

RIVER DOON DISTRICT
SALMON FISHERY BOARD

ANNUAL REPORT 2024/2025



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LIST OF CONTENTS

1	<u>River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board Members</u>	4
2	<u>River Doon DSFB Members' Attendance</u>	4
3	<u>Report from the Chair</u>	5
4	<u>Statutory Remit</u>	6
	(a) Aims of The Board.....	7
	(b) The Catchment Area.....	7
	(c) Key Features	7
5	<u>Summary of the Work done by the Board</u>	9
	(a) Report from the Clerk to the Board	9
	(b) Report on Fishery Assessments	11
	(c) Consultation Responses.....	13
	(d) Good Governance	14
	(e) Code of Practice	17
	(f) Scientific Report.....	22
	(g) Electrofishing Report	29
	(h) River Doon River Watch Scheme	52
	(i) Annual Catch Returns	57
	(j) Audited Statement of Accounts	60
6	<u>Future Work of the Board</u>	65
	(a) Updated Budget.....	65
	(b) Proposed Works for Discussion/Agreement.....	67
7	<u>Acknowledgements</u>	68



1. River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board Members

Chair: Alan Macdonald Doonside Estate

Board Members: Mark Colman Smithston Fishing Club
 David Cosh Doonfoot Fishings
 Lawrence Dalgleish Blackhill, Rozelle
 Martin Donachy Woodlands
 Carlos Van Heddegem Holms Fishing
 Peter Kennerley Auchendrane House

Co-opted Member: Stuart Dorward Salmon Anglers Representative

Associate: Stuart Brabbs Ayrshire Rivers Trust

Clerk: Iain K Clark Gilson Gray LLP, Glasgow

2. River Doon DSFB Members' Attendance

Date	Alan Macdonald	Mark Colman	David Cosh	Lawrence Dalgleish	Martin Donachy	Carlos Van Heddegem	Peter Kennerley	Stuart Dorward
22/02/24	✓	✓	✓	Apology	✓	Apology	✓	✓
14/03/24	✓	Apology	✓	Apology	✓			✓
24/04/24	✓	Apology	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12/12/24	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	Apology	✓





3. Report from the Chair

Dear Board Members,

I am pleased to present my report for March 2025, summarizing the activities and key developments concerning the River Doon and its fishery over the past months.

1. Salmon & Sea Trout Stocks

The results for the 2024 season were an improvement in that 444 salmon were caught and an increase in sea trout numbers. We remain committed to working with Marine Scotland and local stakeholders to monitor stock trends and assess the effectiveness of conservation measures.

2. Conservation & Management Measures

In line with our ongoing conservation strategy, we continue to encourage catch-and-release, particularly for spring salmon. Compliance among anglers remains high, and we will further reinforce best practices through additional signage and outreach efforts.

The hatchery program remains under review as we assess the scientific guidance on the effectiveness of stocking in wild fisheries. Discussions with SEPA (Scottish Environment Protection Agency) and NatureScot continue regarding habitat restoration projects aimed at improving natural spawning conditions.

3. Habitat & Environmental Concerns

Flood events over the winter have caused some bank erosion in key spawning areas. The Board is working closely with local landowners to implement erosion control measures and tree planting initiatives. In addition, water quality remains a priority, with ongoing monitoring of agricultural runoff and potential pollution sources.

Concerns regarding hydroelectric operations on the River Doon have been raised again, particularly regarding flow management. We are continuing dialogue with operators to ensure that water releases support fish migration.

4. Predation & Invasive Species

Predation remains a significant concern, with high levels of cormorant and goosander activity reported. The Board has submitted and secured the necessary license applications for limited control measures, and we continue to engage with NatureScot on best practices for managing predation.

Additionally, invasive species such as Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam continue to threaten riverbanks. The Board is working with local conservation groups to coordinate removal efforts before peak growing season.

5. Angling & Community Engagement

The River Doon remains a valued resource for the local community and visiting anglers. We are working on promoting sustainable fishing tourism and ensuring that the fishery remains an attractive and well-managed destination.



Our annual River Doon Angling Forum (at the Annual Public Meeting) is scheduled for 17 April 2025 at 6pm, providing an opportunity for anglers, landowners, and conservationists to discuss key issues. We encourage all stakeholders to participate actively.

6. Financial & Administrative Matters

The Board's finances remain stable, though we are closely monitoring budgetary pressures, particularly related to habitat restoration and enforcement activities. We will continue to seek external funding opportunities, including grants for conservation initiatives.

7. Conclusion & Priorities for the Coming Months

While challenges remain, particularly in terms of salmon stocks and environmental pressures, the Board is committed to proactive management and conservation efforts.

Priorities for the next quarter include:

- Enhancing monitoring of fish stocks and environmental conditions
- Strengthening conservation initiatives and habitat restoration
- Continuing engagement with stakeholders on river management
- Ensuring compliance with regulations and best practices for sustainable fishing

I extend my thanks to all Board members, anglers, and conservation partners for their ongoing support and commitment to the health of the River Doon.

Alan Macdonald
Chair, River Doon DSFB



4. Statutory Remit

The River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board was established under the 1862 and 1868 Salmon Fisheries legislation, as subsequently amended in the Salmon Act 1986 and the Salmon Conservation (Scotland) Act 2001. This legislation was later amalgamated under the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 ("**the 2003 Act**"), which has subsequently been amended by the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Acts 2007 and 2013.



The River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board is empowered under Part 3 of the 2003 Act to manage the protection, enhancement and conservation of the Atlantic salmon and sea trout stocks in the River Doon. It also has a duty to ensure the general protection and improvement of the fisheries within their district.

(a) Aims of The Board

- Provide fishery protection.
- Police the purchase and sale of illegally caught and unseasonable fish.
- Ensure fish passage over obstructions to migrations.
- Protect juvenile fish and spawning redds.
- Reverse the trend in the decline of adult Atlantic salmon by implementing policies that safeguard and enhance the natural spawning stock.
- Conduct habitat, population and migration assessments to guide management strategies.
- Encourage good conservation policies to stop over exploitation of salmon.
- Conserve and establish sustainable fisheries for the River Doon.
- Extend fishery awareness.

(b) The Catchment Area

The head waters of the River Doon are the burns and streams feeding Loch Doon from the north edge of the Galloway Forest Park. The river is just over 63 kilometres long (including the Loch) and flows north-west, close to the town of Dalmellington, through the villages of Patna and Dalrymple before entering the Firth of Clyde just south of Ayr.

The loch has been dammed to supply and store water for the Galloway Hydro-electric power. There is a net loss of water to the system although there is a compensation flow agreement which maintains water quality and flow levels throughout the year.

The river has a catchment area of 324 square kilometres. The main land uses are rough grassland, improved grassland and woodland, the majority of which consists of conifer plantations. The only significant industry is open cast coal mining in the vicinity of Dalmellington.

The geology of the Doon catchment varies from the granite headwater hills to the limestone coal measures in the middle reaches. Water chemistry mirrors the geology ranging from low productivity and intermittent acidic conditions in the upper tributaries to the highly productive, alkaline tributaries downstream of Dalmellington.

(c) Key Features

- The source of the Doon is Loch Enoch, high up in the Galloway Hills at an altitude of 500m.



- Loch Doon supports the only native population of Arctic Charr in the south west of Scotland. This population is considered to be under threat due to issues such as acidification, climate change and the introduction of alien species. Sentinel populations of Doon charr have been established in two other lochs in the south of Scotland to provide a pool of genetic material as insurance for the loss of the Doon population.
- The River Doon itself starts at the outlet of Loch Doon. The compensation flow of 45 million gallons/day was agreed as part of the Galloway Water Power Act in 1935.
- Below Loch Doon the river cascades down through Ness Glen, a spectacular gorge, dropping 130 feet in less than one mile.
- Although there are several small to medium sized sewage treatment works discharging into the river the relatively high flows in the Doon provide sufficient dilution to maintain water quality
- The Doon catchment is relatively narrow and there are few large tributaries below Loch Doon. The most significant of these are the Muck Water, Cummock Burn, Dunaskin Burn and Culroy Burn.
- Common fish species include salmon, brown and sea trout, arctic charr, stone loach, minnows, sticklebacks, eels, lampreys, pike and perch.
- Apart from Loch Doon there are several large stillwaters in the catchment, including Bogton Loch and Martnaham Loch. These lochs provide excellent habitat for pike and perch.
- The Doon was historically renowned for its pearl mussel fishery. There is still a remnant population present in the river although there is little evidence of recent successful spawning.
- The main stem of the Doon has an abundant population of Saucer bugs *Aphelocheirus aestivalis*. Saucer bugs, which require high quality water, are only found in 5 or 6 rivers in Scotland.
- There are a number of Sites of Special Scientific Interest in the catchment e.g. Loch Doon, Ness Glen, Bogton Moss and Dalmellington Moss.
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5. Summary of the Work done by the Board

(a) Report from the Clerk to the Board

A summary of the work done in the 2024/2025 season is noted below:

1. Maintaining and updating the Board's records with changes of ownership and tenancy.
2. Dealing with the renewal of the Board's Registration as a data controller to process personal data with the Information Commissioner's Office under General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.
3. Correspondence and calls with various Riparian Owners, former Owners and New Owners, regarding outstanding Fishery Assessments; and preparing and updating a detailed Fishery Assessment Spreadsheet (on an almost daily basis) to update the Board's records, as payments were made, queries made and answered; and reporting to the Board.
4. Liaising with Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board to obtain Valuation Roll Extracts; and submitting updated records to have the Valuation Roll updated to reflect the updating of the Board's records
5. Letters to Riparian Owners and Tenants enclosing Fishery Assessment Notices 2024/2025, and Reminders and Second Reminders
6. Detailed analysis of previous Assessment Rates and preparation of Reports for Board re Proposed Fishery Assessments Rates
7. Processing, and accounting for the payments of Fishery Assessments and Fishery Assessment Arrears and making payment of expenditure approved by the Board.
8. Review of financial position/Preparation of Finance Updates for Board
9. Correspondence with Azets regarding the preparation of the Draft Accounts to 31 December 2024 and associated Corporation Tax Return
10. Issuing Calling Notices, collating and issuing Board packs, taking and extending Minutes for Board Meetings, including publication on the Board's Website and liaising with Ayrshire Rivers Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland for publication on their websites
11. Updating the Board's Angling Code of Practice, as directed by the Board, and in liaison with Stuart Brabbs of Ayrshire Rivers Trust; and sending this to the Riparian Owners, Clubs and Associations; and publishing on the Board's Website.
12. Liaising with various Board Members, Stuart Brabbs of Ayrshire Rivers Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland, in order to draft, revise and submit responses to various Consultations (see below)



13. Calls, correspondence and virtual meetings (as appropriate) with Fisheries Management Scotland, and SEPA, supported by Stuart Brabbs of Ayrshire Rivers Trust, regarding a number of matters, including SEPA Sea Lice Framework Consultation.
14. Administering the River Doon River Watch Scheme; including renewal of Self-Employed Contracts and liaising with River Watch Coordinator and River Patrol Coordinator; Police Scotland; and reporting to Board, as required.
15. Implementing obligations of the Board in compliance with agreed Good Governance Policies.
16. Making regular changes and updates to the Board's Website (www.doonfishing.co.uk)
17. Calls and correspondence with Drax Galloway Hydros, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and ART regarding works at Loch Doon Dam; and arranging freshets as part of water compensation agreement, when required.
18. Receiving and sending all correspondence for the Board.
19. Providing general advice and support to the Board, as required, including consideration of matters relating to Assessments, promotion of the Board's Code of Practice; and liaising with other clubs, associations and other organisations, as appropriate.
20. Sending letters to Riparian Owners, Clubs and Associations enclosing Annual Catch Return Forms, sending reminders; collating Annual Catch Returns, updating the Board's records, and preparing summary spreadsheet for inclusion in Annual Report .
21. Drafting, maintaining and updating a *Fisheries Information Pack* for New Riparian Owners (previously circulated to all Owners, Tenants, Clubs and Associations); and uploading to Board's Website on the "About Us" page, for easy download:
 - i. River Doon DSFB Code of Practice
 - ii. FMS - A Guide to Best Practice in Catch-and-Release
 - iii. ART Invasive Weeds Information
 - iv. FMS - Wanted Poster
 - v. FMS Guidance re Farmed Salmon
 - vi. FMS Guidance re Pink-salmon
 - vii. River Doon Gyrodactylus salaris Declaration Form
 - viii. River Doon River Watch Scheme - Leaflet
 - ix. River Watch Scheme Poster
 - x. Fishery Assessments – FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
22. Preparation of the Draft Annual Report, including drafting and collation of reports from various Board Members and other contributors.



(b) Report on Fishery Assessments

Throughout the year, the Clerk to the Board prepared detailed Reports to the Board for their consideration. A summary of the key points to note from the Board's reasoning and decisions is below.

i. Introduction

The Board has the power under *section 44 of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 Act* to impose Fishery Assessments, which are "...assessed at such uniform rate as is determined for all fisheries in the district by the board and shall be exigible according to the valuation of a fishery as entered in the valuation roll."

Therefore, the Board requires, each year, to determine the rate at which Fishery Assessments are assessed and issue Fishery Assessment Notices for payment by the Riparian Owners/Tenants. Ultimately, responsibility for payment rests with the Riparian Owners for the relevant year (which for these purposes, runs from 1 April to 31 March).

ii. Updating of the Board's Records regarding Ownership/Tenancies

It is critical that the Board's records are fully up to date, to ensure that the correct persons receive the Assessments, as well as other information issued by the Board.

Following the previous extensive work undertaken to comprehensively update the current Fishery Assessment List; the Clerk has continued to liaise with Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board to ensure that the Valuation Roll is updated in accordance with the Board's Records.

On many occasions this process is hampered by out of date information. A number of sales and transfers of ownership of land, associated Riparian Owners' rights and tenancies had not been notified to the River Doon DSFB or to the Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board.

Could all Riparian Owners, Tenants, Clubs and Associations PLEASE notify us timeously of any change of ownership or tenancy, together with the date of transfer and any payment arrangements e.g. to apportion payment of Fishery Assessments. This will help us maintain accurate records and ensure that Fishery Assessments are sent to the correct persons.

Please also provide your email address and telephone contact numbers, which will aid more efficient communication with the Board generally (and help to keep costs down for the Board).

