



RIVER DOON DISTRICT **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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MINUTES

of

Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors of the River Doon District Salmon Fishery Board:

Thursday 31 March 2022 at 7:30pm
Western House Hotel, 66 Craigie Road, AYR KA8 0HA

1. Present

<i>Alan Macdonald (AM)</i>	<i>Doonside Estate (Chairman)</i>
<i>Iain K Clark (IKC)</i>	<i>Gilson Gray LLP (Clerk to the Board)</i>
<i>Stuart Brabbs (SB)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Mark Colman (Mandatory) (MC)</i>	<i>Smithston Fishings Club</i>
<i>David Cosh (DC)</i>	<i>Doonfoot Fishings, Board Member</i>
<i>Martin Donachy (MD)</i>	<i>Woodlands, Board Member</i>
<i>Carlos Van Heddegem (CVD)</i>	<i>Holms Fishing, Board Member</i>
<i>Peter Kennerley (PK)</i>	<i>Auchendrane House, Board Member</i>
<i>Peter Kennedy (PD)</i>	<i>Doonholm Estate</i>
<i>Bob Beveridge (BB)</i>	<i>Macmanniston</i>
<i>John Squire (JS)</i>	<i>Holms Fishing</i>
<i>Andrea Lake (AL)</i>	<i>Yonderton</i>

2. Apologies

<i>Lawrence Dalglish</i>	<i>Blackhill, Rozelle, Board Member</i>
<i>Michael Clark</i>	<i>4 Mount Charles House</i>

3. Declaration of Members' Interests

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

In addition, the Clerk notified those Qualified Proprietors present of the requirements of the Meetings Protocol. It was agreed that those present would each be noted as representing the interests of their Beat or organisation; and any other additional relevant financial interest should be declared under the 2003 Act. No such additional interests were declared.

4. Approval of Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting and Public Meeting held on 26 April 2019 had been circulated and were approved. Proposed By: David Cosh and Seconded by: Peter Kennerley.

5. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

None.

6. The activities of the Board for the year to 31 December 2021

Peter Kennedy requested that, in future, the Draft Annual Report was circulated with more time for review in advance of the meeting and the Clerk agreed to do so.

(a) Chairman's Report – Alan Macdonald, Chairman (AM)

The Chairman's Report was presented and noted that a couple of corrections were required (spelling of Martin Donachy's name and reference to piscivorous birds).

(b) Report from the Clerk to the Board – Iain K Clark, Clerk to Board (IKC)

Was presented by IKC. No issues arising.

(c) Report on Fishery Assessments

Was presented by IKC. There was a general discussion regarding arrangements for payments, particularly due to falling memberships of fishing clubs etc.

(d) Consultation Responses

Was presented by IKC. No issues arising.

(e) Good Governance

Was presented by IKC. No issues arising.

(f) Code of Practice

The updated Code of Practice was presented by IKC and discussed and particular attention brought again to the Board's Policy that it **strongly urges** Anglers to adopt a 100% catch and release culture throughout the season, with the key aim being to conserve our wild salmon fish stocks for now and the future.

A question was raised about the usage of River Doon Gyrodactylus salaris Declaration Forms and it was clarified that there is an expectation certainly that they should be signed by any Angler who has been fishing outwith Scotland, in order to protect the River Doon (and other Scottish rivers) from this parasite, which could devastate salmon stocks. The Forms are available from the Board's Website for download at: <http://www.doonfishing.co.uk/about-us/>

(g) Enforcement Issues/Water Bailiffing – Martin Donachy, Board Member

The report was presented by MD, who explained the investigations which had been undertaken; and the Board's decision at its previous meeting on 17 February 2022 not to renew Bailiff Warrants, due to the issues identified.

The Board has been investigating other ways of securing an enforcement presence on the river; and the Board is encouraging everyone to become part of the Board's River Watchers Scheme, to become the 'eyes and ears of the river'. There have been discussions with other interested individuals, including PC Steven Prendergast, Wildlife Crime Officer with Strathclyde Police.

SB made the point quite strongly to Police Scotland that we are seeking their assistance and we need a much more proactive response, as enforcement is recognised as a major part of fishery management; and it was agreed that, with support from Fisheries Management Scotland and others, we must keep putting pressure on the Police to ensure a better response from local crime officers and from Scottish Government, if a case does get to Court, for fines to be relevant.

