

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 9th September 2021 at 3.30pm held at 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.

Sarah Cruickshank attended as a member of the public.

Present: **Andrew Allwood (B), Jim Cruickshank (B&T), Matthew Marsden (B), Gordon Morison (B), J Player (B), Rory Cooper (B & T), Bob Copland (B), Frank Henderson (B & T)** (Turriff Angling Association & Turriff Community), **Richard Breakell (B)** (Salmon Anglers), **Richie Miller (B)** and representative of DBI Trust)
In attendance- **S Roebuck** (Clerk to Board and Administrator of DBI Trust); **Marcus Walters** (DBI Trust), **Karen Muller** (Project officer), **Russell Baker** (Project Officer)
{ **B = Board member; T = Trustee or representative**}

Chairman: **Mr Andrew Allwood**

Apologies for Absence: **C Richard Marsden (B), David Borthwick (B & T), Robert Shields (B & T).**

Mr Morison informed members of the recent death of Mr James McNeil, a former trustee, and a regular contributor to the Trust. Members sent their sincerest condolences to the family and friends of Mr McNeil.

Minutes of Meeting on 8th July 2021 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 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 8th July 2021 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.

The fund at McInroy and Wood now stands at £150,854.10.

Mrs Roebuck reported that statements will be sent out for the 16 outstanding assessments from 11 proprietors.

Mr Allwood has tried getting in contact, without success with one of the proprietors to chase four years of outstanding payments. Using the Sheriff's Court was recommended by Aberdeenshire Council. Mr Allwood asked the clerk to write a final letter to the proprietor before taking matters further.

Annual Meeting Mr Allwood went over points to be covered at the AGM. Continued work with the Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) -Missing Salmon Alliance, The Keith Barrier and The Tributaries Plan.

AOCB- Fishing Booking System

There was a general discussion on booking systems for anglers. Mrs Player asked the board for recommendations on what weekly system could apply to all the beats. Mr Allwood suggested writing a letter to all proprietors with a recommendation and asking them if they wish to adopt the same system.

AOCB – Invasive Species

Miss Muller gave the members an update on Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam (HB) control. Mr Cooper asked about a possible HB strategy. Mr Marsden felt that starting from the top and working down, was the only way to eradicate it. Miss Muller explained that GH control was completed successfully and controlled over all the three river catchments.

AOCB – Poaching Incidents

Mr Cooper asked about recent poaching incidents. Mr Miller reported that there have been some issues in the lower river with some anglers, but after a warning they haven't been back. Mr Miller confirmed that the numbers of poachers has reduced. The question was raised on whether anglers charged for poaching are still allowed to fish on the river. Mixed views were expressed. Mr Allwood suggested that if an angler has purchased a ticket or been given permission by the proprietor to fish then they are entitled to fish.

AOCB – Mr Bob Copland

Mr Allwood welcomed Mr Bob Copland, as this has been the first opportunity for him to attend a meeting in person.

The meeting then focused on Trust Business

Update on Financial Matters – DBI Trust

Mr Cruickshank reported that Mrs Roebuck has been doing monthly updates on income and expenditure and that the Trust is already ahead of budget and narrowing the deficit.

Report by Mr Miller and Mr Walters on DBI Trust work

Mr Miller and Mr Walters 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.

Prominent discussions were made on the following:

Crayfish Sighting: Licences were obtained, and trapping was repeated at Muireisk. Mr Miller reported that they will carry out Electrofishing in that area to make certain that there are no crayfish. Two years of trapping has been completed with zero catches.

Fishery Protection: On the 5 th July there was a joint operation with the police, where 3 males from the Wrack were caught and charged. The Spey boat has patrolled the coast, 6 boats were stopped, but no nets were found.

Water Quality: The Trust has received a report from JHI. It includes the results of the water samples collected and the analysis conducted. The Trust are still perusing SEPA to action various points based on water quality but due to COVID working strategies and the cyber hack that took place last year, any response is taking longer.

Atlantic Salmon Trust: During the smolt run, bird scats were collected from goosanders, cormorants and herons in order to analyse the diet of those birds and potentially also evaluate the number of goosanders on the river.

In the Autumn Mr Walters was out collecting the heads of kelt carcasses. They were sent to Exeter University where they will examine the otoliths and eye lenses to try to ascertain where those fish have been feeding.

There have been major steps forward in the plan to install instruments into the Deveron. The AST has managed to secure funding from Marine Scotland Science for a pit tagging telemetry array and a combined sonar fish counter. This is a major project and the AST will be contributing towards the running costs, there is still a lot of discussion needed on how we can fund locally.

Electrofishing Surveys: 60 surveys per site were completed under the National Electrofishing program funded by the Scottish Government. 30 of the sites are located on the Deveron. A map of the Deveron Electrofishing showed the distribution of salmon, where salmon were present/absent.

Bird Count: Monthly bird counts continue to be conducted since October last year, this is the first time it has been done on the river monthly and has been important to see how the birds are using the catchment throughout the year. Previous counts were only done in March and April.

Deveron Gin: A new label has been designed and commissioned by a local artist Mr Bryan Angus. Mr Miller thanked Mr Allwood for organising the labels. Mr Bryan Angus has agreed to donate 20% to the Trust from the prints that he sells.

King Edward Project (KEB): Mr Miller reported that an important project to survey the KEB by Trex Ecology was financed and going by the electrofishing results, shows that much work needs to be done on that system. The KEB is an intensive agricultural system with a lot of fine sediments deposited in the lower sections which is detrimental for egg survival. Conditions are better higher up. Mr Miller added that bridges were washed away in a severe spate 2 years ago and the burn has yet to recover. The Trust is looking at options of how to restore the habitat, possibly to find third party funds for a subcontractor to manage the project themselves or fund it in-house by means of the improvement fund to try to speed up the required improvements.

Glenkeith Weir Fish Passage: Progress has been made. SEPA has insisted that Chivas fix the structure by 2024. A meeting has been arranged with SEPA who will ask Chivas to fix it in advance of the deadline.

Conservation of Salmon- Assessment for the 2022 season: The government has graded the Deveron as a category 2 river.

Pink Salmon – Only one pink salmon recorded this season.

Health and Safety

The Trust staff are working to COVID protocols. Testing twice weekly and home working where possible.

Next meeting Next Board/Trust meeting will be on Wednesday 1st December. Location to be confirmed.

Meeting closed at 4:40pm Mr Allwood thanked everyone for attending. The Annual Proprietors Meeting and DBIT AGM followed.