



RIVER AYR DISTRICT **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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MINUTES

of
Annual Public Meeting
of

RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD

held at

The Mauchline & District Kilmarnock FC Supporters Club
8 Earl Grey Street, Mauchline, KA5 5AD
on Wednesday 2 April 2025 at 7pm

1. Persons Present

<i>Alan Hill (AH)</i>	<i>Barskimming Estate, Board Member (Chairperson)</i>
<i>Iain K Clark (IKC)</i>	<i>Gilson Gray LLP (Clerk to the Board)</i>
<i>Gordon Millar (GM)</i>	<i>Mauchline Ballochmyle Angling Club (Salmon Fishers' Rep)</i>
<i>Max Stobbs (MS)</i>	<i>Mauchline Ballochmyle Angling Club, Board Member</i>
<i>Charles McDade (CM)</i>	<i>Sorn Angling Club, Board Member</i>
<i>Robin Wilson (RW)</i>	<i>Ladykirk Angling Club, Board Member</i>
<i>Murray Ratcliffe (MR)</i>	<i>Annbank Angling Club</i>
<i>Kevin Weir (KW)</i>	<i>Dumfries Estate, (Salmon Fishers' Rep)</i>
<i>Stuart Brabbs (SB)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Struan Candlish (SC)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Louis Smith (LS)</i>	<i>Mauchline Ballochmyle Angling Club</i>
<i>Scott Davidson (SD)</i>	<i>Muirkirk Angling Club</i>
<i>Kenny Murray</i>	
<i>W Galbraith</i>	
<i>R Smith</i>	

2. Apologies

None

3. Declaration of Members' Interests

In accordance with the Board's good governance obligations, the Board has agreed a Meetings Protocol and Policy on Members Interests. All Board Members present have signed (or will sign) a Declaration and the Board maintains a Register of Relevant Interests, pursuant to *Section 46E of the Salmon and Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 ("the 2003 Act")*.

In addition, the Clerk notified those present of the requirements of the Meetings Protocol. It was agreed that those present would each be noted as representing the interests of their Beat or organisation; and any other additional relevant financial interest should be declared under the *2003 Act*. No additional interests were declared.

4. Minutes of the Last Meeting

The Minutes of the previous Annual Public Meeting of 17 July 2024 were presented and unanimously approved as follows:

Proposed: SC Seconded: SB

The Minutes of the previous Board Meeting of 12 February 2025 were unanimously approved as follows:

Proposed: AH Seconded: RW

5. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

None

6. Presentation of the Annual Report of the activities of the Board for the year to 28 February 2025:

(a) Report from the Chair – Alan Hill, Chair (AH)

AH presented his detailed Report. There was discussion around the highlights:

Extremely busy – getting all paperwork up to date and finances in order.

Himalayan Balsam – on Lugar particularly – two or three work parties to pull some of this, later, as it starts to appear.

Video presentation of new Catch Return App. Seeing birds – Goosanders and also pollution.

Poaching – purchased cameras – new SIM cards – on to EE – will be able to be utilised through the whole system. Got one working on a part of the lower river. Resulted in 2 or 3 convictions and recording sound. Named each other – info passed on to the police,

River Ayr Watch Scheme – should be up and running later in the season. 2 fishermen to help run the scheme + 7 guys at Muirkirk Angling Club. Ayr Walk – will be providing mobile phone for the Coordinators. Will be liaising with Wildlife Protection Officers to do patrols on quadbikes.

Successful Bird Licence – two months of AH's own bird observations. In Ayrshire, that means the River Doon DSFB and River Ayr DSFB have such licences. This is making a big difference.

Got to look at the bigger picture. Best in a long time. Lot of fish in the system and a lot of fish in the redds at spawning time. Once back to sea, not much we can do. Protect and improve the habitat.

Looking forward to next year and moving forward – delighted two new Members of Annbank Angling Club and Kevin has been co-opted as additional Salmon Fisher's Representative at the Triennial Meeting.

(b) Report from the Clerk to the Board – Iain K Clark, Clerk to Board (IKC)

The Clerk presented a Report. There were no questions arising.

(c) Report on Fishery Assessments – IKC

The Clerk presented a Report. There were no questions arising.

(d) Consultation Responses – IKC

The Clerk presented a Report. There were no questions arising.
Response to consultation re SEPA Sealice – by 9 April 2025.

Windfarm developments – happening out in the Kyle Forest. ART have been consulting on these through the ART on behalf of the Board. Lot of monitoring.
Thanks to ART

(e) Good Governance – IKC

The Clerk presented a Report. There were no questions arising.

(f) Code of Practice – IKC

The Clerk presented the new Code of Practice approved at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors and emphasised that, in view of the River being Category 3 (Poor), ALL Salmon must be returned on catch and release.

This also being updated on the Board Website, and includes the QR Code for the new Catch Return App.

(g) Scientific Report – Ayrshire Rivers Trust (ART)

ART's Report was presented and spoken to by SB.