There was some discussion about the perception of how big a problem illegal activities are; and the extent to which this may not be as big a problem as it was historically, due to the decline in fish numbers. It was also agreed that it would be inappropriate to be complacent, as there are well-known incidents of illegal activity and SB noted that they have seen people on the redds taking eggs out the fish for putty (selling it as a bait for illegal fishing).

It was agreed that any efforts that are made are particularly important at the back end of the season. This is important, due to the fact that it was noted there were better salmon numbers in the river last season.

There was some general discussions around steps that can be taken by members of syndicates and fishing clubs etc to help support the River Watcher Initiative, particularly from September to November. Any information which is gathered can then be passed on to the Police, to take action, as appropriate.

MD has also had discussions with someone who has previous experience working as a Water Bailiff and is also a Warranted Bailiff on another river; and there is some scope there for him to be engaged on a sessional basis to cover the River Doon Catchment Area at the tail end of the season, because he has already passed his exam, is self-employed, and also carries his own indemnity insurance.

The Board agreed to give consideration to this and what might be an appropriate financial arrangement.

The Board also agreed to raise the issue of Enforcement / Bailiffing / the proposed River Watcher Scheme for discussion at the Annual Public Meeting.

(h) Scientific Report

This was presented by Stuart Brabbs, Ayrshire Rivers Trust (SB). He invited questions and gave a flavour of where we are at in terms of the fisheries management.

(i) Annual Catch Returns

This was presented by David Cosh, Board Member, who reported on improved responses on Annual Catch Returns, which he collates for the Board, compared to the usual returns.

This was possibly down to the improved form from previous years, but also the efforts made by the Clerk to identify the up to date address and contact details for all Riparian Owners and Clubs were contacted; and the reminders sent to secure the Annual Catch Returns.

There was a general discussion regarding the nature of the information requested as part of the Annual Catch Return, particularly the importance of securing data regarding rod effort. The challenge was to have a process which was simple enough to make it easy for people to provide the information, and improve the accuracy of the statistics retained by the Board (which was in addition to the statutory responsibility of all Riparian Owners to return the Annual Form to Marine Scotland each year).

The issue of the form of the Rod Catch data and the importance of recording rod effort will be raised by the Clerk at the Annual Public Meeting. The Board was particularly interested to secure the support from the Angling Clubs and syndicates on the river to assist in the gathering of accurate statistics, not only of fish caught (and released), but also of the rod effort; to give more opportunity for accurate analysis.

There was some discussion about the form(s) that might be used and whether there was a way to use electronic data collection, such as an online spreadsheet, or at least a standard form to be downloaded from the Board's Website. Andrea Lake also raised the possibility of whether other DSFBs in Scotland use apps on their phones. SB agreed to make enquiries with Fisheries Management Scotland, who could even speak to Scottish Government about ways of funding such a development if it does not already exist.

7. Draft Annual Report and Draft Audited Statement of Accounts

IKC presented the Draft Annual Audited Statements of Accounts prepared by Azets. An opportunity was given for questions arising. The Audited Statements of Accounts were approved as follows:

- (a) Annual Audited Statements of Accounts to 31 December 2019 – approved by the Board at its meeting on 17 February 2022 and published on the Board's Website.
- (b) Annual Audited Statements of Accounts to 31 December 2020 – approved by the Board at its meeting on 17 February 2022 and published on the Board's Website.
- (c) Annual Audited Statements of Accounts to 31 December 2021 – approved by Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors on 31 March 2022 and to be published on the Board's Website in advance of the Annual Public Meeting on 28 April 2022.

8. The proposed activities of the Board for the next year

The Clerk presented a Report on Expected Budget. Based on the income from Fishery Assessments from the year 2021/2022 and the anticipated income from the Fishery Assessments for the year 2022/2023, he recommended the Board fix reserves in a range of £10,000 to £15,000. The Board agreed to retain annual reserves of a minimum of £10,000, in addition to approving the regular annual expenditure identified of approximately £13,000, before project work for the year was considered.

The Board noted that, with the current funds retained and anticipated income, and setting the reserves to a minimum of £10,000, this left the Board with a Budget of between £10,000 and £15,000 to cover Proposed Works for 2022/2023.

The Board had requested our technical advisers and partners, Ayrshire Rivers Trust, to produce a report with recommended possible works, subject to discussion by the Board at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and Annual Public Meeting.

Stuart Brabbs (SB) presented the Report, highlighting some of the key points, as follows.

