

**MINUTES of THE COMBINED ANNUAL MEETING of QUALIFIED PROPRIETORS of
THE RIVER DEVERON DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD and ANNUAL PUBLIC OPEN MEETING
held at THE BANFF SPRINGS HOTEL, BANFF on Thursday, 25th SEPTEMBER 2025 at 5pm**

Present: **Andrew Allwood** (Muirsek), **Jim Cruickshank** (Carnousie, Ardmiddle, Inverkeithny Glebe, Inverkeithny, Upper Netherdale, Lower Netherdale, Laithers Estate), **Gordon Morison** (Mountblairy, Bognie), **Rory Cooper** (Marnoch Lodge, Mains of Auchingoul), **Mr Cheyne** (Mains of Mayen and Mayen & Garronhaugh), **Mr Higgins** (Lower & Upper Coniecleugh), **R Shields** (Avochie), **S Mackison**.

Also in attendance: **Mrs S Roebuck** (Clerk to the Board); **R Miller** (River Director); **M Walters** (River Operations Manager), **Jamie Gordon** (Project Deveron Catchment Restoration Manager).

Members of the public including members of the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust, Ghillies, Estate Managers and Anglers.

Miss S Cruickshank, Ms A Stancioff, Mr C Malpass, Miss R Cheyne, Ms I Hoffman, Mr I Traquir, Mr N O'Neil, Mr R Jackson.

Apologies for Absence: **Mr D Borthwick, Mr M Marsden, Mr B Copland, Mr Frank Henderson, Mr Richard Breakell, Mr M Hay, Mr J Gardiner, Mr A Sharp.**

Chairman: Mr Andrew Allwood welcomed Proprietors, Mandatories, Ghillies, Members of the Deveron, Bogie and Isla Rivers Charitable Trust and other members of the public.

Minutes of last Annual Meeting: Having circulated the minutes in advance for the last meeting held on 5th September 2024, it was proposed that they be taken as read and were unanimously approved.

2025 Proposed Activities

- Project Deveron – Operation of ARIS camera (Fish Counter) and Pit Tag Arrays in collaboration with the Atlantic Salmon Trust and Marine Directorate.
- Project Deveron Phase II – Continue catchment restoration priority actions such as removal of King Edward Dam and development of a comprehensive water quality and water temperature monitoring framework.
- Farm & Estate Engagement – Attend Turriff Agricultural Show to discuss collaborative and funding opportunities with local farming and estate stakeholders. Seek funding for dedicated Agri-Environment officer to lead farmer and landowner engagement and support nature-based solutions.
- Invasive Non-Native species - Continue control through the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) Project.
- Smolt Shepherding Programme & Fish Eating Bird Licence - Continue to maximise number of smolts successfully entering the sea.

Annual Report & Accounts: Mr Allwood presented the accounts to the meeting. An abbreviated version of the Board's Accounts is included in the Annual Report for the Board and Trust which had been circulated in advance to all proprietors and interested parties. Mr Allwood asked if there were any questions. No questions were raised and so the Accounts and Report were adopted.

Mr. Allwood outlined the Board's activities over the past year, highlighting major engineering works at Banff Bridge. This work, overseen by Aberdeenshire Council, was expected to secure the bridge's long-term stability while allowing fish passage to continue. The first phase of the project was anticipated to be completed by November, with the second phase scheduled to finish by March, weather permitting.

Further progress was noted with the reopening of the King Edward tributary, creating miles of additional spawning habitat. Plans for the redesign of the Glen Keith Weir were also discussed, expected to open further upstream territory for migration.

Mr. Allwood acknowledged that the season had been particularly difficult due to low water levels, but expressed optimism that these engineering and ecological works would leave the river system in a stronger position for future generations.

Mr. Allwood also emphasised the importance of engaging local communities and farmers in conservation work, ensuring that stakeholders not directly involved in fishing could still contribute to the health of the river.

**Presentation by Mr
Marcus Walters and Mr
Jamie Gordon**

Jamie Gordon (Atlantic Salmon Trust) presented an update on Project Deveron, a collaborative programme now in its third year. He outlined habitat restoration efforts, extensive monitoring initiatives, and significant funding applications pursued, including for temperature loggers, water quality monitoring, and staff posts dedicated to engaging farming communities. While some bids had been unsuccessful, others remained pending, and several had already secured partial funding.

Marcus Walters (River Operations Manager) followed with a detailed report on monitoring and conservation work. He described the challenges of rising river temperatures and low water levels, the deployment of temperature loggers, and the introduction of environmental DNA (eDNA) sampling to detect species presence, including freshwater pearl mussels. He also highlighted progress in electrofishing surveys, the operation of the fish counter (which recorded nearly 9,000 salmon entering the river in the past year), and predator management, including cormorant control under license.

Mr. Walters also acknowledged the work on controlling invasive species such as giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, and mink.

Questions asked:

A wide-ranging discussion followed, with questions on water temperature impacts on juvenile salmon, the possibility of reseeded freshwater pearl mussels, invasive plant management, predator control, and broader public education. Members emphasised the importance of outreach to schools and young people, as well as community education regarding river ecology and invasive species.

It was confirmed that the Trust had already begun school engagement programmes and was collaborating with the local aquarium on a freshwater exhibit to raise awareness.

Thanks: Mr Allwood thanked everyone for attending.

Meeting closed: At 6:45pm, followed by refreshments.