**iii. Previous Fishery Assessment Rates – 2015 to 2025**

In fixing the Annual Rate for Fishery Assessments, the Board considered matters in the context of previous decisions fixing the Rates of Fishery Assessment and the associated reasoning, summarised as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Value of River</u>	<u>Rate</u>	<u>Value from Assessments</u>	<u>Comments/Reasoning</u>
2015/2016	£68,250.00	None	£0.00	Scottish Government uncertainty re whether Boards to continue
2016/2017	£68,250.00	15p	£10,237.50	Low Assessment rate agreed
2017/2018	£62,090.00	25p	£15,522.50	River Value reduced by £6,169.00 after Re-Valuation
2018/2019	£61,240.00	35p	£21,434.00	More realistic rate – issued 1 May 2018
2019/2020	£61,040.00	25p	£15,260.00	River Value reduced by £200 following successful Appeals Rate reduced by 10p - falling salmon catches and other salmon fishing issues
2020/2021	£60,090.00	15p	£9,013.50	Rate further reduced by 10p – poor season, COVID-19 etc – N.B. not issued until 15/12/20 (after fishing season ended) – affected cashflow
2021/2022	£60,090.00	30p	£18,027.00	Minimum recommended amount providing some small reserves
2022/2023	£60,090.00	30p	£18,027.00	Minimum recommended amount providing some small reserves and putting the Board in a position to carry out additional work
2023/2024	£47,740.00	38p	£18,141.20	Minimum recommended amount, noting lower river valuation, providing small reserve
2024/2025	£47,740.00	40p	£19,096.00	Minimum recommended amount, providing small annual reserve of c. £2,500

iv. Fishery Assessment Rate for 2025/2026

Historically, the Board was aware that COVID-19 caused problems for everyone, including the fishing community. As a consequence of lockdown, falling catch numbers, lack of fishing effort and the fact that some clubs had been struggling, the Board took account of their decision in the previous year (2020/2021), for one year only, to set the Fishery Assessment Rate at a much reduced rate of 15 pence. It subsequently fixed the rate for 2022/2023 at 30 pence.

At its meeting on 6 December 2022, the Board provisionally fixed the Assessment Rate for 2023/2024 at 30 pence per £, but subject to



review of the new Valuation Roll from Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board (AVJB). Upon review of the new Valuation Roll from AVJB with effect from 1 April 2023, the Board unanimously decided on 13 April 2023, to increase the rate to 38 pence per £.

For the reasons noted above the Board has fixed Assessment Rates lower than the increases in RPI over the last few years. However, the previous decisions also recognised the increase in cost of living, affecting all sectors, including the Board. To put this in context: since the rate of 35p was fixed for 2018/2019, the RPI increased from 285.10 to 364.50 i.e. 27.85%, whereas the increased rate from 35p in April 2019 to 38p in April 2023 for Season 2023/2024 increased the Rate only 8.57% across that period. At its meeting on 22 February 2024, the Board fixed the Assessment Rate 40 pence per £ for season 2024/2025.

The Board requires to secure sufficient funds from Fishery Assessments to cover necessary expenditure to meet the Board’s statutory obligations for the purpose of the protection or improvement of the fisheries within the River Doon Catchment Area; and monies to help fund projects on the river, whilst also providing for some degree of contingency.

Taking account of all of the above, at its meeting on 12 December 2024, the Board agreed to fix the Assessment Rate at the same rate as last year, namely at 40 pence per £ for season 2025/2026. Fishery Assessment Notices will be issued in April 2025.

v. Report on Fishery Assessments outstanding at 31 December 2024

With the exception of two beats where we are still trying to gain payment, the Board has made 94.34% recovery as follows:

SUMMARY POSITION AT 31/12/2024	RECOVERED BY GGLLP	% RECOVERED	OUTSTANDING
Arrears (excl queried/disputed)	£0.00	0.0%	£0.00
Fishery Assessments 2023/2024 recovered	£18,016.00	94.34%	£1,080.00
TOTAL RECOVERED (excl queried/disputed)	£18,016.00	94.34%	£1,080.00

This is a significant improvement on the cash flow from previous years. However, it is fair to say that this recovery was made, in some cases, after one or two reminders having to be sent. Prompt payment by all Riparian Owners, Tenants, Clubs and Associations is very much appreciated, and makes the Board more efficient.

(c) Consultation Responses

The Board considers that it is an important part of its role to respond appropriately to Consultations from Scottish Government, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and other organisations.

During 2024/2025, Responses to Consultations were made on behalf of the River Doon Salmon Fishery Board as follows:



- i. with assistance from Ayrshire Rivers Trust (“**ART**”) and liaising with Fisheries Management Scotland, when required, the Clerk continued to monitor ongoing work undertaken by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency Consultation on Sea Lice Risk Assessment Framework Consultation.
- ii. Various other correspondence throughout the year with ART and others regarding various proposed works, with Ayrshire Roads Alliance, and others.

(d) Good Governance

- i. Introduction:

The *Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013* requires all District Salmon Fishery Boards to operate in an open, transparent and accountable manner.

The River Doon DSFB has prepared this Annual Report in compliance with the Guidance on Good Governance Obligations:

- *Section 44 (1)* requires preparation of an Annual Report and a Statement of Accounts (which shall be audited) relating to the activities of the Board. The report and accounts are to be considered by an Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.
- *Section 44 (1A)* requires the Clerk of the Board to arrange for the final Annual Report and Audited Accounts to be published and a copy of these to be sent to Scottish Ministers. Publication is to take place as soon as practicable after the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.
- *Section 44 (1B)* defines the final Annual Report and Audited Accounts as those submitted for consideration at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors or, if they are revised following that meeting, the revised versions.
- *Section 46A* requires that the Annual Report contains specific information: a summary of the activity carried out by the Board under their statutory functions in the reporting year; a summary of the proposed activity of the Board for the year to come; information on complaints made to the Board during the reporting period (their number, a statement of the nature of each and how it was disposed of); and a statement of how the Board has complied with the good governance requirements of the *Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003* (“**the 2003 Act**”) during the course of the reporting year and how they propose to comply in the year to come.

- ii. Statement of Compliance:

The River Doon DSFB has introduced policies and documents, as detailed below, in order to comply with the good governance



requirements of the 2003 Act. As part of this the River Doon DSFB voluntarily adheres to the Scottish Government's District Salmon Fishery Boards Guidance on Good Governance Obligations (August 2013) and proposes to continue to comply in the year to come in the same way.

In particular, the River Doon DSFB has operated as follows:

o Meetings Protocol

- The Board's Protocol on Meetings is published on the Board's website at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>
- Meetings of the Board were held on 22 February 2024, 14 March 2024, 24 April 2024 and 12 December 2024. These meetings were publicised on the Board's Website, and through the Websites of Ayrshire Rivers Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland.
- 9 members of the public attended Board Meetings in 2024
- The minutes from these meetings can be viewed on the Board's Website at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>
- The Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors took place on 27 March 2025 at the Western House Hotel, 66 Craigie Road, AYR KA8 0HA.
- This meeting was publicised on the Board's Website. A copy of the notice was also sent to the Scottish Government. 3 members of the public chose to attend.
- The minutes from this meeting will be published on the Board's Website at <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>
- The Annual Public Meeting is due to take place on 17 April 2025 at the Western House Hotel, 66 Craigie Road, AYR KA8 0HA.
- This meeting will also be publicised on the Board's Website, and through the Websites of Ayrshire Rivers Trust and Fisheries Management Scotland. A copy of the notice will also be sent to the Scottish Government.
- The minutes from this meeting will be published on the Board's Website at <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>

o Declaration of Members' Interests

- The Board's Policy on Members' Interest is published on the Board's Website at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>
- The Register of Members' Interests and Declarations are retained by the Clerk to the Board and can be viewed on a written request to the Clerk
- We have included a standing item at each Board meeting inviting Board members to declare new/amend existing interests and all such instances are recorded in the minutes of these meetings.

o Complaints Policy

- The Board has set up and maintains a Complaints Procedure, which can be viewed on the Board's Website at:



<http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>

- The procedure is reviewed annually. It was recently updated to reflect the new Scottish Government Good Governance email address for sending documents to the Scottish Ministers.
- There have been no formal complaints during 2024.

○ Annual Report and Audited Statement of Accounts

- This Annual Report will be published on the Board's Website at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>
- The Audited Statement of Accounts will be published on the Board's Website at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>
- The previous Audited Statements of Accounts have also been published on the Board's Website at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>

○ Reporting to Scottish Government

Since these procedures have been introduced by the Board, all required reporting has been made to the Scottish Ministers using the following address: DSFBGoodGovernance@gov.scot





(e) Code of Practice

The Board regularly reviews and revises the Code of Practice when required, particularly to reflect its **promotion of 100% catch-and-release throughout the season**, to support conservation measures in the wild stock of salmon in our river.

The current Code of Practice (approved on 17 April 2025) is as follows:



RIVER DOON DISTRICT **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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CODE OF PRACTICE

The River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board has produced this Code to conserve our fish stocks for now and the future.

1. **Mandatory by Law:**

- (a) For the River Doon, the Salmon & Sea Trout Season is from 11 February to 31 October inclusive. The Brown Trout Season is from 15 March to 6 October inclusive.
- (b) It is a criminal offence to retain a salmon or grilse before 1 April, so they **must** be returned
- (c) It is a criminal offence to kill a coloured/gravid salmon.
- (d) All salmon and grilse caught must be recorded in your catch returns.

2. The Board **strongly urges** Anglers to adopt a **100% catch-and-release** culture throughout the season, to support conservation measures in the wild stock of salmon in our river. Therefore, we are asking Anglers not to kill **ANY** salmon or grilse.

3. *Gyrodactylus Salaris* Declaration Forms must be signed by Anglers before fishing.

4. **The Board recommends:**

- (a) On any spinning lure, only one treble hook should be used.
- (b) The use of barbless or crushed barbed hooks, so Anglers can return fish without unnecessary damage.
- (c) Against worm fishing for salmon. However, where worm fishing takes place, please use circle hooks, so Anglers can return fish without unnecessary damage.



- (d) Against the use of prawn, shrimp, or any organic baits at any time.
 - (e) All sea trout caught must be recorded in your catch returns.
5. **Grayling** – the Board has been made aware that Grayling may have been illegally introduced into the catchment of the river. This is a criminal offence. If you capture a Grayling, it should be humanely killed and the Board informed on the above contact details.
6. **Safe landing and handling requirements**

Before you set off, make sure you have the following tackle for safe catch and release:

Suitable tackle - Use fishing tackle that is capable of landing salmon quickly to avoid exhausting them before release.

Barbless hooks – for quick release and minimised risk of bleeding when removing the hooks, always use a barbless hook. A size 8 (or preferably smaller) is recommended.

A knotless net – use a wide, soft knotless net to minimise damage by allowing the fish to lie flat as well as reducing damage to its scales.

Tip: to assist with a swift release make sure you have a tool, such as long-nosed forceps, at hand for prompt hook removal. Also, if you plan on recording or taking a photograph of your catch, make sure that you keep all the equipment close to hand so that this can be done quickly.

Landing the fish

It's vital not to lift the fish out of the water; research has shown that salmon which are exposed to air, even for a short period, have a significantly reduced survival rate. Certainly do not lift the salmon by the tail or gill cover, as this can cause internal damage as well as damage to tendons.

Recording your catch

If you want to take a photograph of your catch, keep the fish in the water or at least slightly above it and support the fish gently under its belly. When handling the salmon, always do so with wet hands to avoid damaging (burning) the fish's outer boundary layer of mucus – which protects it against disease and parasites. If you must weigh the fish, then weigh with the fish enclosed in the net or use a weigh net.

A tape measure or wading stick can be marked to record approximate length – this should be done while the fish is kept in the water. This can also be used against a chart to measure approximate weight.

Recovery and unhooking the fish

Gently remove the hook by hand or with forceps when the fish is quiet. If it is deeply embedded, then cut the leader as close as possible to the hook. Generally, fish can be released and survive with the hook still attached and this will cause less damage to the fish than if the embedded hook is removed.



Recovery may take some time, but it is vital for fish to be allowed to recover before they are released into clean, steady water.

Download a helpful Best Practice Guidance from Fisheries Management Scotland:

<https://fms.scot/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Best-Practice-Guidance-Catch-and-Release-January-2025.pdf>

7. **Farmed Salmon / Pink (Pacific) Salmon**

If you capture a farmed salmon or pink (pacific) salmon, it should be humanely killed and the Board informed on the above contact details. Scale samples (in the case of pink salmon, the whole salmon) should be taken and sent to Ayrshire Rivers Trust.

The capture should also be reported on the Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) Website Reporting tool at:

<https://survey123.arcgis.com/share/1b8632f1d06c48c89bbac8901d084346>

FMS Guidance on identifying farmed salmon can be found at:

<http://fms.scot/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/200908-Aqua-Guidance-for-Anglers.pdf>

Ayrshire Rivers Trust's video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WwKwPv1yGBM&t=271s>

FMS Guidance on identifying Pink (Pacific) Salmon can be found at:

<http://fms.scot/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/210519-INNS-Statement-Pink-salmon.pdf>

8. **Giant Hogweed /Japanese Knotweed / Himalayan Balsam**

See Ayrshire Rivers Trust leaflet at:

<http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/ART-Invasive-Weeds-Information-30.06.21.pdf>

9. **Catch Returns**

Ayrshire Rivers Trust has helped the Board in developing a Catch Return App for use by anglers in the River Doon catchment. This allows you to record your Rod Effort and Catches and upload details of the date, time and location to a central location, which will aid the provision of official Annual Catch Returns to both Scottish Government Marine Inspectorate and the River Doon DSFB.

Download the Web Version of the App at:

<https://arcg.is/Hm1my>



Or use the camera on your phone to scan the QR Code:



Link to video produced by ART on how to download and operate the App:

<https://youtube.com/shorts/uJuE5uzvZCg?si=zE-41uc7g7GEILtB>

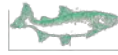
10. **Safety**

Be aware of safety on and around the River. Anglers approach the River at their own risk.

The Board recognises that observance of the Code is voluntary but expects that responsible Anglers will observe it as far as possible.

Please spread the word on this Code of Practice. Your Board are investing in the future so that we all can continue to enjoy the sport on the River.