Highlights were:

Invasive Weeds – there was a discussion as to why are landowners not paying direct? The landowners may take the view paying for this through the Fishery Assessments. Board well placed to deal with this – coordinated. Only last few years the Board has been paying towards this. Japanese Knotweed – deal from upstream source down. Last year quite a bit in Cumnock and down the Lugar. Giant Hogweed – most of money spent on this, as it is dangerous, aiming to eradicate in the foreseeable future. Himalayan Balsam – can be done by the anglers – certain time of the year – couple of work parties – Balsam bash – maybe on a Sunday.

Fish Counter – SG invested £110k. ART has invested a lot of money into it themselves. Last year reported 30% accurate. Specialists say this is not accurate enough, but success with AI software – ART working with funding to count adult fish coming up and smolts out – still under development. Eventually able to publish figures. July couple of years ago 5 to 600 fish through counter. Most go through, unless there is a spate. May, June and July are prime months from an angling perspective. Not later in the year, as was traditionally the case.

Electrofishing – 4 Ayrshire Rivers – green vertical lines show same spikes in all 4 rivers. Expectation is that 4 year cycle, may be hopefully good numbers for fry this year. If anyone wants to go electrofishing in July, then contact ART in June.

SD and LS raised concerns re videos sent out during spawning. They were live for a matter of hours, and were then taken down. These can be reported at the end of the year.

There was a discussion regarding the River Watch Scheme + Cameras + Police Scotland all playing a role in fishery protection and enforcement.

ART have applied for funding for the Board for thermal imaging binoculars and cameras.

Pollution a constant problem in the river. ART dealing regularly with SEPA. Need reports at the time. Send a pollution report with pictures and ART will push with SEPA. SEPA are very slow to react. But an example where SB is giving a statement in prosecution of a landowner about pollution incident last year. Issue with development at Bogend – number of stakeholders, SEPA, Ayrshire Roads Alliance, ART, AH going on behalf of the Board.

LS – concerns re SEPA. Emails from Chair to SEPA – pushing for responses and will escalate. Some encouraging signs of new personnel with whom ART are engaging.

Pink Salmon – specific guidance included in the Code of Practice

Detailed Electrofishing Report produced in the Annual Report and people were encouraged to read. If any questions, phone up ART and come and see them. Don't compare tables between rivers. Just look at River Ayr.

LS – question of why there appears to be a 4 year cycle. ART responded it is possibly COVID related, environmental, don't know. Missing Salmon Alliance is researching.

Increasing numbers of Mackerel numbers – ICES – studying palaegic fish – factory ships trying to reduce their numbers – 2M fish – climate change – North Atlantic fish – moving and so eating smolts.

ART - Lots of contributory factors. Lot to consider

(h) Annual Catch Returns

IKC presented a Summary Report. He emphasized again the importance of timely, accurate Catch Returns including Rod Effort. There were no questions arising.

7. Presentation of Annual Audited Statement of Accounts to 28 February 2025

The Clerk presented the Statement of Accounts for the Board to 28 February 2025 which were unanimously approved at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors. There were no questions arising.

8. Proposed activities of the Board for the next year

(a) Updated Budget - IKC

The Clerk presented the Updated Budget as approved at the Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors.

CM asked a question re investment of reserves in some other high interest bearing account. IKC advised the admin would be too involved and need instant access.

(b) Proposed Works for Discussion – ART

ART advised they were doing more fencing and tree planting due to donations from other funders

Nether Wellwood Engineering - £3,000 towards this and a wider Wildlife Fisheries funding £1,200 already allocated + and an additional £1,800

SPEN Funding – have £16M to put into environmental work in South Scotland. Could assist with some additional bigger projects e.g. Garpel Water Barrier Easements – old railway cutting – passable, but not as many fish getting through. Constrained between two walls – recommended. Would get fish up into really good habit. Possible £8k spend. **Agreed to Defer to next Board Meeting**

Fencing – Board could make available e.g. like the River Doon DSFB has done (an offer to pay up to 50% contribution towards approved fencing to landowners cooperating in appropriate works being done) **Agreed to defer to next Board Meeting**

Glenstang Burn at Stair Livestock fencing – similar work to that on the River Doon DSFB. To stop silt levels in river. Gravel has cleared. Salmon spawned in there, which had never spawned there before. Done in Culroy Burn on River Doon and one of the Proprietors notes the river clears much earlier after a spate.

Treeplanting – need to put up fences etc. Sheep and cattle will damage trees.

9. Question and Answer Session:

- (a) Presentation of Updated Fisheries Information Pack - IKC
- (b) Video Presentation and Demonstration of New Catch Return App – ART

ART presented the new Catch Return App they had developed and the Board encouraged all Clubs, Associations, Syndicates and Anglers to use this to assist in Annual Catch Return process.

10. Any Other Business

None

11. Next Meeting: Board Meeting: 4 June 2025 at 7:00pm

AH thanked everyone for attending and the meeting concluded at 21:05