

MINUTES of THE MEETING of THE RIVER DEVERON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD
being a Meeting open to the public in terms of the Aquaculture & Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013
held at MUIRESK HOUSE, TURRIFF on Thursday 8th July 2021 at 12 noon.
This meeting was held in conjunction with that of the TRUSTEES of THE DEVERON, BOGIE & ISLA RIVERS
CHARITABLE TRUST. The minutes cover both organisations.

At the outset, the Chairman explained that in terms of the 2013 Act, all Meetings require to be open to the public. An invitation to the public was published on the Board's website along with a copy of the proposed Agenda. Any member of the public who wished to attend was required to inform the Clerk.

Present: **Andrew Allwood (B & T), Jim Cruickshank (B & T), Matthew Marsden (B), Robert Shields (B&T), Mrs J Player (B), Rory Cooper (B & T), Frank Henderson (B & T)** (Turriff Angling Association & Turriff Community), **Richard Breakell (B), A Gordon Morison (B), Richie Miller (B and representative of DBI Trust)**
In attendance- **Mrs S Roebuck** (Clerk to Board and Administrator of DBI Trust).
{**B = Board member; T = Trustee or representative**}

Chairman: Andrew Allwood

Apologies for Absence: Richard Marsden (B), David Borthwick (B), Bob Copland (B)

Minutes of Meetings on 8th April 2021 A draft of the Minutes of the Meeting had been sent to all Member's of the Board and Trust and unanimously approved by those who had attended. The minutes have been published on the Board/Trust's website (www.deveron.org) and signed by the Chairman of the Meeting.

Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 Mr Allwood reported that there were no changes noted to Board Members Financial Interests since 8th April 2021 as applicable to the Board. No complaints against the Board had been received by the Clerk since the last meeting.

Update on Financial Matters – Board Mrs Roebuck circulated draft statutory accounts for the Board for the year ended 31 March 2021 prior to the Board Meeting.
Board Members anonymously approved the Year End 2021 Accounts.

Quarterly accounts to 30 June for both Board and Trust will be issued to all Members shortly.

Budget & Fix Assessment A draft budget was circulated for the Board. There was a general discussion on the levy rate in view of the budget figures. The Board unanimously approved a rate of 42p in the £. Mrs Roebuck was asked to issue the notices to Proprietors.
One Assessment remains outstanding for year 2020/21.

Bailiff Patrols Patrols have increased through the late spring and early summer when more anglers are expected to be around. There were three incidents to report. On the Isla, the angler fishing for trout was reminded that landowner permission is required. There were reports of an angler with a spinning rod on the Wrack, but he was seen leaving by the Bailiff with the rod broken down and no fish.
On the 5th July, in a joint operation with the police, three males were stopped and searched, and their fishing gear confiscated after being previously observed fishing illegally on the Wrack beat.

There was a general discussion on public entitlement and activities on the river i.e., canoeing, swimming and horses damaging riverbanks. Mr Cruickshank asked for the

Clerk to investigate this by contacting FMS and seeking guidance on what the law specifically says on public access for these activities. A suggestion was put forward to put up signage stating, "Private fishing" or "Permits Available" at the Wrack to help educate the public on the legal requirements. Mrs Roebuck to investigate with FMS what signage can be put up legally and what implications there may be.

AOCB – Tree Planting

Mr Henderson raised the question on the trees that were planned for planting in the higher catchment. Whether that was still the plan, and if it was possible to get funding for environmental practices to allow for repairs to help narrow the river and save it from getting wider and shallower which causes it to heat up more quickly. Mr Miller explained, the previous chairman, Mr Hay had set aside money for an exercise up the river which has been completed and data was obtained from SEPA on climate change prediction, showing which areas heat up the quickest on the river.

The Trust had scoping completed for planting to be done on the Cabrach Estate but at the time the Head keeper was not in favour of the plan to go ahead. Since then, however, there has been a change in head keeper, and he has been more supportive.

Mr Miller attended a meeting with FMS that focused on river woods. There were discussions about a nationwide attempt to get riparian trees. Mr Miller explained the importance of the Cabrach Estate being involved to do any sort of planting of any scale. It is hoped to form an upper Deveron stakeholder group to take the Riverwoods project forward locally.

AOCB – Electrofishing

Mr Breakell asked if there are any historical data on parr numbers to see how densities have changed over time.

Mr Miller explained he has only seen records dated back from as far as 1998. The Trust has been keeping its own records since 2001, when the Trust was formed. Mr Miller to discuss with Mr Walters about reviewing data.

The meeting then focused on Trust Business.

Update on Financial Matters – Trust

Mrs Roebuck circulated draft statutory accounts for the Trust for the year ended 31 March 2021 prior to the Board Meeting.

Mr Cruickshank felt the Trust had a good year overall given the restrictions/limitations they faced throughout the year and the loss of income due to COVID-19. Mr Cruickshank wanted to congratulate the Team for all their hard work and efforts throughout the year.

Members anonymously approved the Year End 2021 Trust Accounts.

The valuation of the Improvement Fund stood at £146,630 as at 7th July 2021.

Quarterly accounts to 30 June for the Trust will be issued to all Members shortly.

The budget for the Trust for Year End March 2022 was also circulated.

Mr Cruickshank expressed the difficulties in having specific figures for this year's budget due to the uncertainty of projects and ongoing pandemic. The budget currently shows a deficit, but Mr Cruickshank is confident the Team will do their best to reduce this deficit.

Mrs Roebuck is to continue reviewing the Budget monthly to avoid unexpected figures at the end of the year and keep Chairman and trustees updated.