Approved by River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board: 17 April 2025





(f) Scientific Report



Ayrshire Rivers Trust
working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs

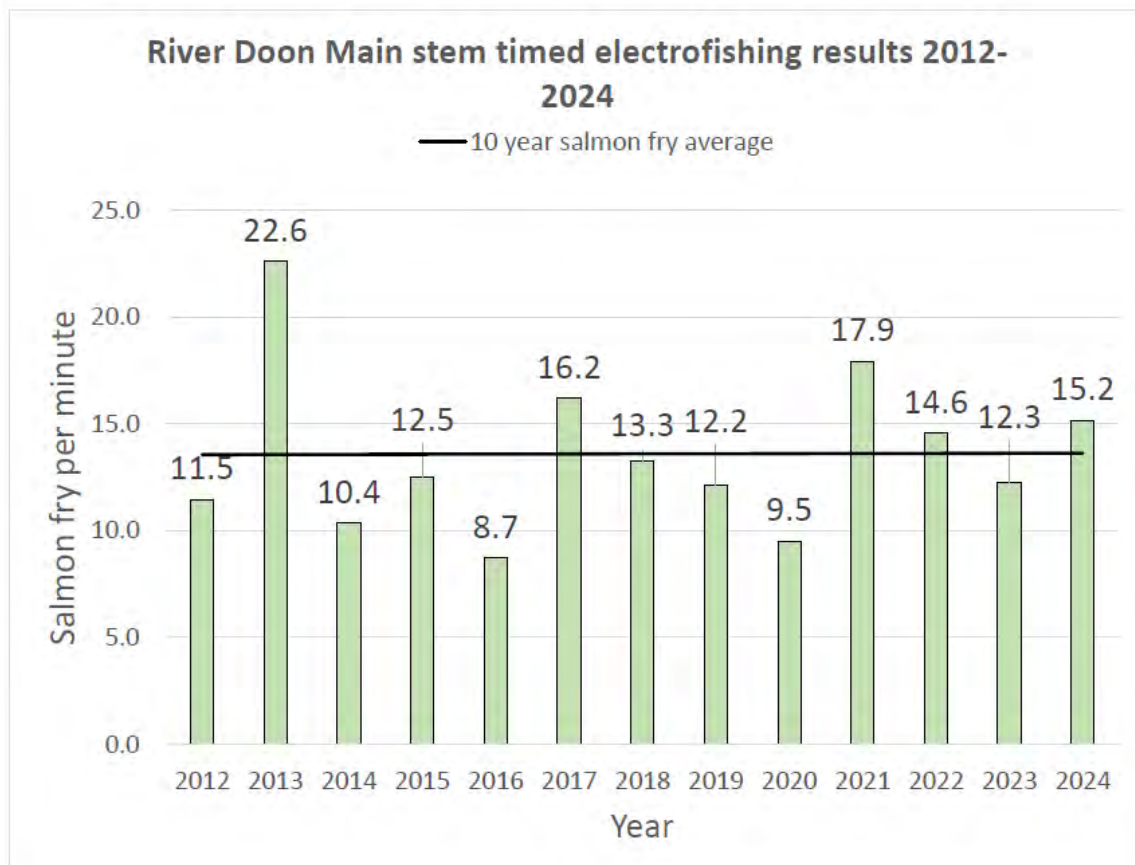
Ayrshire Rivers Trust Report for the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors 27/03/2025

2024 Timed Electrofishing Surveys.

River Doon Main stem timed electrofishing results 2012-2024

SITE	LOCATION	SALMON/ MIN	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TDM9	Top of Swallow Braes	FRY	16.8	23.6	11.2	1.4	3	4	7.4	3	3	6.2	0.4	6.2	3.6
TDM4	Doonholm, d/s Garden Pool	FRY	5	31	7.6	2.4	0	19.2	9.6	7.6	15.8	19.6	10.2	7.8	10.8
TDM25	Auchendrane Weir, side channel	FRY		20.4	11.2		0.8	4	7.3	2.6	7.6	10.2	3.4	3.0	13.2
TDM23	Monkwood, u/s Lemon Pots	FRY	4	45.2	10.4	5.8	2		9.2	20.2	16.2	19.6	16.6	12.8	28.8
TDM8	Holms, wide weedy riffle	FRY	7.4	20.4	9.6	13.2	4.6	17.4	19.8	20	8	19.2	16.4	14	12.4
TDM13	u/s Dalrymple	FRY	9.8	27.8	8	16.4	7.6	10.2	13.6	14.2	12.2	12	13	8.2	8.2
TDM15	Torr Bridge Skeldon	FRY	7.8	9.2	4	1.4	1.4	5.8	13.8	5.6	7.6	4	8.6	4	13.8
TDM20	Smithston, u/s Rabbie's Pool	FRY	12.6	14.6	12.2	13	0.8	8.8	8	9.8	5.6	5.2	10.6	4.2	9.4
TDM27	Craigengillan, d/s of stone bridge	FRY					38.4	53.3	23.4	20		39	29.4	37.4	29.2
TDM24	Craigengillan	FRY	28.2	11.2	19.2	46.6	28.8	23.2	20.8	18.6		44.4	37	25.2	22.2
MEAN		FRY	11.5	22.6	10.4	12.5	8.7	16.2	13.3	12.2	9.5	17.9	14.6	12.3	15.2

2024 Timed Classification	
0	Absent
0.2 - 3.6	Very Poor
3.8 - 8.2	Poor
8.3 - 13.1	Moderate
13.2 - 21.3	Good
>21.4	Excellent

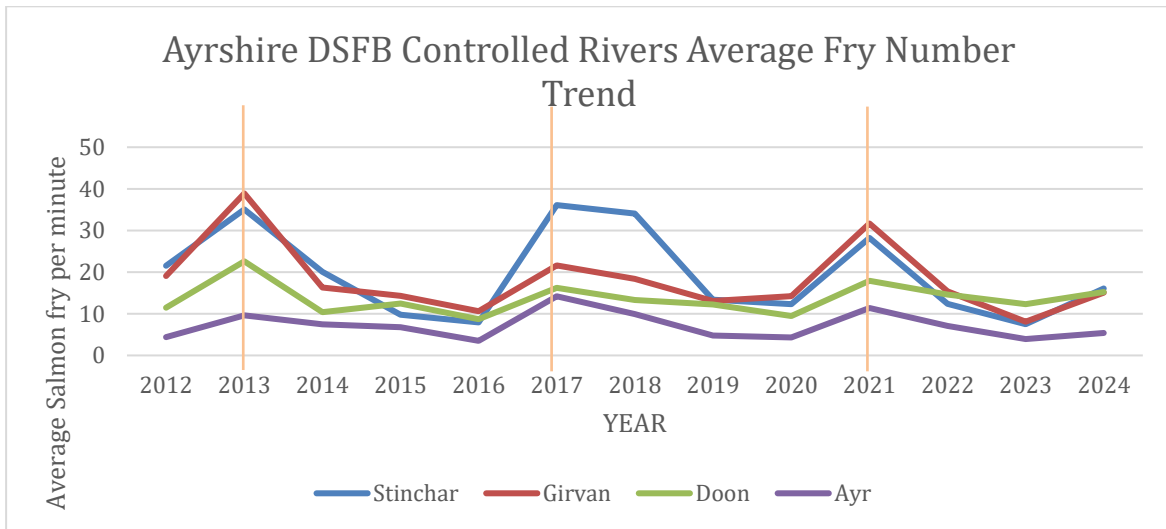




The 2024 results show an increase to 15.2 fry/minute from the 12.3 fry/minute in 2023 across the catchment which is above the ten-year average of 13.2 fry/minute.

When the timed data is analysed (since 2012), there does seem to be a higher number of salmon fry in every fourth year (green vertical lines on the graph below) since 2013. The hope would be that 2025 ought to be a good year with reported catches across Ayrshire higher in 2024. However, until electrofishing is undertaken next summer, this remains a hypothesis.

A full electrofishing report has been produced and circulated at this meeting.



Spawning 2024

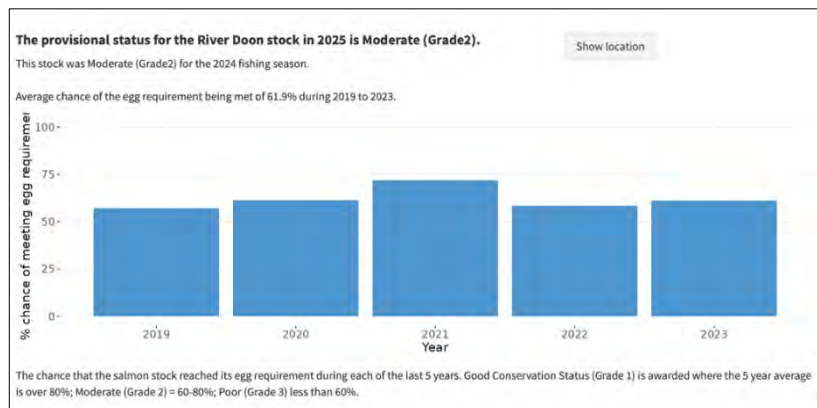
ART staff were encouraged with the number of salmon we saw on spawning redds at the beginning of December in 2024, with a reported rod catch up on previous years. We expect that fry numbers should be above the 10-year average in 2025. The only accurate way to assess this is through electrofishing. If there anybody that is keen to come and be part of an electrofishing team, then please contact the biologists to arrange an outing. Here is a link to a video of salmon spawning on the Doon catchment in 2024 <https://youtu.be/FVla7yAFoec>

Drumgrange and Kiers Angling Club (D&KAC)

Whilst on the river recently we noted that D&KAC have been busy planting willow cuttings throughout many of the erosion scars through their section of river along with trees that ART supplied from our nursery. It's great to see a club working in a proactive manner and both the Trust and Board are working together to help secure funds to bring further benefits to this section of the river.

River Categorisation

Scottish Government are changing the classification of the grading system in 2025, with what was category three being rebranded as poor, category two as moderate and category one as good. This will not have any material impact on anglers with the same mandatory catch and release required of poor/cat 3 rivers. Notably, the calculated chance of the egg deposition requirement being met appears relatively stable as does the rod catch and juvenile production.



The Doon will remain a category 2/moderate grading in 2025.



Pollution



Figure 1: Parrie Burn entering the Muck Water

Pollution is a constant threat to the river and ecology. Fish suffer as a result of all types of inputs with developing ova and alevins particularly susceptible to any unnatural influences. We had reports of the Muck Water running very dirty which we investigated and traced to the Parrie Burn (upstream of Dalmellington) that was running very coloured. This was due to work happening on the South Kyle Windfarm site which was visited by SEPA and seems to have stopped the silt laden water.

Anyone discovering pollution should report their concerns with supporting photos and information to ourselves (01290 518130) and SEPA (0800 807 060).

Purclewan Burn

ART recorded and reported severe silt pollution on the Purclewan Burn at Dalrymple at the beginning of December – prime spawning time. We traced it to the entrance of the Springwater Fishery where contractors were building a new bridge and had altered the banks and bed of the burn.

This was reported to SEPA. We again observed pollution from this site and witnessed a machine working in the burn. Again, this was reported to SEPA who we understand are acting against those responsible as we think there was no CAR license in place. ART staff have been requested to provide witness statements for this incident.

We will keep the Board up to date on how this develops.



Figure 2: Purclewan Burn Engineering Works - December

Fencing



Figure 3: Brockloch Burn Fencing to both banks with good buffers provided

The DSFB fencing contracts are underway with Netherton opting to use a Clipex metal fencing system. This is a relatively new approach and we are very keen to see how this performs as there may be benefits from using galvanised posts and materials, particularly with regard to the longevity and reusability of posts. ART have aided with advice and materials for bridge construction over the burn as part of this project.

The fencing on the Brockloch Burn has now been completed. This means that livestock are now excluded from all areas of the burn that are accessible by salmon which is an excellent achievement. ART have planted trees across the site to bring further shading and riverbank stability. During electrofishing surveys in 2024 ART recorded very good recovery of salmon in the Brockloch Burn – this is incredibly rewarding as a lot of effort has gone into delivering this project. We look forward to revisiting this burn in 2025.



ART have been in discussion with Drumgrange Farm (Patna) about fencing the Drumgrange Burn and the landowner is fundamentally supportive of this work. We also discussed large scale erosion of banks on the Doon through his ground that would warrant green engineering to prevent land loss and siltation of the river. ART are preparing an application to the Wild Fisheries Fund to help deliver this work with support also coming from the Board.

Netherton Burn Project

Value: £28,509.40

Status: In Progress

Overview:

ART in collaboration with Netherton Farm, Wild Fisheries Fund, SEPA and the River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board (RDDSFB) are working in collaboration to transform the Netherton Burn. The lower reaches of this burn supports low density populations of salmon and trout. However, historic pollution incidents, the presence of a redundant weir, a difficult culvert and excessive silt and nutrient inputs led to poor water quality and a severely impacted habitat with limited access suffering from reduced productivity throughout.

ART have now stabilised a large eroding bank to improve water quality and removed a weir and installed baffles within the culvert which will improve salmon and trout access to the upstream habitat. Restoring form and function to this burn should bring benefits for fish and ecology. The new fencing has allowed water margins to recover quickly and nutrient enrichment is reduced.

We have had problems with one of the solar watering systems required for this project and are now, at our own expense, installing another novel system. There is still a section of fencing to be erected once the watering issues are resolved however, the landowner has constructed a new shed in which cattle will overwinter. This is a significant improvement from the former practices at this farm. Once our new system is installed the fencing will be completed and the livestock will be excluded going forwards.



The wetland scrape is developing well and offers good habitat for a variety of species and alleviates flood pressures against the vulnerable bank.



The Clipex Fencing has been installed on this (the right) bank and broadleaf trees have been planted throughout the protected area.



Before: ART staff and volunteers planting willow and sewing wildflower and grass seed across the eroding bare slope before installing green engineering.



After: Much of the slope is now vegetated and the green engineering on the riverbank is visible and growing rapidly.



The green engineering we installed in May 2024 has transformed the toe of this sheer banking and is now helping prevent most of the alluvial soils from entering the watercourse.



The green engineering also offers fantastic cover for juvenile fish. As this site develops the shading, cover and stability will only improve.



These metal clipex fencing systems should out last traditional timber fences and are somewhat quicker to install in ground free of stones.



Netherton Culvert: We have now installed baffles in the culvert which should aid trout and salmon in reaching the upstream habitats that have been restored.

Project Monitoring 2025 and beyond

ART staff will continue monitoring the recovery of project areas and are pleased to report that we recorded salmon fry in the Brockloch Burn project area - this is a first for ART and we would expect these numbers to improve as the riparian habitat continues to recover and the silt that is present in the burn is mobilised and washed out. Jon Gibb who runs/administers the Wild Fisheries Fund visited the Brockloch Burn project site with us and was very impressed with what had been delivered. They had a content creator produce a short video of this project which should be available to view shortly. We produced a video looking at some of the issues across Ayrshire and the approaches we take to bring improvements, which is available on our Youtube page at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EuA_VazmuGo&t=288s

The Wild Fisheries Fund video is available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MosLpt9xVhc>

We surveyed the Culroy at Minishant, the first burn we restored in 2015 and 2017 and were very pleased to record good numbers of salmon fry. Whilst the water quality and instream habitat was improved a number of years ago, the improvements in fish numbers were only really reflected in the trout densities and whilst salmon were always present the densities of juvenile salmon were never high. This year's results are very encouraging – see the electrofishing 2024 report.



Muck Water Green Engineering – July 2024

ART delivered green engineering on the Muck Water from Craigengillan Estate to prevent further erosion of the footpath and protect the Muck Water from unnecessary silt inputs. This work has been highly successful.

With Stuart certificated as an excavator driver we deliver all these jobs completely in house. This gives us greater control over every aspect of the job.



Muck Water Before: path at risk of being lost. Inputs of silt/sediment to the burn – degrading water quality.

Muck Water After: The footpath is now protected, the silt/sediment input has stopped and juvenile fish have better bankside cover/refuge.

Catch records and returns – the new recording App for anglers

The Clerk and Board are keen to streamline the official catch return process that is often poorly completed. The fact that both the DSFB and the Marine Directorate (MD – formerly Marine Scotland) require the same data on different forms at the same time of the year leads to confusion. With MD requiring anglers to record their rod effort now added to annual catch reporting requirements, ART have developed a new phone app that should make these data easier to submit and collate.

Using GIS (Global Information Systems), our new web-based App will allow anglers to report their catches in real time to the Board using their mobile phones. Catch reports submitted by anglers can now include length and weight of fish, the beats and/or pools fished, rod effort, photos of any fish captured, signs of disease or pollution discovered and all submitted in real time. SEPA should always be informed of pollution points directly but we encourage anglers to let ART know too. We are happy to take suggestions from anyone using the App if they feel improvements could be made.

