

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

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**MINUTES**

*of*

**Meeting of River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board:  
Tuesday 29 June 2021 at 6pm, by Zoom**

DUE TO COVID-19 CONSTRAINTS, THIS MEETING WAS HELD BY ZOOM IN PRIVATE

**1. Present:**

<u>Name:</u>	<u>Organisation (Position):</u>
Alan Macdonald	Doonside Estate (Chairman)
Iain K Clark	Clerk to the Board
Stuart Brabbs	Ayrshire Rivers Trust
Iain Campbell	Smithston Fishing Club
David Cosh	Doonfoot Fishings
Lawrence Dalgleish	Rozelle
Martin Donachy	Woodlands
Carlos Van Heddegem	Holms Fishing
Peter Kennedy	Doonholm House
Peter Kennerley	Auchendrane House

**2. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Carlos van Heddegem.

**3. Approval of Minutes of the Last Meeting**

Approval of the Minutes of the last meeting on 24 March 2021 was proposed by Peter Kennerley and seconded by Iain Campbell; and with no revisions or opposing motion, the Minutes were approved.

**4. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting**

**(a) Fisheries Management Scotland Annual Review**

This Review was circulated in advance of the Meeting

No other comments were made thereon by the Board.

**(b) Updated Code of Practice, GS Form and Poster from FMS**

Revised Drafts had been prepared by the Clerk and circulated before the meeting. The Board approved the Drafts and (subject to a couple of technical points to be clarified in liaison between the Clerk and Stuart Brabbs of Ayrshire Rivers Trust

(ART)) agreed the Revised Code of Practice was to be issued to all Riparian Owners.

In approving this Revised Code of Practice, the Board placed emphasis on the fact that it is now urging Anglers to adopt a 100% catch-and-release culture and never to kill any fish which they do not require, with the key aim being to conserve our fish stocks for now and the future.

Stuart Brabbs noted that this was despite the fact that the River Doon is a Category 2 River, and agreed that this is a responsible approach for the Board to take.

## **5. Report from Ayrshire Rivers Trust**

A Report which had been prepared and circulated prior to the meeting was presented by Stuart Brabbs of ART.

It was noted that there were a high percentage of smolts with bottom jaw deformities – possibly linked to water temperature in hatchery.

Reference was made to the ‘impassable’ waterfall in the Cummock Burn due to a large boulder at the top of the falls near Pennyvennie Farm. There is an intention at some point in the summer, dependent on the flow heights, to try and remove the offending boulder. Lawrence Dalglish intends to assist.

It was noted that the growth rate in smolts was exceptional. Some were huge (170 to 180mm) and this is likely due to slight enrichment in our waters, so if we can get fish up there, this could be beneficial for the river. Also, downstream, quite a good number of par have been observed.

As regards the Draft Fisheries Management Plan, ART will circulate to new members of the Board and then a revised one to the whole Board, when they have the updated Scottish Government Pressures Mapping Tool, currently awaited.

Scotland’s Angling National Development Strategy (SANDS) was discussed. This is a new way to engage with youths. There is a feeling it is an uphill task, but they have set up a steering group. ART have a representative on the Group. The Nith has a youth project. The success of this project will rely on volunteers becoming involved.

Invasive Species Control – an update was given and emphasis placed on dealing professionally with giant hogweed, which has been noted in the Ayr Catchment and also in the lower Doon. If anyone sees it flowering, then inform ART. It was noted there was one location on the Ayr bypass, at the Pow Burn, near the airport. Apparently there is a lack of funding for this or for Himalayan Balsam removal, although the latter can be removed safely by anyone – and all are encouraged to do so.

Regarding Japanese Knotweed, they only stem inject now and can tackle over time, unless someone has got a pressing problem.

Himalayan Balsam – need landowners to help with this. ART are flat out trying to police 4 Boards and the amount of time it takes to keep in check. The biggest problem is re

Chapelton Burn. It is pretty well-controlled, but downstream of that location is problematic. There has also been an outbreak at Dalmellington. They require support from landowners on the beats.

There is a brochure that ART have – which lists all three main invasive plants and shows pictures of them – and this will be sent to the Clerk to be included in the pack of documents being sent to Riparian Owners with the Revised Code of Practice.

As regards the decommissioning of the N route, this is going through final monitoring this year.

Pylon Routes – ART have already done two fish rescues this year. It was noted that, if they are not done correctly by contractors, they can lose quite a number of juvenile fish (it has mainly been trout they have been dealing with, but this is just as important for the river).

There were some discussions about Windfarms generally and ART will keep monitoring and will support any water related work associated with these developments.