David Cosh (DC) raised concerns about what appeared to be happening at sea, resulting in declining salmon stocks in Scotland's rivers, particularly regarding the adverse influence of aquaculture. SB acknowledged those concerns and noted that whatever happens at sea will happen at sea anyway. His key point was that the only place the Board had influence to directly improve fish stocks is in the river. He recommended that any works to be undertaken would maximize input in the river e.g. habitation improvements etc.

SB gave the example of the works which had been done in the Culroy Burn; and which was to deal with erosion, with a shear face in the banking, meaning it was highly mobile. Fencing alone was found to be insufficient to address the issues. The initial work undertaken was undermined by Hurricane Alice and ART came back to the Board for approval of further funds to carry out repairs and now this is a success story, with the habitat vastly improved. Bearing in mind that salmon are an animal with a 5 year life span, they have been finding that salmon have spawned and have been finding juveniles on a sporadic basis. What augers well is that ART have identified that the trout numbers are now vastly improved, as a consequence of the green engineering undertaken.

SB recommended that the Board take a multi-faceted approach to the works, including planting, tree planting, fencing, weed removal etc.

The Board does not need to fund all of the works. Money can be obtained from other sources, such as grant funding applied for by ART. It would be helpful if an amount could come from the Board and then funding could be sought from e.g. Scottish Woodlands, who were previously funding tree planting for groups and individually per beat. At one point they were sending 400 trees + stakes etc to anyone who requested them.

DC raised concerns about the costs that most Riparian Owners were already paying for every fish caught, due to Fishery Assessments, with declining numbers (albeit acknowledging the numbers this year were much improved).

SB strongly recommended that the Board consider invasive weed control should be part of the regular expenditure the Board may have to fund. For example, there are issues with Himalayan balsam to be looked at. SB explained that, unchecked, Himalayan Balsam can cause erosion, and you get bank flats in the winter.

Each Riparian Owner should be able to deal with this themselves, but there is a significant source at the Chapelton Burn and some Riparian Owners are not prepared to carry out the work or to pay for someone else to do it. There was some discussion about the Board writing to such owners to seek their cooperation. It was also agreed this would be tabled for discussion at the Annual Public Meeting.

Realistically, SB suggested the Board might consider it may have spend e.g. £3,200 per year on invasive weeds.

Carlos Van Heddegem (CVD) asked about the location of these weeds. SB explained they have been mapped in the past, but to repeat this exercise would be expensive

Mark Colman (MC) suggested the Board adopt a process of regular Annual costs and longer term capital costs; and that there needs to be a balancing of the expenditure.

As regards fencing, the suggestion was that farmers/riparian owners could be asked to contribute 50% and the Board would contribute 50%.

ART has applied for two lots of funding relating to the Purclewan Burn (fencing) and also the Chapelton Burn, which is larger, long term project. This would probably need a formal feasibility study. The location of this burn is that it runs in at Cassilis and used to historically be an important burn for spawning. Third party funding would be required. A suggestion was that of [CBEC Eco Engineering Ltd](#) or [the River Restoration Centre](#) could be asked to provide quotations to conduct a feasibility study and plan of action, if considered appropriate. SB has asked CBEC for a quotation.

SB was requested to further consider his List of Proposed Works and give some indication of costs and possible priorities, and it was agreed we would raise this for discussion at the Annual Public Meeting and the Board would then make decisions on some of this expenditure to be authorised at its Board Meeting on 15 June 2022.

Meantime, the Meeting of Qualified Proprietors unanimously agreed that the Clerk should finalise the Annual Report and publish for the Annual Public Meeting on 28 April 2022.

9. Any Other Business

Andrea Lake asked whether the Board could issue a Welcome Pack to them, as they are the new owners of the Yonderton Farm and Fishing Beat. Robert Beveridge made a similar request, as the new owner of the Macmanniston Beat. The Clerk indicated that he had prepared such a pack and would arrange to send this out to them both. SB of ART also offered to meet with the new Proprietors to discuss matters relating to river and habitat management.

There were no other matters raised.

10. Next Meeting

The next meetings of the Board are:

- **Annual Public Meeting:** Thursday 28 April 2022, 7:30pm, Western House Hotel, Ayr
- **Board Meeting:** Wednesday 15 June 2022, 4pm, Western House Hotel, Ayr

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and for their participation.

The meeting concluded at 21:10