Anglers will still be required to submit returns to the proprietors/clubs but in time the App may offer a suitable alternative once fully adopted and will make the collation of data very much easier. Only time will tell how the anglers take to reporting directly using their phones but we hope this will be seen as beneficial by all owners, clubs and anglers and encouraged.

ART have put together a short video demonstrating how to use the App that can be shared widely amongst clubs/syndicates. We could even have download codes in fishing huts to prompt anglers to download and start using the app.



National Park Proposal

There is a proposal for a Galloway National Park that could potentially cover some of the Doon catchment. We have attended and discussed the proposal with NatureScot representatives and whilst there is little detail on this at the moment the Trust are fully engaged with the process and will keep the DSFB informed of any developments/consultations.

INNS Control

Japanese knotweed was stem injected at two large stands between Patna and Dalmellington and another near Nethererton. ART has recommended that the DSFB continue supporting this control in 2025 and beyond to strategically target stands across the catchment.

Chapelton Burn Restoration

One of the most impacted tributaries in the Doon catchment is the Chapelton Burn (entering the river at Cassillis). Historically the Chapelton is highly modified with levies, ditching and straightening of the channel. Because of this the burn offers little habitat to fish and contributes silt and sediment to the Doon. Removing levies and restoring the channel to a natural course would increase the spawning potential of the burn, reduce erosion and restore ecological function to the watercourse. Opposition from landowners is a key issue here however we do have the support of two landowners, and we'll continue to work on securing the others as this is fundamental to the scale of work required on this watercourse.

ART prepared an application on behalf of the Doon DSFB to the Neighbourhood Ecosystem Fund which acts as a development fund to bring in expertise and advice and allows time to be spent speaking with landowners to gain support for future project funding. The value of this project is £13,000 and could be fundamental to achieving larger scale restoration of this highly degraded catchment.

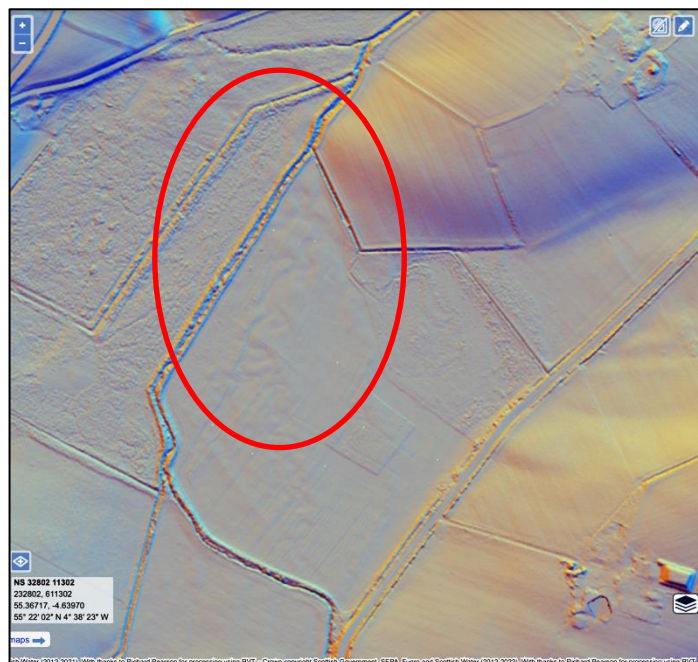


Figure 4: the red line shows one of the original courses - pre-modifications

Stuart Brabbs, Trust Manager



(g) Electrofishing Report



Ayrshire Rivers Trust

River Doon catchment

Electrofishing Fish Survey

2024



Figure 1: River Doon at Waterside Bing

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CONTENTS

1. Introduction	5
1.1 Salmonid fish and fisheries	5
1.2 Biodiversity	5
2. Methods	6
2.1 Data recording	6
2.2 Techniques	6
2.3 Timed surveys	6
2.4 Density surveys	7
2.5 Water Quality sampling	7
3. Results Classification	8
3.1 Timed sites	8
3.2 Density sites	8
3.5 Electrofishing survey limitations	9
4. Results	10
4.1 Timed Electrofishing Sites	10
5. Summary and Conclusions	20
6. References	22

List of Figures

Figure 1: Comparison of electrofishing results over 10 years.....	11
Figure 2: Comparison of electrofishing results over 10 years and location.....	11
Figure 3: Doon timed salmon fry survey results and location within catchment 2024	Error! Bookmark not defined.

List of Tables

Table 1: 2020-2024 Ayrshire timed sites salmon fry classification.....	8
Table 2: SFCC classification salmon fry and parr density breakpoints	8
Table 3: SFCC classification trout fry and parr density breakpoints	9
Table 4: Results from the Doon catchment salmon fry timed surveys 2024	10
Table 5: Colour coded Salmon fry/min 2003 to 2011	13
Table 6: Colour coded Salmon fry/min 2012 to 2024.....	14
Table 7: Doon catchment quantitative electrofishing sites 2024.....	18

1. Introduction

The Ayrshire Rivers Trust (ART) was formed in 2000 to provide a source of local fisheries management and biological expertise in Ayrshire. The River Doon DSFB helps to fund ART each year and in return receives management advice and survey work. A major part of the survey work involves examining the distribution and density of fish populations through electrofishing at a network of sites throughout the Doon catchment. The sites visited in 2024 by ART were examined as part of a long-term monitoring strategy, to investigate stocking success and to address specific issues arising over the previous year.

The aims of the 2024 electrofishing survey were:

- To examine salmon fry production in the main stem of the River Doon
- To monitor changes in fish density elsewhere in the catchment, in both good and poor-quality sites, as part of a long-term monitoring strategy
- To collect water quality data at electrofishing sites
- To assess the impact of any projects/interventions the Trust and/or Board has made
- To provide the Doon DSFB with the information from these surveys

1.1 Salmonid fish and fisheries

Migratory salmonids; Atlantic salmon (*Salmo salar*) and trout (*Salmo trutta*) and other native fish populations commonly use freshwater habitats for breeding and development of early life-stages. Typically, juvenile salmon and trout spend between one and three years in freshwater before migrating to sea as smolts. Salmon may spend between one and three years in the Atlantic Ocean before returning as mature fish to spawn within their natal river, at or close to their original hatching site. Sea trout differ from salmon in that they are part of a resident brown trout population and migratory forms are made up of a high proportion of females. Sea trout may spend less time at sea and, unlike salmon, remain in nearby inshore marine waters to feed. The use of both marine and freshwater habitats during their life-cycle makes migratory salmonid populations vulnerable to deterioration or loss.

Isolated resident brown trout populations may also be present upstream of waterfall barriers that prevent access from the sea. These populations form an important part of a functional ecosystem and are likely to contribute to downstream populations through downstream migration.

1.2 Biodiversity

Other than Atlantic salmon and brown trout, native fish such as lamprey (*Lampetra spp.*), stickleback (*Gasterosteus aculeatus*) and European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) also utilise freshwater habitats. Fish and freshwater habitats also support a range of other native flora and fauna and consequently mitigation to protect water resources for such species is likely to benefit a range of other biodiversity and conservation objectives.

2. Methods

2.1 Data recording

ART is a full member of the Scottish Fisheries Coordination Centre (SFCC), which is an association of Scottish fisheries management organisations including Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS), Marine Science Scotland based in Pitlochry, and District Salmon Fishery Boards. The SFCC has, in partnership, agreed on a common methodology for data collecting and recording and has developed a database for entering and storing data in an agreed format. The SFCC also provides electrofishing training to its members, and ART's biologists have attended and passed electrofishing training courses organised by SFCC. Wherever possible, ART's surveys are therefore carried out to the standards required by the SFCC and data are recorded using the agreed format.

2.2 Techniques

Fish populations at each site were assessed using electrofishing. This is a widely used technique to examine freshwater fish communities. The method uses electricity to attract and stun fish, which allows operators to remove them from the water. The fish are transferred to a holding container until they have recovered and then anaesthetised using a mild solution of MS222 (Tricaine Methane Sulphonate). Each individual is then identified, measured and returned unharmed to the area from which they were captured.

Battery powered backpack equipment (Hans Grassl model IG600) was used at all sites. Smooth DC was used at all sites to maximise catch efficiency while minimising potential damage to fish and other wildlife. A minimum voltage of 200V was used to ensure efficient fish capture.

Two different techniques were used to relate the number of fish caught to actual fish densities, in stream-area delimited and time-delimited surveys. In smaller watercourses it was possible to cover the entire survey area accurately, and the number of fish captured could, therefore, be related to the wetted area of the site. However, for the larger main stem sites, the full area of the river could not be electrofished effectively. In these cases, the ART survey followed existing guidelines, and carefully timed the electrofishing runs to obtain a figure for fry caught per minute. Protocols in both cases were followed to SFCC standards, a standard protocol for timed electrofishing having been agreed in 2007.

2.3 Timed surveys

Biologists are increasingly finding that timed surveys are an effective and efficient way of examining fish production, particularly in larger watercourses. While timed fishing does not provide an absolute value for fish densities, it can be extremely useful in comparing different parts of a catchment or wider area, provided that catch efficiency does not change between sites. This potential source of error can be minimised by ensuring that an identical protocol is followed at every site and by using a standard team of fully trained personnel. However, it is recognised that inter site variables may skew results and interpretation of the results requires care.

Sites for this part of the survey were chosen to cover suitable salmon fry habitat throughout as broad a geographic range as possible on the main stem of the river. It is particularly important to examine these habitats because in many rivers the majority of salmon spawning and juvenile production is likely to take place in the main stem of a river, rather than smaller side tributaries. Restricting electrofishing surveys to smaller watercourses, using area based surveys, may, therefore, fail to identify important factors affecting salmon populations.

Shallow run and riffle areas were targeted, preferably with a maximum depth of 30 cm. Electrofishing runs were timed, with a single 5-minute run being carried out at each site, all within typical fry habitat. The timer was started at the beginning of each run and only counted when the anode was switched on in the water, meaning that the 5-minute period covered only the time spent truly fishing. The electrofishing operators proceeded in an upstream

direction throughout, working in a zigzag pattern to avoid covering the same area twice and staying in shallow areas suitable for fry production. In some cases this meant that the whole channel width was not covered, however, because the fish numbers were to be related to time, rather than area, this could be accounted for.

2.4 Density surveys

For the density surveys, the survey sweep began at the downstream end of the section and moved back and forwards across the channel so that every part of the bed was covered. The type of net used depended on the specific site - at fast flowing sites with small substrate a banner net was used to ensure no stunned fish were carried downstream past the operators. However, in slower flowing water, or where the substrate was made up of many large boulders, a hand net was generally found to be more effective.

Salmon and trout were separated into year classes based on length frequency histograms. As fish grow at very different rates between sites, this was repeated for each site individually. Age classifications were also checked by examining the number of annual rings on scales taken from fish of a range of sizes. Fish densities were then separated into fry and parr for the presentation of results. Fry refers to fish less than one year old resulting from spawning at the end of the previous year and parr to older fish.

At most sites, a one run, semi-quantitative protocol was used. While this method does not provide accurate information on absolute fish densities, it is commonly used as a relative comparison between sites or at the same site between years. This method was also chosen as it allows a greater number of sites to be visited.

2.5 Water Quality sampling

Water quality parameters were recorded using handheld multi-parameter field sampling meters. Samples were assessed prior to electrofishing, informing the team leader of variables such as electrical conductivity, temperature, and pH that may affect the operation of the electrofishing equipment. The meter was calibrated at regular intervals throughout the sampling season using buffer solutions of pH 4.0, 7.0 and 10.0.

3. Results Classification

3.1 Timed sites

In order that the results from one river or site can be compared easily with others, a results classification scheme has been introduced. The results from all the timed-electrofishing sites surveyed across Ayrshire from 2020 to 2024 were collated and the total salmon fry density figures ranked and split into 20% divisions, excluding sites where no fry were recorded. The groups were then assigned a classification indicating the relative number of salmon fry caught per minute. The timed results classification score was revised this year to include the five year average scores, with the 2019 results dropping out to be replaced by the 2024 results. It should be noted that this does not allow for comparison of classifications out with the 5 year period stated due to the yearly update of breakpoints.

Table 1: 2020-2024 Ayrshire timed sites salmon fry classification

Salmon fry breakpoints (No/min)	Classification
0.0	Absent
0.1 – 3.6	E – Very poor
3.7 – 8.2	D - Poor
8.3 – 13.1	C - Moderate
13.2 – 21.3	B - Good
>21.4	A - Excellent

If salmon fry are absent this often indicates that salmon cannot access this area, or there are other serious problems preventing survival.

3.2 Density sites

The results from surveys where fish densities are obtained are now classified according to the SFCC Scottish national classification scheme which was derived using data from over 1600 Scottish sites covering the period 1997-2002 (*Godfrey, 2005*). This allows ART and the reader to interpret local fish populations in a Scotland-wide context. The national classes should be periodically revised as fish populations will inevitably change over time, even on a national scale.

Table 2: SFCC classification salmon fry and parr density breakpoints

Salmon fry (No/100m ²)	Classification	Salmon parr (No/100m ²)
0.0	Absent	0.0
<4.7	E – Very poor	<2.6
4.7 -<10.3	D - Poor	2.6 -<5.1
10.3 - <20.3	C - Moderate	5.1 - <9.1
20.3 - <42.1	B - Good	9.1 - <15.8
>42.1	A - Excellent	>15.8

Table 3: SFCC classification trout fry and parr density breakpoints

Trout fry (No/100m ²)	Classification	Trout parr (No/100m ²)
0.0	Absent	0.0
<2.5	E – Very poor	<1.6
2.5 - <5.3	D - Poor	1.6 - <3.1
5.3 - <12.4	C - Moderate	3.1 - <5.6
12.4 - <30.3	B - Good	5.6 - <10.4
>30.3	A - Excellent	>10.4

3.3 Electrofishing survey limitations

Electrofishing is a common means of obtaining data on juvenile salmonid populations (*SEERAD 2007*); however, it is only effective in shallow streams.

The survey sites chosen were selected to be representative of the general habitat type present within each sub-catchment and to include a range of flow and substrate types. The SFCC protocol recommends that the minimum survey length is six times the mean channel width at the site, with a minimum of 20m length (SFCC, 2007). If the site selected is representative of the local habitat the survey should provide a robust estimate of local fish populations. However, it is possible that if fish populations are low or have a clumped distribution, the data from an electrofishing site may not adequately sample the full range of fish species present in that area.

It is usually impossible to capture all the fish present within a site, therefore depletion sampling, where fish are removed from a site in a series of successive electrofishing runs, are used to provide an estimate of the total fish population present. The rate of decline in each run and the total number of fish captured are used to estimate fish stocks. However, if fish numbers are low (less than 40 per site) the confidence limits will be wide and the depletion estimates will be unreliable (Schnute, 1983).

It is considered that it is impossible to prove the absence of fish by electrofishing, therefore, whilst the failure to capture fish at a site may indicate that the population is low, it cannot be assumed that fish are necessarily absent. Similarly the absence of individual species from electrofishing results should not be assumed to be indicative of the overall status of the species as many factors may contribute to the results.

