

**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
on Wednesday 6th December 2023 at Banff Springs, 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: **Jim Cruickshank (B&T), Andrew Allwood (B), Matthew Marsden (B), Robert Copland (B), Robert Shields (B & T), Gordon Morison (B), Mrs J Player (B), Rory Cooper (B & T), Frank Henderson (B & T)** (Turriff Angling Association & Turriff Community).

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

Members of the public- Carl Malpass, Sarah Cruickshank.

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

Chairman: Mr Andrew Allwood

Apologies for Absence & Welcome Andrew Higgins (B), David Borthwick (B & T), Richard Breakell (B)

Minutes of Meeting on 28th September 2023 A draft of the Minutes of the Meeting had been sent to all Members 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.

There were no queries nor matters outstanding.

Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 Mr Allwood reported that there were no changes noted to Board Members Financial Interests since 28th September 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 Mrs Roebuck reported the last quarterly accounts to 30th September had been circulated and the accounts for December will be issued in January.

Mrs Roebuck informed the Board that four Board assessments were outstanding, totalling £3,857.10. It was explained that copious reminders were sent, and proprietors were also contacted by phone.

A donation from the Board amounting to £31,500 had been paid to the Trust.

River Deveron Conservation Code 2024 Before discussions were made, Mr Miller informed the Board that the proposed 2024 River Grading is Category 2.

Mr Allwood enquired about the changes implemented by the board last season to remove the opportunity to kill salmon in September and October and if the changes had an impact on the catch and release percentage for this season.

Mr Miller explained some catch returns remain outstanding but from the information we have gathered to date, there were 31 salmon/grilse killed in September and October 2022 with an overall release rate of 96.78% and in September and October this season there was 1 salmon/grilse killed with an overall release rate of 97.36%.

Mr Cruickshank expressed the majority of the Code is not legislation but voluntary, and if the Board aspires for all salmon, grilse and sea trout to be returned safely then it should say so in the code. There are some scenarios to be considered such as a badly damaged fish. On occasion these can and should be kept but that would be at the discretion of the ghillie or beat owner rather than the angler. Mr Cruickshank feels the code is quite lax and changes need to be made.

A general Discussion on possible wording for the code was had. Mr Marsden agrees that wording on the code should state "It is the Boards aspiration that all fish are returned". Mr Marsden believes all anglers are educated enough to know that salmon are in demise and agrees if youngsters catch their first fish, you can let them take one.

Mr Allwood added, worming is currently still allowed and when using this method for fishing, releasing fish safely to the wild is problematic and suggested this was discussed.

Mr Henderson added they've not had any worm sales for fishing the river and doesn't think it is an issue in this area.

Mr Cruickshank expressed the board should demonstrate they disapprove of such procedures in principle and reaffirmed the code is only advisory and guidance.

Mr Cooper added he sees no reason against banning worming but also questioned if we would lose visiting anglers if all fish were to be returned.

Mr Henderson and Mrs Player don't think many anglers will be lost as most anglers understand the current situation and the scarcity of fish.

Mr Cruickshank reported there was no complaints, or any comments made from any anglers regarding returning fish in the months of September and October.

Mr Shields expressed that worming on his beats was already banned. Mr Marsden agrees worming should be banned as well as banning spinning in October.

Mr Miller explained in the early days when conservation codes were being reviewed, they were looking at worming and circle hooks that has far less impact. Anglers ages were considered, and discussions were made for starting younger anglers off with bait finishing which is not the case nowadays.

All members agreed to prohibit worming.

Miss Cruickshank explained that at Deveronside Fishings they promote fly only, but spinning is not banned because there's always going to be water heights or physical ability issues. There was a couple of instances this year where anglers wanted to know what they could keep and when they could spin and as the code states "spinning lures should only have 1 single set of hooks..." that implies that spinning is acceptable. Miss Cruickshank suggested the words "On the beats where spinning is permitted, lures should only have 1 single set of hooks."

All members agreed.

Mr Allwood wanted to highlight that the changes made to the code last year had a positive impact during September and October. Mr Allwood explained the Deveron is a category 2 river and therefore according to the government advice anglers don't have to return every fish after end of March. After lengthy discussions it was agreed by all members that points 2 and 3 on the code regarding salmon and grilse were to be removed and replaced with the following wording:

"All salmon and grilse to be returned safely throughout the season".

Mrs Roebuck to e-mail proprietors PDF version of updated code.

AOCB – Future Board Meeting Dates

Mrs Roebuck to e-mail members with dates for 2024.

Proposed Dates for 2024:

Thursday 28th March - 12pm

Thursday 27th June - 12pm

Thursday 5th September – 3:30pm & AGM 5pm

Wednesday 4th Dec - 12pm

AOCB – Seal License

Mr Henderson attended the Spey Anglers meeting in which the fishery board chair attended. Mr Henderson explained the Spey board appealed the refusal of their seal license which was turned down on the basis that they had not used a scaring device and that they were a category 1 river.

Mr Miller explained that a seal scaring device is an acoustic deterrent device. It sends out frequency noises that keeps seals away. It shouldn't scare anything else away.

Mr Miller explained that a scaring device for the Deveron is in discussions.

The meeting then focused on Trust Business.

Update on financial matters

Mrs Roebuck reported that bank balances in both organisations were healthy. Furthermore, a brief overview was given by Mr Cruickshank of the original projected Trust budget against a reviewed budget. Adjustments for SISI income/expenditures had to be made to account for leavers and new members of staff.

The valuation of the Trust investment held by McInroy and Wood was £154,719.11.

Report by Mr Miller & Mr Walters on DBI Trust work

Mr Miller, Director of the Trust, and Mr Walters, River Operations Manager, had prepared a written report on the work of the Trust since the last Board Meeting and this was e-mailed to all members (**available on request from the Clerk**).

2024 Work Plan

The 2024 work plan was outlined and is available on request.

- Health and Safety** Electrofishing kit has been sent for its annual service and safety checks.
- PAT Testing has been carried out at Trust/Board Offices.
- AOCB – Aris Sonar Presentation** A presentation was given by Mr Walters to give an update on the Aris Sonar on the Deveron.
- AOCB – McConnell Trophy** Mr Walters was named as the recipient of the McConnell trophy for 2023. Mr Cruickshank thanked Mr Walters for all his hard work on establishing the new fish counter and all his work on data analysis.
- AOCB – FMS Board** Mr Cruickshank congratulated Mr Miller on being elected to the board of Fisheries Management Scotland as a Trust representative.
- Meeting closed** Mr. Allwood thanked all those who attended and closed the meeting at 2:30pm