

MINUTES of 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
Thursday 28th September 2023 at 3.30pm held at The Banff Springs Hotel, Banff.
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 who wished to attend was required to inform the Clerk.

Present: **Andrew Allwood (B), Jim Cruickshank (B&T), Andrew Higgins (B), Matthew Marsden (B), Robert Shields (B & T), Gordon Morison (B), Richie Miller (B and representative of DBI Trust).**

In attendance- **S Roebuck** (Clerk to Board and Administrator of DBI Trust);
Marcus Walters (DBI Trust).

{B = Board member; T = Trustee or representative}

Chairman: **Mr Andrew Allwood**

Apologies for Absence: **J Player (B), Rory Cooper (B & T), Frank Henderson (B & T)** (Turriff Angling Association & Turriff Community), **David Borthwick (B & T), Richard Breakell (B)** (Salmon Anglers).

Minutes of Meeting on 29th June 2023 A draft of the Minutes of the Meeting had been sent to all Members of the Board and Trust and was unanimously approved by those who had attended. The minutes have been published on the Board/Trust's website (www.deveron.org) and signed off 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 29th June 2023 as applicable to the Board. No complaints against the Board had been received by the Clerk since the last meeting.

Update on Financial Matters - RDDSF Mrs Roebuck reported that bank balances in both organisations were healthy. The next quarterly accounts will be made up to 30th September and circulated in October.
Mrs Roebuck reported that statements have been sent out for the 18 outstanding assessments from 12 proprietors.

Discussion of Forthcoming AGM There will be a presentation by Mr Walters at the AGM covering the years work and next years priorities. Also joining the AGM and giving a presentation is Alison Baker, Restoration Director from the Atlantic Salmon Trust.

AOCB – Peterhead to Beaully Powerline Mr Shields reported that the line has been moved a bit more towards the south but still within same corridor. Mr Morison added that the corridor has no geographical reason for being that further and it is just two lines on the map. Mr Morison would like SSE to move the south line a little bit and it won't have any great effect on what they are doing. Mr Morison believes SSE are looking into this. Mr Morison is happy to share any information and keep members updated.

Mr Allwood wondered from river or water ways point of view this will have a lot of impact somewhere along the catchment system. Mr Miller replied that the Board must be clear about what the threats are and as Mr Morison mentioned they don't know the route yet. The Trust has asked SSE to get back to them once they do have a preferred route.

AOCB – Centenary Celebrations

Mr Cruickshank suggested to put a group together to formally plan and look for ideas to mark centenary celebrations in 2024.

Mr Allwood agreed and has asked for anyone with ideas or suggestions to put them forward to the board.

- Ideally celebrations are done in the summer rather than October because of the weather.
- Mr Miller suggested the opening of the river; we can highlight the anniversary heavily there, including in press articles. We can also have a special edition Gin. Mr Miller suggested Centenary at the auction which will be held in September 2024 can be the main theme for that event as well.
- Mr Miller hopes to sign a deal to do habitat work on the river with a local whisky company and could maybe have an event at one of their premises.
- Mr Allwood suggested to look into the Castle Hotel in Huntly and combining their opening with centenary. Mrs Roebuck to investigate.

AOCB – Bailiff

There haven't been many incidents this year.

10 x Spy cameras were purchased to help with bailiffing. 4 of these cameras are currently in place full time, the rest are ad hoc. Cameras are quick for sending notifications if there's any movement. The cameras will be used for intel only.

Mr Allwood thanked Mr Morison for funding the cameras and expressed these will help to reduce unnecessary patrolling.

AOCB – The use of Hatcheries

Mr Cruickshank questioned if it is prudent for the Trust to investigate hatcheries in more detail and look at how hatcheries could help certain areas. Mr Cruickshank added, with the prospect of an habitat restoration officer in place, we can identify areas where introduction of fish could be helpful. Mr Cruickshank feels that now we have more sophisticated measuring and monitoring equipment, we could use these to aid our decision making regarding an hatchery. As part of the two rivers project with the technology in place the Trust is more set up to do a properly organised trial.

Mr Higgins added getting an idea of numbers of different fish sizes up and down the river would be useful. The counters in place are a start but it needs to include the smaller fish i.e. fry, smolt. Mr Higgins asked if the Trust does have a good idea if there is any areas or spots that are lacking.

Mr Miller responded, that parts of the Bogie / Isla and parts of the King Edward have lower numbers then you would expect. The main causes are silt input, poor field margins, and flooding. Mr Higgins feels if there is a problem with fish in those areas because of that local environment, pouring fish into that area is not going to help.

Mr Cruickshank added it will take time to understand what would or would not be appropriate for the river Deveron. But when you look at the graphs from the last 50 years, catch records have always been variable but the last ten years have seen a steady decline in numbers. It is up to the board to anticipate if the decline does continue, whether we need something and if so, we are to be prepared for it.

The meeting then focused on Trust Business

Update on Financial Matters – DBI Trust

The Trust budget is updated monthly by Mrs Roebuck. Mr Cruickshank reported we set off at our last meeting with a projected deficit of £39k but there was hope the Trust would be able to secure work which would reduce that deficit. This did take place due to the Electro fishing contract. Currently our projected deficit is £10k mainly due to increased activities and contracts. Mr Miller added that the 3rd party surveying contracts secured in the summer has helped the budget greatly, as well as the governmental work.

Mr Shields enquired about the Aultmore Windmill Burn and the water monitoring station that was put in at the time. Mr Shields enquired if data from this was retained and used.

Mr Miller responded; the data was responsible for the conifer plantation being pulled back from the margins. Thanks to this instrumentation we could demonstrate that the PH was dropping below by 5.5 more than 2 or 3 days in a row which can be a threat salmon eggs hatching, this argument was accepted by the windfarm consortium. Mr Miller added the machine did its job at the time and data was retained.

Report by Mr Miller and Mr Walters on DBI Trust work

Mr Miller gave a short report as most of the points were included in the Annual Report which had now been circulated to all Proprietors and other interested parties. Available on request.

Prominent discussions were made on the following:

Water Quality: Mr Shields suggested having measuring stations and have evidence available to be able to have informed discussions.

Mr Miller reported that the Trust were gifted water monitoring stations from Dorenell windfarm once the work was completed and they've been in position on the Blackwater and Allt Deveron up until recently. Mr Walters has asked for a quote to refurbish them and redeploying elsewhere. Mr Miller added, we will look at various locations throughout the river and we can get them online. We must work with SEPA in advance to make sure they accept stats from this.

Health and Safety

Nothing further to report.

Next meeting

Next Board/Trust meeting will be on Wednesday 6th December at the Banff Springs Hotel, Banff.

Meeting closed at 4:50pm

Mr Allwood thanked everyone for attending. The Annual Proprietors Meeting and DBIT AGM followed.