4. Results

4.1 Timed Electrofishing Sites

In 2024, ART examined a total of 10 timed sites in the Doon catchment. Habitat quality at all sites was suitable for salmon fry.

The 2024 results are shown in Table 4 and Figure 1. A summary of the results from 2003 to 2011 are displayed in Table 5 and results from 2012 to 2024 are shown in Table 6. The mean timed results in 2024 for the catchment were 15.13 fry/minute, an increase on 2023's mean results of 12.28, and higher than the 10-year average of 13.2 fry/minute (Figure 1). Upper Doon timed sites recorded slightly higher salmon fry numbers on average than lower Doon sites. The upper Doon averaged 16.5 fry per minute in 2024 and the lower Doon sites averaged 13.76 salmon fry/minute (Figure 2).

Salmon fry were recorded at all sites, with the highest results recorded at Craigengillan downstream of the Stone Bridge (TDM27). Although slightly lower than in 2023, 'Excellent' results were again recorded at Craigengillan (TDM24). A big increase was seen at Monkwood (TDM23) where the categorisation increased from 'moderate' in 2023 to 'excellent' in 2024. Other increases were seen at Auchendrane Weir (TDM25) and Torr Bridge Skeldon (TDM15) which both increased from 'poor' to 'good'. Smithston upstream of Rabbie's Pool (TDM20) also saw an increase from 'poor' to 'moderate' category. However, some sites saw a decrease in numbers, with Holms (TDM8) moving from 'good' to 'moderate', upstream of Dalrymple (TDM13) moving from 'moderate' to 'poor' and the top of Swallow Braes (TDM9) moving from 'poor' to 'very poor'. Doonholm downstream of Garden Pool (TDM4) remained in the 'moderate' category despite a minor increase in fry density.

Table 4: Results from the Doon catchment salmon fry timed surveys 2024

*Codes for other species are: Tr = Brown trout, SL = Stone loach, M = Minnow, E = Eel, L = Lamprey

Site	Location	Grid Ref E, N	Date	Salmon fry/ minute	Classification	Other species*
TDM9	Riffle at top of Swallow Braes	232650, 618855	22/07/24	3.6	E	Sa par, Tr fry, E, SL, M
TDM4	Doonholm, d/s Garden Pool.	233658, 617467	22/07/24	10.8	C	Sa par, Tr fry, E, M, SL
TDM25	Auchendrane weir, side channel	233552, 615218	22/07/24	13.2	B	Sa par, Tr fry, E, SL
TDM23	Monkwood, u/s Lemon Pots	233829, 613185	22/07/24	28.8	A	Sa par, E, SL
TDM8	Holms, riffle below Burn Pool	235150, 613680	22/07/24	12.4	C	Tr fry, E, SL
TDM13	Upstream Dalrymple	236700, 614100	26/07/24	8.2	D	Sa par, Tr fry, Tr par
TDM15	Upstream Skeldon Bridge	238075, 613800	26/07/24	13.8	B	Sa par, Tr fry, M, SL
TDM20	Smithston, u/s Rabbie's Pool	240920, 612660	26/07/24	9.4	C	Sa par, Tr fry, Tr par, E
TDM27	Craigengillan, d/s Stone Bridge	247856, 603391	26/07/24	29.2	A	Sa par, E
TDM24	Craigengillan, d/s Ness Glen	247768, 603049	26/07/24	22.2	A	Sa par, E

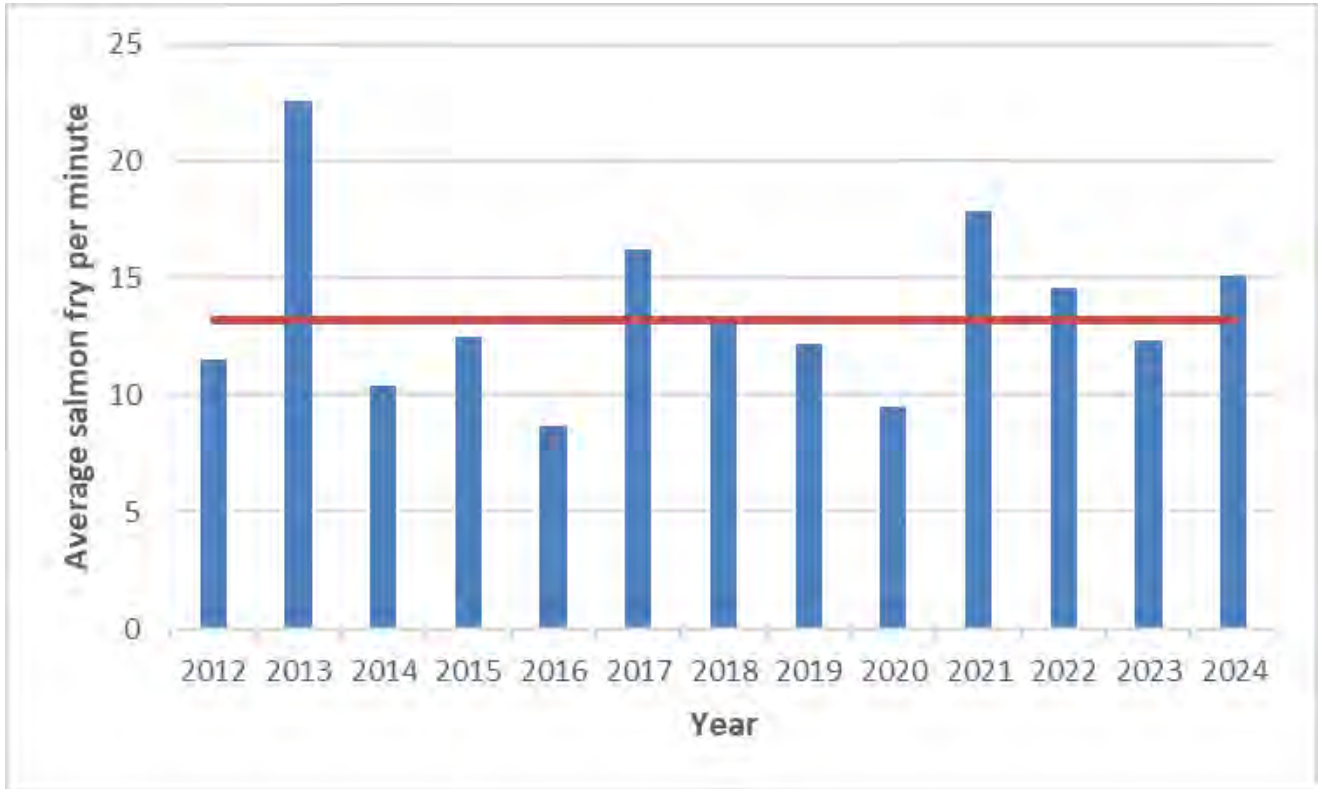


Figure 2: Comparison of timed electrofishing results on the River Doon over 10 years. The 10-year average (red line) from 2015-2024 is 13.2 salmon fry/minute. Catchment average in 2024 is 15.2

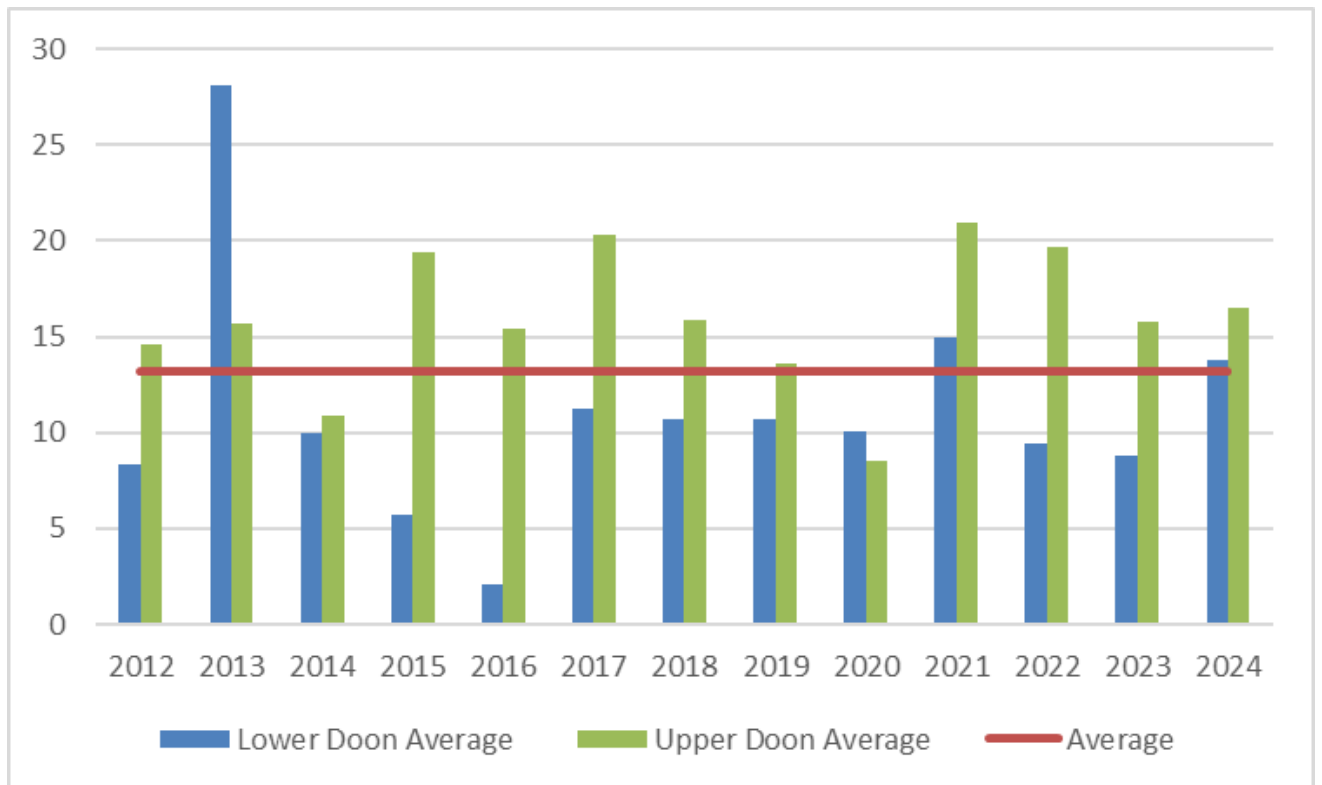


Figure 3: Comparison of timed electrofishing results on the River Doon over 13 years, separated into upper and lower catchment. The 10-year catchment average from 2015-2024 is 13.2 fry/minute. The lower Doon mean for 2024 is 13.8 fry/minute. The upper Doon mean for 2024 is 16.6 fry/minute.

Table 5: Colour coded Salmon fry/min 2003 to 2011
 (Black = Absent, Red = Very poor, Orange = Poor, Yellow = Moderate, Light Green = Good, Dark Green = Excellent)

River Doon Main stem timed electrofishing results 2003-2011											
SITE	LOCATION	SALMON/ MIN	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
TDM9	Top of Swallow Braes	FRY	4.9			7.2	5.4	18.2	12	23.4	25
TDM4	Doonholm, d/s Garden Pool	FRY	8.2		6.6	9.6	4	18.4	18.6	8.6	13.6
TDM25	Auchendrane Weir, side channel	FRY									12.2
TDM23	Monkwood, u/s Lemon Pots	FRY								17.6	15.6
TDM8	Holms, wide weedy riffle	FRY			10.6	15	4	9.8	18.6	8	12.8
TDM13	u/s Dalrymple	FRY				8.6	6.6	11	7.8	7.4	14.2
TDM15	Torr Bridge Skeldon	FRY				10.8	7.2	8.6	14.4	8.4	12.4
TDM20	Smithston, u/s Rabbie's Pool	FRY						9.8	7	6.4	7
TDM27	Craigengillan, d/s of stone bridge	FRY									
TDM24	Craigengillan	FRY								6.8	9.6
MEAN		FRY	6.6		8.6	10.2	5.4	12.6	13.1	10.8	13.6

Table 6: Colour coded Salmon fry/min 2012 to 2024

(Black = Absent, Red = Very poor, Orange = Poor, Yellow = Moderate, Light Green = Good, Dark Green = Excellent)

River Doon main stem timed electrofishing results 2012-2024															
SITE	LOCATION	SALMON /MIN	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
TDM9	Top of Swallow Braes	FRY	16.8	23.6	11.2	1.4	3	4	7.4	3	3	6.2	0.4	6.2	3.6
TDM4	Doonholm, d/s Garden Pool	FRY	5	31	7.6	2.4	0	19.2	9.6	7.6	15.8	19.6	10.2	7.8	10.8
TDM25	Auchendrane Weir, side channel	FRY		20.4	11.2		0.8	4	7.25	2.6	7.6	10.2	3.4	3	13.2
TDM23	Monkwood, u/s Lemon Pots	FRY	4	45.2	10.4	5.8	2		9.2	20.2	16.2	19.6	16.6	12.8	28.8
TDM8	Holms, wide weedy riffle	FRY	7.4	20.4	9.6	13.2	4.6	17.4	19.8	20	8	19.2	16.4	14	12.4
TDM13	u/s Dalrymple	FRY	9.8	27.8	8	16.4	7.6	10.2	13.6	14.2	12.2	12	13	8.2	8.2
TDM15	Torr Bridge Skeldon	FRY	7.8	9.2	4	1.4	1.4	5.8	13.8	5.6	7.6	4	8.6	4	13.8
TDM20	Smithston, u/s Rabbie's Pool	FRY	12.6	14.6	12.2	13	0.8	8.8	8	9.8	5.6	5.2	10.6	4.2	9.4
TDM27	Craigengillan, d/s of stone bridge	FRY					38.4	53.3	23.4	20		39	29.4	37.4	29.2
TDM24	Craigengillan	FRY	28.2	11.2	19.2	46.6	28.8	23.2	20.8	18.6		44.4	37	25.2	22.2
MEAN		FRY	11.5	22.6	10.4	12.5	8.7	16.2	13.3	12.2	9.5	17.9	14.6	12.3	15.2

Table 7: Comparison of timed results for each DSFB river catchment across Ayrshire during 2024 fry/min

River Ayr Results		River Doon Results		Water of Girvan Results		River Stinchar Results	
Site	2024	Site	2024	Site	2024	Site	2024
TAM4a	0	TDM9	3.6	TGM13	2	TSM18	3.2
TAM14	0	TDM4	10.8	TGM14	4.8	TSM17	25.8
TAM15	3.8	TDM25	13.2	TGM20	9.6	TSM15	14.4
TAM11	3.6	TDM23	28.8	TGM11	11.6	TSM3	22.6
TAM13	4.4	TDM8	12.4	TGM15	8.2	Lower Stinchar Average	16.5
TAM3	2.8	Lower Doon Average	13.8	Lower Girvan Average	7.2	TSM12	12
Lower Ayr Average	2.4	TDM13	8.2	TGM17	21.4	TSM4	12.4
TAM16	1.4	TDM15	13.8	TGM3/3a	18.6	TSM6	16.8
TAM9	12.2	TDM20	9.4	TGM9	37.8	TSM11	15.2
TAM1	10.2	TDM27	29.2	TGM2	20.2	TSM7	28
TAM18	9.2	TDM24	22.2	TGM8	22.8	TSM16	9.6
TAM19	12.2	Upper Doon Average	16.6	Upper Girvan Average	24.2	Upper Stinchar Average	15.7
Upper Ayr Average	9	Overall Doon Average	15.2	Overall Girvan Average	15.7	Overall Stinchar Average	16
TAL2	10.2						
TAL7	3.4						
TAL15	0.4						
TAL18	12.2						
TAL6	0						
Lugar Average	5.2						
Overall Ayr Average	5.4						

The results in table 7 show that more salmon fry per minute were caught in 2024 across all four catchments when compared to 2023. The overall mean fry/minute for the River Ayr was 5.4 in 2024 compared to 3.5 in 2023, 15.2 fry per minute in the Doon in 2024 compared to 12.3 in 2023, 15.7 fry per minute in 2024 for the Water of Girvan compared to 8.1 in 2023 and 16 fry per minute in the River Stinchar in 2024 compared to 8.2 in 2023. Upper sites across all areas continue to display higher productivity than lower sites which is to be expected as habitat and water quality are better in these areas.

