

**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 7th December 2022 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), **Frank Henderson** (B & T) (Turriff Angling Association & Turriff Community), **Richard Breakell** (B), **Andrew Higgins** (B), **Rory Cooper** (B & T), **Gordon Morison** (B), **Jamie Mair** (Ghillies Representative).

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).

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

Chairman: Mr Andrew Allwood

Apologies for Absence & Welcome David Borthwick (B & T), Mrs J Player (B), Matthew Marsden (B), Robert Copland (B), Robert Shields (B & T)

Mr Andrew Allwood informed members of the recent death of Mr Richard Marsden, a long-standing board member of 31 years for the Deveron District Salmon Fishery Board. Members sent their sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Mr Marsden.

Minutes of Meeting on 8th September 2022 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 8th September 2022 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 ones for December will be issued in January.

Mrs Roebuck informed the Board that three Board assessments were outstanding, totalling £3,990.00. It was explained that copious reminders were sent, and proprietors were also contacted by phone. The Chairman to investigate further action.

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

**River Deveron
Conservation Code
2023**

Mr Breakell suggested that, in time, the Government will want to legislate for catch and release only and has already proposed considering catch and release so there is no chance of taking a fish irrespectively the condition of the fish, albeit the river Deveron return rate of 95% is very good.

Only 48 fish were not returned to the river for the 2022 season.

Mr Cruickshank added that he feels a recommendation to return all fish would be more suitable unless there is an exception. We need to be seen to encourage more release of fish given the low numbers.

Mr Allwood added if it is 100% catch and release then what would the incentive be to come fishing in the first place for some folk?

Mr Cooper suggested that wording on the code should state, the Board recommends that all fish are returned. He explained it should not be an instruction or public guidance, it's a recommendation. Mr Higgins expressed that it should need to be noted that at present a weekly rod can keep one fish.

A general discussion on the possible wording for the code regarding the "recommendation" was had. Mr Allwood suggested wording should state, the board recommends that all fish are returned where possible, however, weekly rods can retain one fish. Mr Cruickshank argued, that adding "however" to the wording opens the door again and instead we need an official recommendation to state it is encouraged to return all fish.

After lengthy discussions it was agreed that the code should be reworded to state, "No fish to be retained in September and October", which is the period when most fish are caught.

**AOCB – Future Board
Meeting Dates**

Mrs Roebuck to e-mail members with dates for 2023.

Proposed Dates for 2023:
29th March, 29th Jun, 28th Sep and 6th Dec

**AOCB – Future
Assessment Rates**

Mr Morrison wanted clarification on the function of the board if the beats currently being reviewed as a whole drop in rateable value and assessments go down. Mr Morrison added that the amount of the assessment, funds the function of the board, so if the value of beats is reduced it will have a direct financial impact on the board.

Mr Allwood explained the Board has not changed the assessment for a considerable amount of time and that there is a possibility that the board would have to increase the rate. Mr Allwood suggested we wait until the new valuations are complete. There are costs to cover, and it is difficult to make any changes until the new valuation for each beat is available.

AOCB – FMS

Mr Henderson felt there is not enough communication from FMS with updates. Mr Henderson added their communication is more focused on what the trusts are doing rather than what FMS are actually doing.

Mr Miller explained that FMS have been very helpful, and their help has been of the highest level.

The Board have asked to invite Mr Alan Wells to present at the next board meeting.

There was a comment on how few proprietors or their representatives attended the last AGM.

The fishing permit signage at Banff was discussed

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.

The valuation of the Trust investment held by McInroy and Wood was £152,583.67.

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**).

2023 Work Plan

Please see Deveron Objectives and Delivery 2022 (updated).

Health and Safety

Mr Miller and Miss Muller successfully completed a training course in Mental Health First Aid in the workplace

AOCB

Mr. Allwood pointed out that during the visit by Mairi Gougeon, Scottish Minister in August, John Armstrong of Marine Scotland had responded to a question that the return rate for salmon from the oceans was only 4% and that 20 years ago it was 15-20%. This figure of 4% is surely unsustainable for the survival of salmon. We should be putting more pressure on MS and the Scottish Government to come up with reasons as part of NASCO.

Mr. Miller updated the Trust on the seal license application and appeal, which has been turned down by Marine Scotland.

There was a discussion on the installation of the fish counter and the possibility of it being ready to go for the beginning of next season. The engineering works are still in the design stage.

The processing of the data was discussed and Mr. Miller and Mr. Walters explained how the data was being handled by the similar unit on the River Wye. There was also a discussion on the handling and release of data emerging from the operation of the fish counter as this would be sensitive information.

There was a discussion on keeping the bird counts going during January, February and March and possibly a special bird count on a tributary to evaluate the conjecture that there were lots of birds in those areas.

All members expressed their thanks to the Trust team for all their hard work during a difficult season.

Meeting closed at

14:45pm