**Report by Mr Miller
and Mr Walters on DBI
Trust work**

Mr Miller and Mr Walters had prepared a written report on the work of the Trust since the last Board Meeting, and this was handed out (available on request). Mr Miller went over the salient points:

SISI – The Scottish Invasive Species Initiative was granted a 1-year extension earlier this year, with Project Officer Miss Karen Muller in position until October 2022. Mr Russell Baker has been recruited as the SISI Seasonal Project Officer for four months. Mr Baker has been working alongside Miss Muller and other landowners, ghillies and volunteers with Giant Hogweed control.

Crayfish Sighting and Investigation – As Mr Miller had previously reported there was a potential crayfish sighting last year. Appropriate licenses were obtained to do the trapping, but none were found. This could be due to waters being too cold at the time. New licenses have been granted and the Trust will attempt trapping again when the water is warmer, and crayfish are more active.

Water Quality – There was a general discussion on the response submitted by Mr Walters to the SEPA RBMP 3 Consultation and the Water Resource Management Plan Consultation.

The water quality monitoring agreement with the James Hutton Institute is now complete. JHI will produce a final overview report of all the work they have done over the years. The report will focus on the water quality of the river and the type of pesticides intrusion that have been getting into the river Deveron. The report will also include analysis for pharmaceuticals.

Unfortunately, some of the 2020 results failed to produce repeatable replicates in the laboratory, so no detail is available.

Going forward the Trust will collate data and decide on a plan for moving forward with SEPA, JHI and the Government. Mr Miller reported, from the information the Trust gathered over the years the data shows the type of pesticides that are still getting in the river. This is information SEPA would not have been able to find as they do not test for them. The Trust can show what is in the Deveron and the next step is to have discussions with SEPA and the Government to come up with a future monitoring plan and solutions to stop these pesticides getting in. SEPA and Agricultural Department and JHI are looking at where these intrusions might be coming from and how they can work with landowners to stop this.

The Trust had plans to contract Buglife to conduct an analysis on the insects and long-term changes that may have happened on the river, but Mr Walters is unable to get the required long-term information from SEPA yet.

Bird Count – Mr Walters put together graphs with the bird counts. The board formally asked the Trust to do bird counts over a year, to give a full annual overview. Mr Miller reported that according to the information they gathered so far, future counts will take place in the winter and into spring only. The counts in June and July have minimal numbers. Contacts on the upper river are keeping an eye on the goosanders there.

Mr Allwood asked for a conclusion on the counts done so far. Mr Miller explained that through the winter months cormorants are much more prevalent river wide and drop away late spring and into the summer. Previously, SNH were only interested in goosander numbers during the months of March and April, but the Trust has contacted SNH and told them about the increase in effort for Bird Counts. Bird Counts done from above Avochie will not be considered yet as they require three to five years of data to see annual variations.

Smolt Monitoring – This was the final year of smolt monitoring for the Dorenell windfarm.

Mr Shields expressed the data gathered over the years has been very useful and worth the knowledge and requested Mr Miller to discuss with Dorenell the possibilities of them supporting the Trust, should we wish to carry on with the smolt monitoring.

Mr Miller explained that decisions would need to be made on whether the Trust now has enough information for the upper river and whether there are other areas of the catchment they would want to investigate as well.

Smolt Tagging Project – Tagging was carried out by Miss Muller and Mr Walters. This year showed the highest survival rate to Banff from the Upper River with 74 out of a 100 tagged smolts passing the receivers. Mr Miller reported the smolts were in good condition and good body mass.

Atlantic Salmon Trust Collaboration – As part of a multiple projects with AST, the Trust are looking at all aspects of the salmon life cycles and predators. In addition, salmon carcasses washed up in the river last autumn were collected and have been sent away for analysis.

Mr Miller reported that the Trust is working alongside AST and the Scottish Government to pull together a project design and funding proposal for a Sonar fish counter and Pit Tagging Telemetry Array. Mr Miller explained the Pit Tagging does not have a battery life; it can therefore give better understanding of sea survival from the fish that leave the river. Furthermore, The Trust have an opportunity to get a fish counter in the river to allow for better clarification on the number of fish that are entering the river. It could be up to a £200,000 investment from the Scottish Government into the Deveron should it proceed.

Gin – A local artist from Banff has commissioned a new label for the gin. It is planned to have a new batch available soon.

Lower Tributaries Project – King Edward – The King Edward Burn has been properly surveyed by Trex Ecology. They produced a report and with recommendations of what could be done to help the habitat. Mr Miller will use the report to speak to landowners and have discussions with farmers to then create a funding bid to try get the work started.

Moray Firth Seal License – Marine Scotland have not yet granted the license. It has been brought up to the attention of a senior Marine Scotland official but still currently awaiting the decision.

Health and Safety

The Staff are following all COVID protocols and testing is being done twice weekly. The office is not fully open yet, but all staff members are still working and there are no staff furloughed.

AOCB – Next meeting: The next Board/Trust meeting will be held on Thursday 9th September 2021 at 3.30pm**, followed by the Annual Proprietors Meeting and joint Board and Trust AGM at 5pm.
 ** Location yet to be confirmed.

Meeting closed at 2.00pm Mr Allwood thanked everyone for attending.

Action Plan

Action	Responsible	Deadline	Completed	Result
Issue Levy Assessments.	SR			
Guidance on public access and signage on the river.	SR			
Review historical Parr data.	MW/RM			
Discuss with Dorenell - Smolt Monitoring extension.	RM			