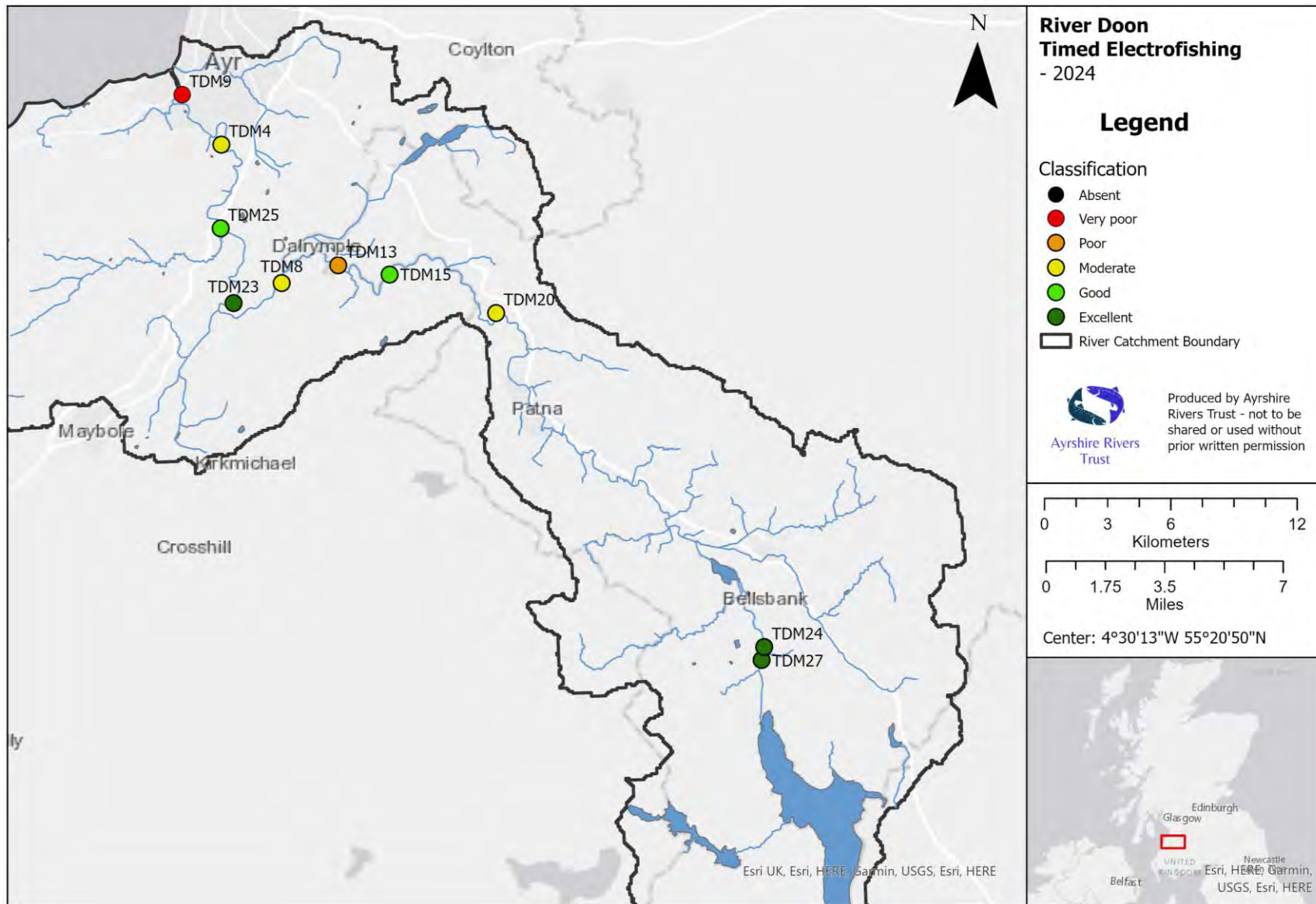


Figure 4: Doon timed salmon fry survey results 2024 and their location in the catchment.

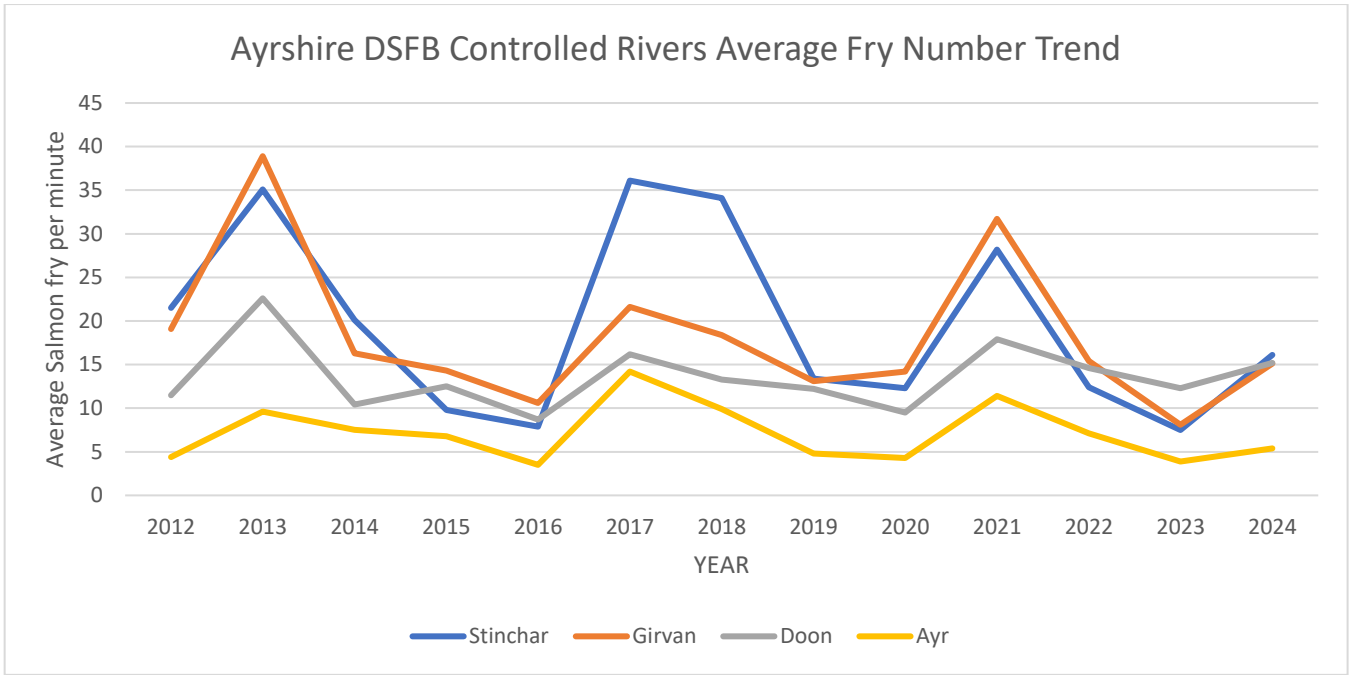


Figure 5: DSFB Rivers: Timed results 2012 - 2024 trends.

4.2 Quantitative sites

A total of 10 quantitative sites were surveyed in 2024 for contracts and project work.

Sites DMW5, DCU2, DCB10, DCLN2 and DMD3 were surveyed for South Kyle windfarm. Sites DCB14 and DMW8 were surveyed for North Kyle windfarm. Sites DBO6, DBO7 and DBO8 were surveyed for the ART Brockloch restoration project.

Table 8: Doon catchment quantitative electrofishing sites 2024

Site Code	Location	Salmon Access?	Date	Grid Ref		Minimum estimates per 100m ²			
				Easting	Northing	Salmon fry	Salmon parr	Trout fry	Trout parr
DMW5	Muck Water U/S Culvert	No	13/08/24	234666	614209	0	0	1	5
DCU2	Culroy Burn at Minishant	Yes	05/09/24	233200	614400	28.3	0	21.8	0
DCB10	Upper Cummock opp' Layby	No	13/08/24	251145	607460	0	0	28.8	3.9
DCLN2	Linn Water	No	19/08/24	252854	607068	0	0	0	0
DMD3	Mossdale Burn D/S Benbrack Burn confluence	No	19/08/24	250981	605587	0	0	1	2.9
DCB14	Cumnock Burn, D/S pennyvennie discharge	No	19/08/24	249938	606824	0	0	1.7	0.9
DMW8	Muck water D/S culvert	Yes	06/09/24	251013	602152	112.3	12.2	107.4	1.2
DBO6	Brockloch	Yes	22/07/24	232301	611856	6	0	40.6	0
DBO7	Brockloch wet woodland	Yes	22/07/24	232296	611976	15.5	1.7	31	0
DBO8	Brockloch wet woodland	Yes	23/07/24	232324	612088	30.6	0	12.5	2.8

In 2024 only 5 out of 10 quantitative survey sites showed salmon presence (DCU2, DMW8, DBO6, DBO7 and DBO8). The five sites which didn't have a salmon recorded at them are beyond the natural reach of salmon and the five sites that are accessible showed very encouraging densities of fish. The Brockloch Burn has shown excellent recovery since the fencing in 2023 and 2024 was installed.

Trout fry numbers at DMW5 showed a severe decline, with a drop from 'good' 24.9 fry per 100m² in 2023 to 'very poor' 0.9 fry per 100m² in 2024. Trout parr numbers dropped from 'excellent' 11.6 parr per 100m² to 'moderate' 5.0 parr per 100m². The moderate numbers of trout parr are close to average for this site but the decrease in fry numbers is concerning and indicates that there was poor spawning or spawning success over the winter of 2023/2024. This site is above a culvert circa 60m in length that many fish will struggle to negotiate, this is why naturally produced salmon are never recorded beyond the culvert. The culvert also hampers the repopulation of an isolated site such as this.

In 2024, 28.3 salmon fry per 100m² and 21.8 trout fry per 100m² were recorded at DCU2 on the Culroy Burn. No salmon parr were present at the time of surveying nor were any trout parr. Parr numbers have historically been poor at this site with the habitat being more suited for fry. The Board and Trust have invested and carried out a lot of work in fencing and green engineering over the last nine years and this has led to major improvements in water and instream habitat quality. Whilst this site is more suited to fry there are deeper refuge pools nearby that should suit salmon parr more.

At site DCB10, trout fry numbers rose from 'poor' to 'moderate' with fry increasing from 2.9 fry per 100m² to 28.8 fry per 100m² and parr improved from 2.9 parr per 100m² to 3.9 parr per 100m². These results are encouraging and indicate good spawning over the winter of 2023/2024.

No fish were recorded in the Linn Water (DCLN2) in 2024 or 2023. A single trout parr was recorded in the Linn Water in 2022. The population of brown trout here is low with only occasional records of fish being present at this site.

In 2024, the numbers of trout at site DMD3 on the Mossdale Burn showed severe declines with fry numbers dropping from 'good' 22.1 fry per 100m² to 'very poor' 0.9 fry per 100m². Whilst this site has been subject to previous fluctuations in the numbers of fry, 2024 represents a significant decline. It is difficult to give a reason for this decline, as there were still fish present and the invertebrate results did not record a similar decline. As such it is difficult to attribute this reduction in fish population to a pollution event. The declines are similar to the Muck Water site. Both are upstream of impassable barriers and seem to have suffered from poor spawning years although the Muck Water has relatively stable parr numbers and the Mossdale site has seen quite a decline in parr numbers in 2024. This site has been subject to natural fluctuations in previous years and the fluctuations in parr numbers may be due to trout migrating out of Corbie Craigs dam into the burn in preparation for spawning.

Site DCB14 is on the Cummock Burn and has consistently produced poor or very poor numbers of trout fry and parr since the start of this monitoring programme.

At site DMW8 juvenile salmon numbers have remained relatively consistent. Atlantic salmon fry numbers slightly dropped from 137.2 per 100m² in 2023 to 112.3 per 100m² in 2024, however numbers remained within the excellent classification parameters. Salmon parr numbers dropped from 25.1 per 100m² and a classification of excellent in 2023, to 12.2 per 100m² and a classification of good in 2024. Trout fry numbers increased from 31.7 per 100m² in 2023 up to 107.4 per 100m² in 2024. Trout parr numbers have dropped four classifications since the baseline surveys. In 2024, only a minimum density estimates of 1.2 were produced due to the low numbers recorded. This site sits below an impassable culvert and as such salmon cannot ascend the burn any further, this may lead to an artificially high number of fry at this site. However, the habitat and water quality here are excellent and the high numbers of salmon fry are very encouraging to record.

Sites DBO6, DBO7 and DBO8 at the Brockloch Burn in the restoration project area were all surveyed for the first time in 2024 and therefore have no previous data to compare to. DBO6 showed poor salmon fry numbers but excellent trout fry numbers. No trout or salmon parr were recorded here, however the habitat is far better suited to fry than parr at this site. DBO7 had good salmon fry numbers and excellent trout fry numbers. Salmon parr were also present but in very poor numbers. DBO8 had excellent salmon fry numbers and moderate trout fry numbers. Trout parr were also present but in very poor numbers. We would expect that the majority of parr drop out of this watercourse into the Chapelton Burn and then the mainstem River Doon to find more optimal habitat.

The overall quality of the habitat within the Brockloch Burn has improved enormously since the fencing has been erected and as the silt inputs have largely been eradicated we expect the numbers of juvenile trout and salmon produced by the burn should increase this is dependant upon fish returning to the burn to spawn.

