate). The intention of that pack is to inform Proprietors, Tenants, Clubs, Associations and others of the Answers to the most Frequently Asked Questions about Fishery Assessments.

It is noted that Payments of Fishery Assessments can now be made as follows:

- (1) Payment by LEGL Secure Payment System
- (2) Payment by Direct Bank Transfer
- (3) Payment by Cheque

The Clerk is trying to encourage the use of the LEGL system as it allows the Fishery Assessment Notices to be viewed and downloaded, simple payment by Credit or Debit

Card, automated receipts and much simpler administration for the Clerk and his colleagues (thereby saving on time).

Payment by Direct Bank Transfer is the next best alternative, but is more onerous on the administration, especially if people do not use the Unique Beat Payment References.

Whilst it is appreciated that some organisations require to operate by cheque, this is the most administratively demanding.

The updated position on Fishery Assessments at 12 December is:

	RECOVERED BY GGLLP	% RECOVERED	OUTSTANDING
Arrears (excl queried/disputed)			£0.00
Fishery Assessments 2023/2024 recovered	£17,948.00	94%	£1,148.00
TOTAL RECOVERED (excl queried/disputed)	£17,948.00	94%	£1,148.00

There are 49 Beats in total:

- 45 of those get Fishery Assessment Notices currently
- 2 have No Assessments / 2 where ownership is unclear
- 41 have paid
- 3 are outstanding:
 - 1 is because we didn't get the payment confirmation and funds were returned (£68) and is being re-arranged
 - 1 is £800 outstanding by a former proprietor, who IKC has written to.
 - 1 (£280) we will need to clarify (Potterston Farm) as there is a new proprietor, with effect from 14 March 2024. It is unclear whether Charles Tait still has the Skeldon Mill Syndicate. We have just received the catch return from the new Proprietor, Gordon Taylor,

9. **Proposed Fishery Assessment Rate for 2025/2026 – (Doc 5)**

The Clerk presented a detailed Written Report to the Board and recommended that the Board fix the Rate at the same rate as last year, namely 40p in the £ The Board unanimously agreed.

10. **Financial Report (Doc 6)**

The Clerk presented a Written Report.

The Clerk asked AM to sign the Corporation Tax Return so that payment can be made of the sum due for the year to 31 December 2023 in the sum of £204.63 and this was duly done.

11. **Annual Catch Returns – (Doc 7)**

A Report was presented, but it was incomplete in a number of respects, due to the Annual Catch Returns not all being returned. There was some discussion about whether the Annual Catch Returns should be sent out earlier, although it was noted that all Proprietors (supported by their Tenants, Clubs and Associations) have a duty to fill in and submit the Marine Inspectorate return by 31 December each year, so they should fill out one for the Board at the same time.

It was noted the Word Format of the Report needs to be updated to reflect the correct 2023 numbers. This will be finalised for the Annual Report and Annual Meetings.

12. River Doon River Watch Scheme

(a) Update from River Watch Coordinator

- Voluntary patrols with Billy Kean and Russell Uriate of Drumgrange & Keirs
- Incidents
 - o Some people fishing at Patna without permits – approached, given advice and moved on – liaised with PC Steven Prendergast
 - o Incident 7 July 2024 reported by Tom Stevenson at Patna Angling Club, spoke to PC Prendergast and emails exchanged with Andrew Thorne
 - o Thebigfisherman1 – email exchanges 23 July 2024 – reported to PC Andrew Thorne
 - o Someone phoned about a boat trawling in one of Estuaries near Troon – suggested should phone Police Scotland

IKC and MD will continue to work with others in relation to the River Watch Scheme.

(b) Update re River Patrol Coordinator

The Board noted that Alan McDowall required to step down from this role and thanked him for his efforts. It is proposed that Alan Shannon and Russell Uriate may jointly fulfil this role for the coming season and IKC is to arrange to meet with them.

13. River Doon Code of Practice – (Doc 8)

The Board reviewed the Code of Practice and noted the requirement for Anglers to have written permission to fish, which would usually be in the form of a membership card or annual ticket from some angling clubs and associations.

ART pointed out that, as the forthcoming season was an odd year, there is the possibility of Pacific (Pink) Salmon being in the river again. The Guidance from FMS should be noted, and IKC will check to see that we have the most up to date information.

The Board also discussed that, if there is jack pike in the river, this can be humanely despatched, but larger pike should be left, as they will tackle the jack pike.

There was a discussion about the latest guidance on Best Practice in Catch and Release and 'Trophy photographs', which can cause hidden damage to salmon being returned, due to poor handling. The Clerk agreed to include a reference to the latest Guidance from FMS.

14. Report from Ayrshire Rivers Trust - (Doc 9)

SC presented a Written Report and the following highlights were discussed:

Electrofishing Report

2023 across Ayrshire was generally a poor year, but the River Doon fared better. 2024 was a better year. This is on Timed Data.

Review of the records suggests that in the years 2013, 2017 and 2021 there is a trend or cycle where there is an increase in fry and this suggests catch numbers should be better this year, because of the better fry numbers. In short, more fish are going back out and more fish coming back, which is linked to marine survival.

There were better numbers of fry on the lower river this year, which is quite encouraging

Scottish Government Categorisation of the River

Again, SG have fixed the River Doon as Category 2 (Moderate), which shows the river is quite stable in the lower end of Category 2. They are having good rod effort in Doon c.60% taking account of everything.

Pollution

There was a pollution incident in the Muck Water coming off South Kyle Windfarm site and ART intervened and are dealing.

Fencing

The Brocklock fencing has now been completed. There are a few more trees being put in. There was previous impact from poaching of cattle. There has been significant improvement even in a year

Netherton Burn. The Board contributed some funding to aid baffles and fencing to be done. ART used a clipex fencing system, which is potentially better.

Electrofishing Report

There is a Full Electrofishing Report to come. In the Culroy Burn the water quality is much improved, which is apparent in trout, but not yet showing in salmon numbers.

Muck Water Green Engineering - the silt/sediment has now been stopped as a consequence.

National Park Proposal – Dumfries & Galloway: this could capture upper Doon and Loch Doon. This is still in early stages. It could change Planning regulations etc. ART will continue to monitor and keep the Board informed

Bogton Loch Smolt Curtains - The cost would be around £4,000. They would be very difficult to monitor output. They would need to smolt trap top and bottom. ART has decided to forget this.

Chapelton Burn Restoration – ART have been walking and talking to landowners on the ground. This is a big project. They would need everyone to have a common interest. The Board previously approved a budget for £3k for survey from CBEC. This is still being considered/progressed.

Angling App – ART has developed this and it is ready to use to report catches. You can get on phones and ART are preparing a QR Code to allow anglers to report what catch,

take a picture, hours fished. It is a simple way to handle. The data comes in to ART, who could then furnish results to the Clerk. SD commented it could be used (adapted) to report birds + pollution etc, which SB said could be done.

Catch Returns and Rod Effort – The Board noted that it is important that we get accurate Catch Return and Rod Effort data, as Wild Salmon has now been designated an Endangered Species.

Future Work for the Board – ART would come with Recommendations, including Costs, for next Board Meeting

15. **Any Other Business**

None not covered elsewhere.

16. **Dates of Next Meetings**

- (a) **Board Meeting – 27 February 2025, 4pm**
- (b) **Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors: 27 March 2025, 7pm**
- (c) **Annual Public Meeting: 17 April 2025, 7pm**

AM thanked everyone for attending.

The Meeting concluded at 17:20