Community Councils – Stuart Brabbs attended a recent meeting of the 9 local Community Councils on behalf of the Board, who are expecting to be the beneficiaries of £40M investment. He was the only person there representing environmental interests. There was an indication that the Councils were keen on eco tourism e.g. Loch Doon re Ospreys – there maybe criteria they have to meet.

Craigengillan – there have been discussions with Mark Gibson – who has a particular interest in a freshwater pearl mussels project. If the Board is not using the hatchery, there is the possibility of exploring using some of the hatchery for that. They have done that in Ireland and in Kielder Reservoir.

Maybole Bypass - on 9 June 2021, the Clerk received a notification from Mhor Environmental that they were about to undertake a fish rescue within the Doon catchment (Brockloch Burn near Maybole) associated to culvert works on the Maybole Bypass project. Stuart Brabbs of ART was duly involved and approved the relocation and said he would report in due course to the Board. It looks like they are about to re-divert the burn again.

Introgression monitoring – see below re MOWI Scotland

National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland (NEPS) – ART will be involved in this programme, and will report in due course.

National Scale Sampling Programme – there are no details yet of this Programme – but we will be asking anglers to take scale samples to address concerns, amongst a number of areas, about introgression with escaped salmon etc.

## **6. Correspondence/Report from Clerk**

In addition to the regular correspondence received from Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS), the following correspondence was received and sent:

(a) In May 2021, ART and David Cosh (on behalf of the Board) submitted Objections to the three CAR licence applications for Dawnfresh's proposed trout farms in the inner Clyde out for consultation via the SEPA website

(b) Response to SEPA Consultation 3<sup>rd</sup> River Basin Management Plan

On Friday 25 June 2021 a Response was submitted on behalf of the Board by the Clerk to this SEPA Consultation, based primarily on the Response prepared by Stuart Brabbs of ART, whose considerable input was appreciated; and with input from Alan MacDonald and Stuart Donachy.

(c) Response to SEPA Consultation on Scottish Salmon Company Ltd North Arran CAR – due 5 July 2021

The Board agreed that it wished the Clerk (liaising with ART and other Board Members) to submit a response to this Consultation.

(d) Fisheries enforcement: Launch of poaching phase of Operation Wingspan (commencing 1 July 2021)

Iain Campbell had been liaising with Police Scotland and with the local officers, Their contact details are to be submitted by the Clerk to Riparian owners. The police now have two quad bikes, which should make access easier.

There was a discussion about the fact that any Water Bailiffs require to be properly trained and Warrants issued to empower them to act. Stuart Brabbs explained that advice can be given by Brian Davidson at FMS. This issue remains that there is a lack of qualified Water Bailiffs on the River Doon. The only person who is known to be active is at the top of the River Doon – Bob Brown, who covers the Dalrymple area. The costs of Bailiffs were removed about two years ago and so effectively there is no enforcement capacity. It was noted that it is difficult to get volunteer Bailiffs, because of the formal training required. We really need someone from within the Board to champion this, help identify relevant people, arrange the online training and liaise with relevant people. Stuart Brabbs agreed to have a word with Brian Davidson at FMS and Martin Donachy indicated he would be willing to look into what could be done to try and encourage involvement.

## **7. Proposed Beaver Release: Craigengillan Estate, Dalmellington**

Everyone in the Board was extremely concerned about the proposed release of beavers on the Craigengillan Estate. However, Stuart Brabbs of ART spoke with Mark Gibson about those concerns and he has now written to Dr Campbell Palmer to indicate that he will not be proceeding with it.

## **8. Marine Scotland Stocking Policy/Possible Stocking on River Doon?**

Articles had previously been circulated by Martin Donachy and were included in the Board Pack for the meeting.

The Board agreed that it would not be stocking at the moment, as we do not believe there is any appetite to progress with same. Also, it is noted that we would unlikely secure a Licence to proceed with stocking. Stuart Brabbs referenced the Article by Kyle Young – and is a huge supporter of his professional views and firmly believes what he has said (about the dangers of stocking and affecting the genetics of wild salmon) is correct.

#### **9. Missing Salmon Alliance Workshop: 22 June 2021**

A short verbal report was given by the Clerk, who attended the Missing Salmon Alliance (“MSA”) Workshop, representing the Board and to find out more about the work of the MSA and the partner organisations.

Iain Clark and Stuart Brabbs were the only west coast representatives. The view was taken that it is essential we ‘fight for our corner’ as there is research value for Ayrshire to be included in matters affecting the west coast.

#### **10. Funding Opportunity for River Barrier Removals in Greater Europe**

On 9 June 2021, the Clerk had received notification through FMS of a funding opportunity relating to river barrier removals.

There is currently no evidence of any major barriers which prevent migration; and nothing which would meet the criteria required for the funding, other than one barrier in the Netherton Burn and the view was taken that the Board would be wasting our time applying for funding.