5. Summary and Conclusions

- Timed results cannot be accurately compared between rivers and care must be taken when comparing between sites in the same river. Fry numbers in 2024 have seen a slight improvement across all catchments, including the Doon, where the mean fry per minute results of **15.2** is higher than the 10 year average of **13.2**.
- Juvenile production in the upper catchment appears again to be excellent and it is encouraging to see continuity in the numbers these areas produce.
- Production in the lower catchment, although still less than that of the upper catchment, has significantly improved on 2023 and the difference in productivity between upper and lower catchments is now less pronounced than the previous 3 years. Spawning in the Torr area and at Monkwood Mill has been markedly better over winter 2023 than recent years and suggests a good number of returning fish as the majority of the survey sites have above average levels of salmon fry present.
- Similarly to 2023, the Muck Water at site DMW8 downstream of the culvert produced both excellent salmon and trout fry numbers. It was the most productive fry site by a considerable margin. Though both salmon and trout parr were also present at this site, their abundance has dropped from 'good' to 'moderate' for salmon and 'moderate' to 'very poor' for trout. Other sites on the Muck water continue to show good trout densities suggesting good salmonid spawning habitat is available.
- Unfortunately, due to a lack of available resources, the Scottish Government did not run the National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) in 2024 and there are no plans to run the programme in 2025.
- Many of the survey sites for windfarm developments are outwith the range that salmon can access which is why there are many sites showing salmon as being absent. At the sites where salmon are present the numbers are in the good to excellent range which is very encouraging.
- A pollution incident was reported from the south side of the North Kyle site on the 15th and 16th of February 2024. The Cummock Burn and its tributaries as well as the Muck Water and the River Doon were affected. Monitoring site DCB14 is upstream of where the pollution entered the Cummock burn. As such, it has been recommended that additional monitoring sites are added below where the pollution entered the Cummock Burn in order to monitor the potential impacts and recovery of these sites.
- In December ART recorded and reported severe silt pollution on the Purclewan Burn at Dalrymple. We traced it to the entrance of the Springwater Fishery where contractors were building a new bridge and had altered the banks and bed of the burn. This was reported to SEPA. We again observed pollution from this site and witnessed a machine working in the burn. Again, this was reported to SEPA who we understand are acting against those responsible as we think there was no CAR license in place. ART staff have been requested to provide witness statements for this incident.
- The IUCN red list of threatened species reclassified Atlantic salmon as endangered in Great Britain (December 2023), previously salmon were designated as being 'least concern'. Given the conservation status of these fish and the historical and current significance of these watercourses as productive juvenile salmon areas of the River Doon, it is important to carefully monitor all developments within this area.
- Juvenile salmon numbers can be subject to greater fluctuations than trout due to their more complex lifecycle involving an oceanic phase, whereas resident brown trout reside in these watercourses year-round and aren't subject to the same range of environmental variables that Atlantic salmon are. This can

make brown trout a better indicator of water quality issues/variations over the course of a year. Returning numbers of adult salmon can be highly variable as is egg deposition and resulting numbers of fry produced.

- ART monitor macroinvertebrates as these are long term indicators of water quality. High scoring taxons of invertebrates such as stoneflies indicate that water quality is high whereas species such as snails and hoglouse indicate the long-term degradation of water quality. We monitor spring and autumn communities annually for invertebrates across the areas that have the potential to be impacted by developments such as windfarms. The details of these surveys have not been detailed in this report and if anyone is interested in learning more about this please get in touch with the Biologists.

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(h) River Doon River Watch Scheme

Following previous discussions with various parties, the Board agreed to establish a River Watch Scheme with the aim of developing a shared ideal that all proprietors, angling clubs, permit holding anglers and others who use and enjoy the River Doon and its surroundings have a shared collective interest in acting as River Watchers in protecting wild salmon and other fauna.

To achieve this, a four pronged strategy has been identified and implemented:-

1. Targeted visible patrol by a self-employed River Patrol Coordinator of known poaching hotspots in the key months of August, September, October, November, December, January and February:

What CAN do	What CANNOT do
Carry out patrols of the river	
Approach persons checking permits etc	
Ask them to leave, if fishing illegally etc	Put them off the river
Report illicit activity to the Police	Detain/lay hands on persons
Work with Police - planned operations	Confiscate fishing equipment
Liase with River Watcher Coordinator	
Liase with Clerk to Board	
Give witness evidence, if called by PF	

2. Establishing a dedicated, publicly available phone number **(07469 819 345)** and dedicated email address - **RiverDoon.RiverWatch@gmail.com** - available throughout the year, through which interested parties (River Watchers) can pass on information and intelligence in respect of suspected poaching to a nominated self-employed River Watcher Coordinator, who will liaise with the River Patrol Coordinator, Police Scotland and the Clerk to the Board.
3. Ongoing liaison with the local Wildlife Crime Police Officer to develop intelligence on known and suspected illegal poaching and to inform local policing strategy and Wildlife Crime initiatives to address this.
4. Publicity of River Watch Scheme:
 - Letters to all Riparian Owners, Tenants, clubs and associations
 - River Doon DSFB Website
 - Attendance at Drumgrange & Keirs Salmon Fishing Competition
 - Warning Posters posted throughout the catchment area of the River Doon
 - Facebook by East Ayrshire Councillor, Drew Filson on 25 September 2022
 - Facebook by *Ayrshire Daily News* on 18 October 2022
 - *Ayr Advertiser* on 19 October 2022
 - *Daily Record* on 21 October 2022
 - *Cumnock Chronicle* on 22 October 2022
 - November 2022 issue of *Alloway & Doonfoot's Going Out*
 - 'Something Fishy' – Article in *Ayrshire Magazine* - January/February 2023 issue

**Martin Donachy, River Doon DSFB Member
& Iain K Clark, Clerk to the Board**



River Watch Scheme Leaflet



The River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board and Police Scotland have combined forces in a new initiative – **the River Doon River Watch Scheme** – to combat illegal salmon poaching and other wildlife crime. The River Doon is home not only to the magnificent wild Atlantic Salmon, but also the rare Freshwater Mussel, bird species such as Kingfishers and Dippers, and a reviving Otter population. Our beautiful river is a treasure to be valued by all who live by and enjoy its wonderful wildlife.

In recent years the anglers on the Doon have made a significant contribution to securing future stocks of wild salmon by releasing over 95% of all reported rod-caught salmon back to the river to continue their journey to the spawning grounds.

However, unfortunately illegal poaching continues to pose a threat to these vulnerable salmon stocks.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Call: 07469 819 345

Email: RiverDoon.RiverWatch@gmail.com

Call Police Scotland: 101



Left to right: Martin Donachy (River Doon DSFB Member), Alan McDowall (River Patrol Coordinator), PC Steven Prendergast (Wildlife Crime Officer), Alan Shannon (River Watch Coordinator), Iain K Clark (Clerk to River Doon DSFB)



The River Doon River Watch Scheme aims to enable not just anglers, but all who care about preserving the Salmon for future generations, a way to report any suspicious activity.



left to right: Alan Shannon (River Watch Coordinator), Martin Donachy (River Doon DSFB Member), Alan McDowall (River Patrol Coordinator), PC Steven Prendergast (Wildlife Crime Officer), Iain K Clark (Clerk to River Doon DSFB)

Iain K Clark, Clerk to the River Doon DSFB said:

“As part of its role in managing the protection, enhancement and conservation of Atlantic Salmon, the Board have appointed a River Patrol Coordinator to patrol the River Doon and its tributaries, and a River Watch Coordinator, who will coordinate all reports received through a new confidential 24 hour hotline number and dedicated e-mail address established by the Board. Any suspicious activity reported will be shared with Police Scotland, who will respond. The Board hopes that all communities in the Doon Valley will support this new initiative.”

As Wildlife Crime Officer, PC Steven Prendergast, emphasises, combatting wildlife crime is a key priority for Police Scotland.

All of us are potential River Watchers.

REPORT SUSPICIOUS ACTIVITY

Call: 07469 819 345

Email: RiverDoon.RiverWatch@gmail.com

Call Police Scotland: 101



left to right: Martin Donachy (River Doon DSFB Member), Alan McDowall (River Patrol Coordinator), PC Steven Prendergast (Wildlife Crime Officer), Alan Shannon (River Watch Coordinator), Iain K Clark (Clerk to River Doon DSFB)



Warning Notice in situ



If you see suspicious activity contact:-

07469 819 345

RiverDoon.RiverWatch@gmail.com

Police Scotland:- 101

River Watch Coordinator: Alan Shannon

Clerk to the Board: RiverDoonDSFB@gilsongray.co.uk

Website: www.doonfishing.co.uk



i. Report by the Clerk

Over the year, there were 2 incidents reported through the River Watch Scheme, summarised as follows:

1. In July 2024 there was a report of someone posting a TikTok video purporting to be talking about poaching on the River Doon. This was reported to the Clerk, who in turn liaised with the River Watch Coordinator and Police Scotland.
2. On 3 February 2025, a video was posted on Facebook which appeared to suggest that someone had been fishing for and caught at least one Salmon out of season. Contact was made by a Board Member with the individual's family. The matter was reported to the River Watch Coordinator and discussions are ongoing with Police Scotland.

As a result of these incidents, the Clerk has liaised throughout with the River Watch Coordinator and River Patrol Coordinator, who in turn have maintained regular contact with Police Scotland, including organising additional patrols.

ii. Report by Alan Shannon, River Watch Coordinator

Over the close season I had carried out patrols of the river and the spawning grounds of the upper tributaries. I am happy to report that there was no apparent illegal activities going on. As well as carrying out routine patrols of the river I am also in the process checking our existing signage with a view to renewing / replacing signage.

If any riparian owner wishes any posters for their beat then please get in contact as below:



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I continue to work alongside clubs and the wildlife crime officers from Police Scotland and hope to continue to forge a good working relationship with all involved. Since our last AGM I have been further kitted out with an embroidered polo shirt and body warmer in addition to the windcheater I received at the start of the initiative. Going forward I will be carrying out patrols of the beats at various days / times throughout the season. Should anyone wish discuss any concerns etc then please get in touch with me via the River Doon RiverWatch hotline or email address and I will endeavour to help however best I can.

Finally I'd like to wish all anglers on the river all the best and tight lines for season 2025.

Alan Shannon
River Watch Coordinator



(i) Annual Catch Returns

Summary of Data Collection

Once again, the Board used the Annual Catch Return Form introduced in October 2022. This was in addition to the statutory requirement upon all Riparian Owners to submit the full Rod and Catch Return Form to Marine Scotland.

Number of Beats

In total we have 49 beats on the River Doon. 4 of the beats (Nos 010, 020, 0270, and 0440) do not currently make returns. 2 of those do not need to make returns, as they relate to the former coastal netting station (010) and the mouth of the river (020). 1 is vacant (0270); and 1 is disputed (0440).

Number of Annual Catch Returns

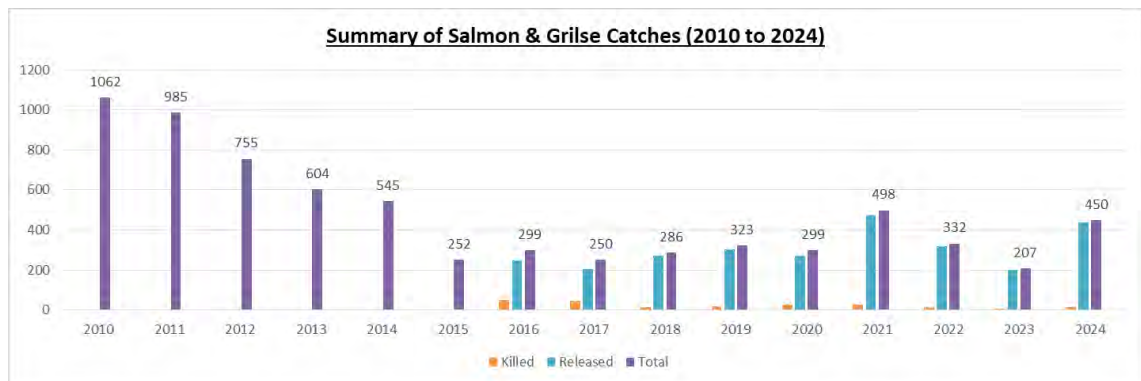
Some beats report collectively, or are grouped together.

We were therefore expecting Returns from 45 beats, in 36 Annual Catch Returns this year.

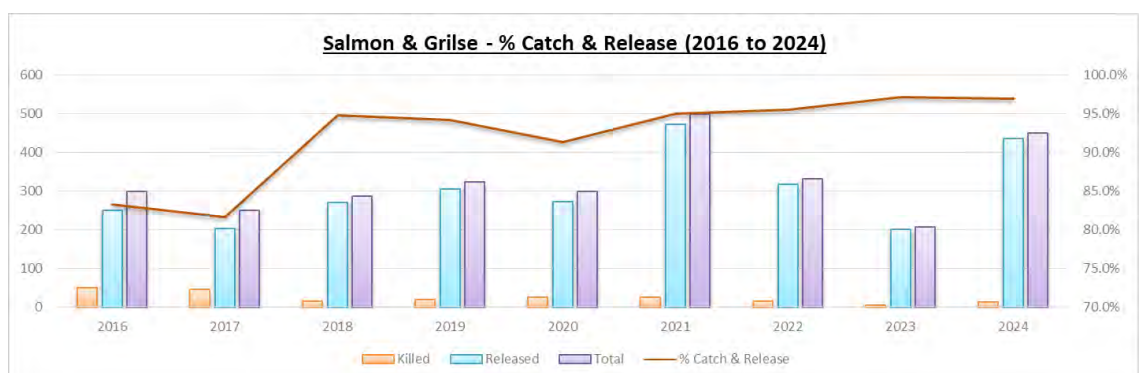
After Reminders were sent for outstanding Annual Catch Returns on 21 November and 14 March 2025, we received 29 out of 36 expected Annual Catch Returns (80.6%).

Salmon Caught, Released and Killed

In term of the numbers of Salmon caught, 450 salmon were reported as caught.



436 out of 450 Salmon caught were released, with 14 killed. That is 96.9% Catch and Release.





Salmon Rod Effort

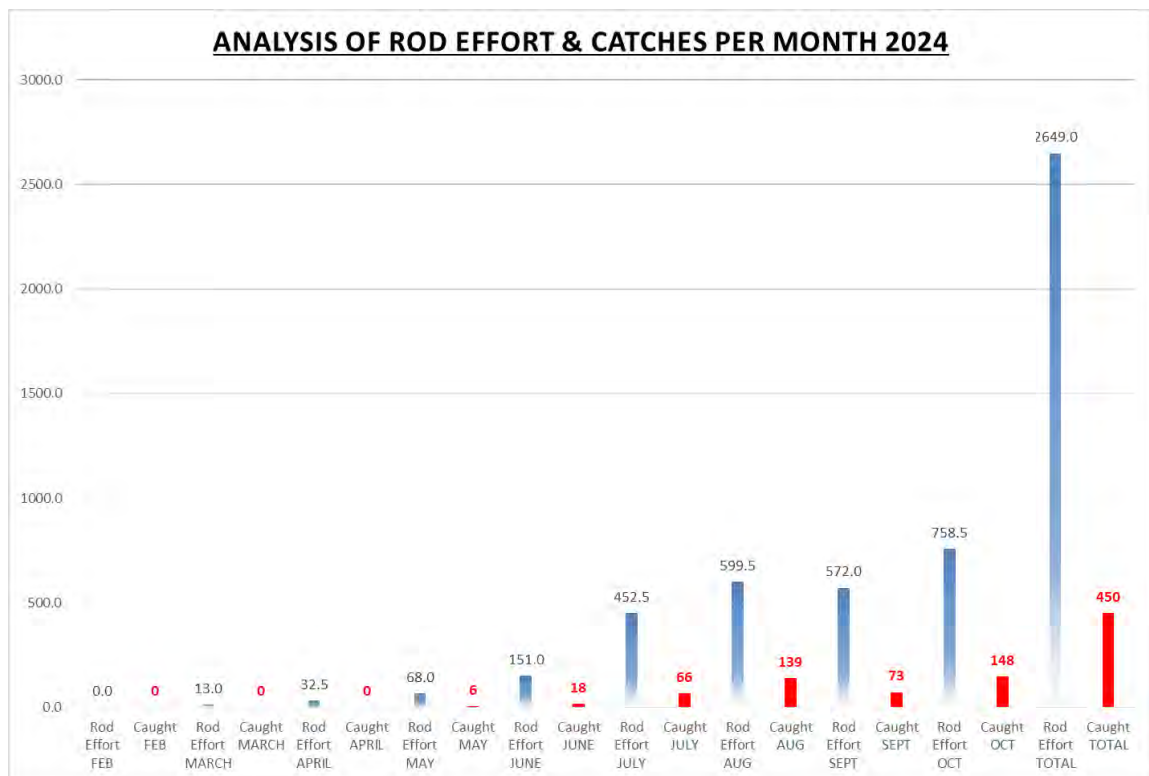
In terms of Salmon Rod Effort, 33 out of the 36 Annual Catch Returns received (91.67%) reported on Rod Effort. This is an increase in those reporting Rod Effort from the previous year (89%).

