

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 7th July 2022 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 are required 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), Rory Cooper (B & T), Richard Breakell (B), Andrew Higgins (B).**

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) **Jamie Mair** attended as a member of the Public.

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

Chairman: Andrew Allwood

Apologies for Absence: Robert Shields (B&T), Jacky Player (B), Frank Henderson (B & T) (Turrieff Angling Association & Turrieff Community), A Gordon Morison (B), Richard Marsden (B), David Borthwick (B), Bob Copland (B)

Minutes of Meetings on 7th April 2022 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 7th April 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 – Board Mrs Roebuck circulated draft statutory accounts for the Board for the year ended 31 March 2022 prior to the Board Meeting. Board Members unanimously approved the Year End 2022 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. As a result the Board unanimously approved a rate of 42p in the £. Mr. Morison had let it be known by proxy that he supported the 42p rate but awaited with interest the Grampian Assessor's revaluation which is due in early 2023. Mrs Roebuck was asked to issue the notices to Proprietors.

Catch figures Catch figures for the last season were discussed. There was a surprising and worrying decline of 40% from the previous 2 seasons. The 2022 season is also looking poor due to a severe shortage of rainfall since last winter. Mr. Mair expressed the view that the last May was disastrous and that May is often an indication of the season as a whole. Mr. Breakall commented that some of the lack of water can be attributed to the poor rainfall over the winter coupled with little

snowmelt which is the norm these days. Also that the headwaters are not retaining what water there is over the winter period and that some of the ditches at the top of the catchment should be filled in to increase chances of water being retained for longer.

Update on Financial Matters – Trust

Mrs Roebuck circulated draft statutory accounts for the Trust for the year ended 31 March 2022 prior to the Board Meeting. Members unanimously approved the Year End 2022 Trust Accounts.

The valuation of the Improvement Fund stood at £151,371.50 as 6th July 2022.

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. Mrs Roebuck and Mr Miller went over a few figures predicted on the budget. There was a general discussion on the figures presented. 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 and Mr Walters went over the salient points:

SISI – Mr Tom Humphries joined the Trust in May to help with the Giant Hogweed Control. Mr Humphries is contracted to work until the end of September. The current SiSi project runs to March 2023 with the possibilities of it going for multiple years after to consolidate the work that has been done over the years.

Fishery Protection – Mr Russell Baker and Mr Jamie Mair completed the fishery bailiff examination. Russell has since taken up a full-time position elsewhere and Jamie is currently supporting the existing team as and when he can. Mr Allwood suggested putting signage up for the public to be more aware of procedures and how to obtain fishing tickets. Mr Miller to investigate this.

Water Quality – Mr Marsden and Mr Higgins suggested buying sampling kits to assess waters for the trust to build up their own library of results. It was suggested it could be used as evidence for SEPA. Mr Walters explained SEPA would not accept this but possibly still worth doing.

The current warm weather and lack of rain has put the river and fish at stress. The temperature in parts of the main stem occasionally reaching 20 degrees is putting salmonids off their normal behaviour. Mr Walters suggested a message to go out to anglers and beats to be cautious about the returning of fish, to make sure they are fully recovered and encourage anglers to fish during the cooler part of the day if possible.

Mr Higgins has facilities that allow you to read the temperatures of the water every 10 minutes and has offered to send this information over to Mr Miller. An alert e-mail will be sent out to Mr Miller if water temperatures reach 18 degrees or higher.

Piscatorial Birds – A new application has been submitted for the 2022-23 license. The licence application included the monthly counts to demonstrate that the highest

numbers are not always in March and April when the long-term annual counts have been conducted – particularly for Cormorants.

King Edward Project – The whole survey has been completed. Mr Baker identified who the landowners were, who is interested in the project and who is potentially interested in helping where we can increase buffer strips. All of the four landowners have granted their permission for the dam to be removed. There is a European fund available which Mr Miller is hoping to apply for, to help with the removal of the dam on the King Edward as this is a big structure.

Moray Firth Seal License – The river Deveron used to be part of the Moray Firth seal license. This was a scientific program that considered the permitted biological removal of seals that enter the river, which would not materially impact on the general population out at sea.

The Trust submitted (on behalf of the board) a new licence application for the Deveron. This application was rejected. Mr Miller is submitting an appeal as the grounds for the rejection were not in line with other government guidance.

Glenkeith Weir Fish Passage – The design of the new fish pass has been agreed by SEPA and hopefully this work will be completed by next Autumn 2023.

Project Deveron - Atlantic Salmon Trust & Scot Gov. Collaboration –

Sonar Counter – The long awaited fish counter has arrived. Fishtek has won the tender that was put out by the Scottish government to supply and install and the counter is currently being trialled at various locations prior to final installation once the best position has been agreed. It is currently running at bridge of Alvah, it will be left there for 2 weeks. At last we will have some empirical method or monitoring numbers of fish in that part of the river.

Pit tag Arrays – The receivers were installed in May. Compared to previously used tags, the Pit tags are small, they have less impact on the fish, they do not have a battery so last indefinitely and they are cheaper so a larger sample can be selected. It is planned to tag 2000 salmon parr each Autumn.

Acoustic Tagging – This year 100 smolts were tagged as part of the final year of the Moray Firth tracking project. On top of this a further 60 smolts were tagged with a different type of tag designed to detect predation on behalf of the Scottish Government. These tags change signal when / if the fish has been eaten.

Smolt Monitoring – The two rotary screw traps have again been used. This is the first year the work has not been funded by the Dorenell Windfarm as that contract has now finished. The Board expressed their thanks to the Dorenell Windfarm for their support over many years. This work has been a significant investment by all parties both in time and money. As acoustic tags are not planned to be used next year different methods will be used. The 2022 smolt run was good but different in terms of timing. Mr Walters discussed. Mr Walters went over the graph prepared by himself (available on request).

Deveron Gin – A larger batch of Deveron Gin has been produced and will be available to purchase under license from 1st – 3rd September and again 1st - 3rd December. A different label has also been commissioned this year showing the Rothiemay Bridge to celebrate the 2022 season.

Red Skin Disease – Salmon up and down the East coast and West coast of Scotland have appeared with red haemorrhaging marks on them. The government are not

sure what the cause of it is but are looking into it. Mr Miller has asked if salmon with these markings are caught to please take a picture.

Health and Safety

The Trust river team has been trained up on pesticide application.

All the office equipment has had the electrical PAT tests completed

AOCB – Next meeting:

The next Board/Trust meeting will be held on Thursday 8th September 2022 at 3.30pm at the Gordon Arms Hotel, Huntly , followed by the Annual Proprietors Meeting and joint Board and Trust AGM at 5pm.

Future dates for 2023 need to be considered and discussed over the next few weeks to avoid clashes with events and holidays.

**Meeting closed at
2.00pm**

Mr Allwood thanked everyone for attending.