#### **11. SANDS (Scottish National Angling Development Strategy)**

Already discussed above.

#### **12. National Electrofishing Programme for Scotland**

Already discussed above. It was noted this feeds into conservation. ART are sent coordinates to sample. If they can’t find a suitable habitat at those coordinates, they have to ask for a replacement sample site

#### **13. Proposal by Scottish Assessors’ Association (SAA) to publish valuations of Fishing Rights on public portal**

The Board did not oppose the proposal, recognizing that such information would be useful for the public to know. It was agreed the Clerk would communicate no opposition to this proposal.

#### **14. Farmed Salmon – Possible Action Against MOWI**

The Clerk had spoken at length with representatives of FMS. MOWI have already contributed approximately £200k to address matters. It is apparent from the Report now published that the farmed salmon were spread across all the affected areas in the west coast.

Stuart Brabbs explained that the issue of historic introgression + hatchery introgression is recognised as being very difficult. There are real technical science matters which need to be worked out. This affects the Clyde + Argyllshire rivers – one of the first of those is to prove whether the farmed salmon will survive even to breed.

It is also noted that there is a fund to which MOWI is contributing which will provide funding to projects on an annual basis, so the perceived wisdom from FMS is that we are more likely to gain funds to benefit fisheries affected by working with MOWI. The Board also noted the Clerk's recommendation to keep liaising with FMS on this and other issues.

Board Clerks have been requested by FMS to request all Riparian Owners to report catches of Farmed Salmon and Pink Salmon, as well as those with Red Skin Disease – this request will be included in the pack to be circulated to Riparian Owners.

#### **15. Collection of Catch Returns / rates**

David Cosh (who is the Reporter of Catch Returns for the Board) proposed to try and streamline the process of collecting data from Riparian Owners both for the Board and for Marine Scotland on an annual basis

The Board agreed the idea is to try and align the two questionnaires more closely and the Clerk recommended that we endeavour to do so electronically, where possible. The idea is for the process to be as simple as possible, to ensure better responses from Riparian Owners.

David Cosh and the Clerk agreed to liaise.

#### **16. Any Other Business**

David Cosh raised the issue of previous problems with groups of youths on the river. He received two good responses from Councillors, and then one followed up (Siobahn Brown). When there was bad weather, there was less of an issue. When the weather improved in April and May, there were groups of youths. It was noted that the police have attended on numerous occasions – on dialling 101, the average response time has been 10-20 mins. The Board agreed to keep monitoring the situation and the Clerk will issue the contact details for the two police officers to all Riparian Owners.

Project at Dam Park – on the gable end of building ART installed a sim accessible security camera, which was quite cheap. It was basically the cost of the camera and a sim card monthly data package. This could also be put in the trees where there is a problem area to monitor it. The Clerk pointed out that, due to Data Protection (formerly GDPR) concerns, if such cameras were put up, notices would require to be posted.

Peter Kennedy indicated that he would like to retire from the Board. He had been Chairman of the Board for a long, long time. Alan Macdonald, on behalf of the Board, thanked Peter for his service and the Board wished him all the best in his retirement.

Iain Campbell asked a question regarding a severe algae bloom in the Clyde and whether we were concerned about this possibly affecting the River Doon. Stuart Brabbs indicated that we did not have an answer on that at present, but he would discourage any organisation from trying to treat this – they are waiting on SEPA dealing.

It was noted that there were some woodland works being undertaken at Nether Auchendrane. Whilst it was noted that the woodland owners had the right to do so, they must always carry out such works in such a way so that they do not impact water courses. If there were any problems identified, please let Stuart Brabbs know. In short, as long as the contractors follow the guidance, there shouldn't be a problem.

David Cosh noted that a diseased fish had been identified in the Mount Charles pool. Stuart Brabbs confirmed there had been a lot of diseased fish in the River Ayr at the moment, because we have had an extremely dry month. The warm water encourages fungal growth. The advice is to keep such fish in the net and don't touch the fish. This appears to be happening on a number of beats on other rivers.

There was a discussion about requesting a further freshet from Loch Doon. Stuart Brabbs and the Clerk to the Board to speak tomorrow regarding contacting SEPA.

#### **17. Date of Next Meeting**

It is to be hoped that the next meeting of the Board will be sitting in person. We will circulate possible dates for a meeting in November, when the Catch Returns start coming in.

As regards the AGM, standing the issues which have arisen with COVID, it was agreed to defer the AGM until next April 2022.

As regards the requirement for a Triennial Meeting, that requires a meeting once every three years. The Clerk to clarify the position and report (subsequently confirmed the last Triennial Meeting was held by Conference Call on 30 April 2020, therefore the next Triennial Meeting requires to be held before 30 April 2023).

The meeting concluded at 7:45pm.