7 of those reporting on Rod Effort (21% of those reporting) reporting nil Rod Effort. This is reduced slightly from 9 (25%) the previous year.

In terms of Rod Effort Days, the total sum reported was 2649 days, which is a significant jump from the previous year (889 days), some of which increase is considered to be due to increased recording of Rod Effort. However, as we have only been recording Rod Effort for the last 3 years, it is early days to start drawing too many conclusions from such data.

Monthly Salmon Rod Effort and Salmon Caught

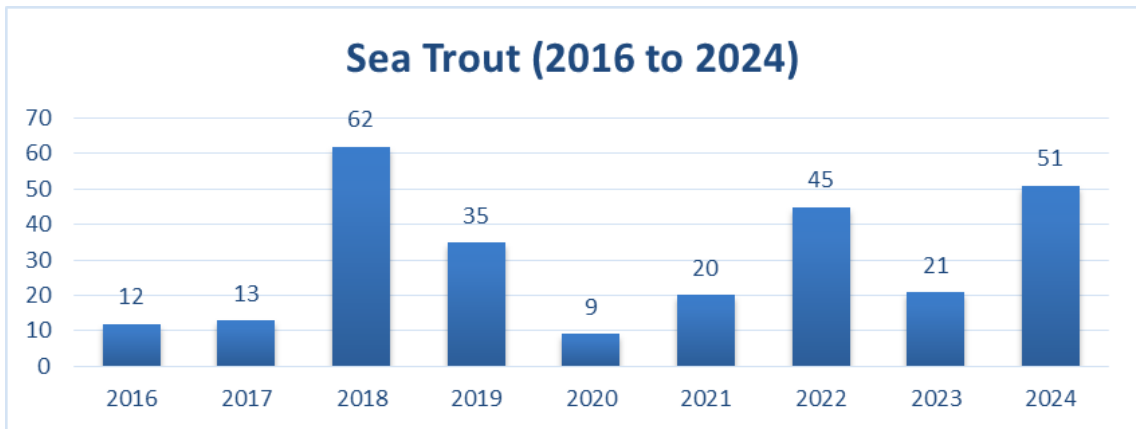
Monthly Salmon Rod Effort was reported from February to October, increasing to the end of the season, with Salmon being caught from May to October, increasing as the season progressed, with the last four months of the season being the most successful (but also associated with significantly higher Rod Effort in those months, as has traditionally been the case on the river).





Sea Trout Numbers

The number of Sea Trout reported as caught was 51, compared to 21 in 2023, 45 in 2022, 20 in 2021 and 9 in 2020.



Conclusion and Comparison to Previous Years

The total numbers of salmon caught at 450 are a significant improvement on the previous numbers of 207 in 2023 and 332 in 2022, but not quite as high as the recent height of 498 salmon caught in 2021. It will be interesting to see what the 2025/2026 Salmon season brings.

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	
Salmon & Grilse	Released	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	249	204	271	304	273	473	317	201	436	
	Killed	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	50	46	15	19	26	25	15	6	14	
	Total	1062	985	755	604	545	252	299	250	286	323	299	498	332	207	450
	% Catch & Release	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	83.3%	81.6%	94.8%	94.1%	91.3%	95.0%	95.5%	97.1%	96.9%
Sea Trout	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	12	13	62	35	9	20	45	21	51	

Iain K Clark
Clerk to the Board



(j) Audited Statement of Accounts

The Audited Statement of Accounts to 31 December 2024 are produced here, for approval at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on 27 March 2025.

RIVER DOON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024



REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINERS

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE RIVER DOON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

We have examined the financial statements on pages 2 to 4.

Respective responsibilities of Members and examiner

The Trusts' members consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1)(a) to (c) of the 2006 Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the financial statements as required under section 44(1)(c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the trust and a comparison of the financial statements presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements and seeks explanations from the members concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the financial statements.

Independent examiner's statement

In connection with my examination, no other matter except that referred to in the previous paragraph has come to my attention:

- (a) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
- (i) to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations; and
 - (ii) to prepare financial statements which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations;

have not been met or

- (b) to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Azets
3 Wellington Square
Ayr
KA7 1EN

14 March 2025

**RIVER DOON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD****INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT****FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024**

	Year to 31.12.24	Year to 31.12.23
	£	£
INCOME		
Assessments	19,096	18,141
Bank and building society interest	<u>854</u>	<u>1,077</u>
	<u>19,950</u>	<u>19,218</u>
EXPENDITURE		
Fisheries Management Scotland	759	723
Ayrshire Rivers Trust annual contribution	6,789	6,789
Clerk's fee (incl. stationery and postage)	5,700	5,440
Accountancy fee	660	642
River Watch Scheme	648	875
Contribution to Netherton Project	1,300	-
Debts Written Off	-	1,553
Donation – WildFish Conservation	1,000	-
Sundry	526	64
Taxation	<u>162</u>	<u>205</u>
	<u>17,544</u>	<u>16,291</u>
Surplus/(Deficit) for year	2,406	2,927
Surplus brought forward	<u>29,884</u>	<u>26,957</u>
Surplus carried forward	<u>32,290</u>	<u>29,884</u>



RIVER DOON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

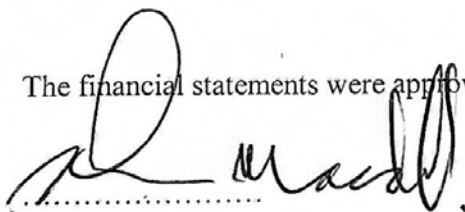
STATEMENT OF FUNDS ON HAND

AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2024

	As at 31.12.24	As at 31.12.23
	£	£
ASSETS		
Gilson Gray Deposit account	33,979	31,123
Gilson Gray Main account	148	-
Debtors – unpaid assessments	<u>1,148</u>	<u>-</u>
	35,257	31,123
LIABILITIES		
Accruals	(2,300)	(882)
Deferred Income	(148)	-
Tax payable	<u>(519)</u>	<u>(357)</u>
	<u>32,290</u>	<u>29,884</u>
Retained surplus	<u>32,290</u>	<u>29,884</u>

Represented by:

The financial statements were approved by the Board on 27 March 2025.


.....
Chairman



RIVER DOON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2024

1. ACCOUNTING POLICIES

- Except to the extent noted below, the financial statements include cash income and expenditure received and paid during the period.
- Liabilities and income outstanding at 31 December 2024 have been incorporated in the Financial Statements.



6. Future Work of the Board

(a) Updated Budget

The Board intends to carry out further work over the balance of 2025 and going forwards. A Draft of the Budget was presented and discussed at the Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on 27 March 2025, and which has now been updated as follows:

BALANCE OF FUNDS HELD AT 27 MARCH 2025 **£32,708.23**

Less Agreed/Anticipated Regular Expenditure to 31 December 2025

Regular Annual Expenditure

Information Commissioner's Office – Annual ICO Certificate Fee	- £	40.00
Azets – Fee for preparation of Annual Accounts and Tax Return	- £	660.00
Fisheries Management Scotland – Annual Membership Fee	- £	797.00
Payment to HMRC re Corporation Tax	- £	162.26
Ayrshire Rivers Trust - Annual Donation to the Ayrshire Rivers Trust * *Subject to expected increase in RPI in June 2025	- £	6,789.20
Gilson Gray LLP – Fees for Clerk to the Board to 31 December	- £	6,000.00
River Watch Scheme – River Patrol Coordinators	- £	700.00
River Watch Scheme – River Watch Coordinator	- £	300.00
ART – Web Hosting to 31 December (+ Domain renewal costs TBC)	- £	<u>150.00</u>
Sub-Total of Regular Annual Expenditure	- £	15,598.46

Ad Hoc/Additional Expenditure already approved

Allocation for Fencing Initiative already committed not yet billed	- £	10,000.00
Gilson Gray LLP – Additional Advice (estimated)	- £	1,200.00

Project Work agreed so far (subject to funding) for 2025/2026:

Japanese Knotweed Treatment	- £	2,000.00
Waterside Green Engineering	- £	3,000.00
Fencing – Drumgrange Burn (£2,500 p.a. to 2027)	- £	2,500.00
Treeplanting (subject to £1,000 Grant Funding)	- £	500.00
Donation to Wild Fish	- £	1,000.00
Sub-Total of Ad Hoc/Additional Expenditure 2025/2026	- £	9,000.00



Sub-Total of Ad Hoc/Additional Expenditure to 31 December 2025 - **£20,200.00**

TOTAL ANTICIPATED EXPENDITURE TO 31 DECEMBER 2025 - **£35,798.46**

PLUS ANTICIPATED INCOME TO 31 DECEMBER 2025

Agreed Fishery Assessment Rates for 2025/2026

2025/2026 River Value £47,740.00 Rate: 40p Anticipated Income £19,096.00
(assumes full recovery)

LESS

SHORTFALL in Current Funds re Anticipated Expenditure - £ 3,093.23

Agreed Minimum Retention for Reserves - **£10,000.00**

Sub-Total of Allocated Funds - **£13,093.47**

NET FUTURE BALANCE FOR AD HOC/ADDITIONAL EXPENDITURE: **£6,002.77**

Standing the reliance each year on full recovery of all Fishery Assessments, (which is the main source of income for the Board, supplemented at times by grant funding), and the extent of the Regular Expenditure, and desire to continue to carry out Project Work as part of Ad Hoc/Additional Expenditure, rather than adding a regular donation to WildFish as part of the Regular Expenditure of the Board, the Board agreed to review such donations annually.

This will be done in accordance with our usual budgetary cycle (normally tabled for discussion at a Meeting of the Board in around February, before the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors each year).

Iain K Clark
Clerk to the Board





(b) Proposed Works for Discussion/Agreement



Annual Fee:

£6789.20 + RPI to be assessed in June when annual donation is due.

Japanese knotweed control:

Good progress was made last year using stem injection and we recommend continuation of this strategy for 2025 and beyond until the entire catchment has been visited. Of course, this will take several years but the problem will be reducing each year along with the risk of spread.

We recommend the Board allocates **£2000** towards this strategy for 2025.

Waterside Green Engineering and Wild Fisheries Fund Match Funding:

We are looking to secure Wild Fisheries Fund grant funding for green engineering through the Patna to Dalmellington area. We have previously been very successful with this fund and will look to build a project to secure further funding for the catchment in 2025.

We suggest a contribution of £3000 towards green engineering here would be very worthwhile. We have identified a site that is of immediate concern where we would like to act quickly. We would undertake this work to the value of **£3000** and use this as match funding for a larger project. We have spoken to representatives of Drumgrange and Keirs Angling Club who are very willing to support and learn from this work.

Drumgrange Burn Fencing

For 2025/2026, ART propose that the Drumgrange Burn is fenced upstream of the Farm and while the landowner is accepting of the benefits of this, he is also concerned about how this will change his management of livestock and access to hill ground. This makes securing agreements difficult.

One possible solution would be to construct a bridge prior to fencing the burn. This leads to increased costs due to the width of the burn at this point. The width has increased due entirely to grazing pressures however, restoring the burn to more natural scale would require machine works and materials and this inevitably increases the cost. It may also mean a SEPA Simple Engineering License is required.

We continue to discuss the options with this landowner – if we secure green engineering funding then this landowner would benefit from work on his ground which may aid us in securing his fencing agreement. We estimate this fencing would cost approximately £10,000 and consequently a DSFB contribution of **£5000**.

2024 Fencing Costs

We are pressing the fencing contractors to submit final bills to us for the Brockloch and Netherton Fencing undertaken in 2024. We estimate that this will cost the Board (as previously agreed) **£7,100** and ART's management fee (15% of total cost) will be approximately **£2100**. **Approximate total value: £9,200** (claimed through **2024 budget**).

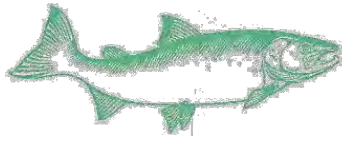
Mossdale Burn Fencing and Tree Planting.

We are working to secure landowner agreements to allow fencing and native tree planting on the Mossdale and potentially the Trough Burn. This would be work to carry out in 2026 if we can gain the necessary agreement

Stuart Brabbs, Trust Manager



7. Acknowledgements



RIVER DOON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

Thanks the following for their support in its work:



Ayrshire Rivers Trust

working to improve Ayrshire's rivers and lochs

Stuart Brabbs, Trust Manager
Struan Candlish, Fisheries Biologist

Jennifer Garland, Office Manager
Carolyn Bruce, Biologist

Office Address:

Ayrshire Rivers Trust
2 Crosshill Cottage
Mauchline
KA5 5HJ

Email: info@ayrshirerivertrust.org

Telephone: 01290 518130

Website: www.ayrshirerivertrust.org
www.facebook.com/AyrshireRiversTrust
www.youtube.com/user/ayrshirerivertrust

Funders and partners:

- All River Doon District Salmon Proprietors and Tenants (48 Fisheries)
- Fishery Managers, Ghillies, Club and Association Committee Members
- Fisheries Management Scotland
- Accountants: Azets, Ayr
- Solicitors: Gilson Gray LLP, Glasgow
- Alan Shannon, River Watch Coordinator and River Watch Patrol Coordinator
- All the River Watchers under the River Watch Scheme
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency
- South Ayrshire Council
- Ayr Joint Valuation Board
- Peter Scanlan, Assistant to the Clerk
- The many landowners who allow access and work to be undertaken
- And other volunteers who give up their time to support our efforts

Clerk to the Board: Iain K Clark, LLB (Hons), Dip LP, NP
c/o Gilson Gray LLP, 160 West George Street, Glasgow G2 2HQ

Direct: +44 (0)141 530 2025 **Mobile:** +44 (0)7908 022 304

Email: RiverDoonDSFB@gilsongray.co.uk

Website: www.doonfishing.co.uk