



# **RIVER AYR DISTRICT** **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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## **MINUTES**

of

Board Meeting

of

**RIVER AYR DISTRICT SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

to be held at

**The Mauchline & District Kilmarnock FC Supporters Club**

**8 Earl Grey Street, Mauchline, KA5 5AD**

**held on Wednesday 17 December 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>Murray Ratcliffe (MR)</i>	<i>Annbank Angling Club</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>Stuart Brabbs (SB)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Struan Candlish (SC)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Carolyn Bryce (CB)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>

### **2. Apologies**

<i>Nick Wright (NW)</i>	<i>Sorn Estate/Dumfries Estates, Board Member</i>
<i>Kevin Weir (KW)</i>	<i>Dumfries Estate, (Salmon Fishers' Rep)</i>
<i>Greg Bowie (GB)</i>	<i>Annbank Angling Club</i>

### **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 had 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")*. No additional interests were declared.

### **4. Report from the Clerk to the Board**

#### **(a) Correspondence and Actions**

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

The Clerk explained about the difficulties experienced over the last few months due to busy workload and staff absence and apologised for any delayed responses. Arrangements have been put in place to address this, with support also being offered by ART and the Board. It was agreed that the Clerk and Board would endeavour to work on as efficient a basis, using electronic communication where possible.

**(b) Report on Fishery Assessments**

The Clerk updated the Board on the current recovery of outstanding Fishery Assessments. It appeared that a cheque apparently sent by Mauchline & Ballochmyle Angling Club had not been received and was handed to the Clerk (and subsequently banked with Gilson Gray LLP on behalf of the Board).

A discussion took place regarding the beats which were the subject of former tenancies from various Proprietors to the Cumnock & District Angling Association (**the CDDA**). It is noted that as a consequence of the non-payment of Fishery Assessments by the CDDA, the Board had required to send Fishery Assessment Notices directly to the Proprietors seeking payment. It was reported that a number of the Proprietors have confirmed that they have refused to give written permission to the CDDA or any persons purporting to sell tickets to fish their beats.

It was agreed that further correspondence would be sent to the Proprietors of the former CDDA tenancies and an updated Report presented to the Board in due course.

**(c) Financial Report**

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

**5. Proposed Fishery Assessment Rate for 2025/2026**

The Clerk updated the Board on the revaluation of the river expected to take place with effect from 1 April 2026. MS had apparently received a Draft Valuation dated 30 November 2025. He was asked to send this to the Clerk, as neither the Clerk nor ART were aware of who at AVJB was now dealing with Fisheries Valuation, despite both having made enquiries to AVJB.

The Clerk is to make contact with AVJB to try and ascertain who is dealing and to request a Teams Meeting with them regarding how the Revaluation is to be completed. SB, RW and CM expressed a willingness to attend any such meeting.

There was a discussion regarding the methodology being used/to be used and the desire that it should be seen to be equitable and transparent to everyone – clubs and members of public – because some clubs are struggling to survive.

**6. Annual Catch Returns**

The Clerk updated general on the ongoing exercise (the Annual Catch Returns having been sent out a little later this year than in previous years). There were concerns expressed that it appears some clubs may be under reporting.

CM pointed out that Sorn Angling Club don't allow Members to get a new Annual Ticket, unless they have sent in their Annual Catch Return and the Board considers this is good practice.

Annbank Angling Club have broken down monthly returns, and are making best attempts to obtain Rod Effort details.

There was a discussion about the importance of Rod Effort, as well as Catch Returns, to allow better and more accurate statistics, and this was noted as being of particular importance during any Revaluation exercise being conducted by AVJB.

The Clerk advised there wasn't enough data yet to be able to give an indication on Catch Returns for the 2025 season. He acknowledged, with thanks the Returns handed to him by Mauchline & Ballochmyle Angling Club (who indicated they were unable to gather accurate details of Rod Effort).

There was a discussion about the use of the ART Catch Return App. There were a total of 35 submissions across 7 beats. It was commented that, if Clubs encouraged their Members to use the App, then this would help them gather relevant Rod Effort and Catch Return data to aid the completion of the formal Annual Catch Returns.

It was noted that Mauchline & Ballochmyle Angling Association will be encouraging the use of the App next year to particularly assist in more accurate Catch Returns (and perhaps to help with Rod Effort).

## 7. Report from Ayrshire Rivers Trust

A Report was presented by ART. Highlights were as follows:

**Electrofishing** - There are improved fry numbers – more green in right hand column – this is quite heartening. From available information from a number of sources, it seems like there may be better catches this year. From the data gathered, it seems to be a 4 year cycle.

ART made an offer to the Members of the Board if they want to join them carrying out electrofishing –done in the 3<sup>rd</sup> week in July – to come out and see what ART do.

**Tarholm Bridge in the lower river** - There was a discussion regarding this location, which is good spawning territory, with later running fish and is good habitat.

**Pennyfadzeoch Meander Reconnection** – ART have submitted a project development application to NatureScot's Nature Restoration Fund. It is a massive project and would need extensive funding to identify the risks and get reports and consider green engineering which may be appropriate. There is a lot of river bank erosion caused below. SB explained the reason it was originally moved, was to protect a coal bing on Barony side – hoping to take energy out in to the pump house pool, but if we got funding and permission to put back the meander, it would slow down the river and help in restoring the river.

**Pollution - Ochiltree Water Treatment Works - Scottish Water** – AH and SB have been liaising with the householder, Claire Knowles, of Langholm Farm who has been documenting the sewage, sometimes untreated, coming from the WT works. They have installed a camera to monitor and taken photographs. There have been meetings with the Community Council, SW and various FOI requests. They need to arrange lorries to take sludge away. They have been checking and photographing and rainfall meters. And there have been emails sent to SEPA, who have not replied to SB and Claire direct. Apparently SEPA are evidence gathering.

SB commented that apparently someone did an invertebrate sample above and below the location. The Board would like to instruct an invertebrate sampling. ART are dealing

with the local officer and this is ongoing. Claire, AH and SB have a WhatsApp group and will continue to put pressure on SW

Couldn't get in to water to do sampling at this time (water high) – in Spring ART will do this and send away for independent analysis.

**Escaped Farmed Salmon** – We are aware of an escape from MOWI's Gorsten salmon farm in Upper Loch Linnhe on 5 October 2025. FMS have been pursuing it at the moment. ART are liaising. The escaped farmed salmon are alleged to be immature, but there are still concerns re introgression. ART have requested introgression monitoring. MOWI have confirmed they will pay for it.

MOWI just had a licence refused on the East of Isle of Lewis

Also there has been a proposal launched by MOWI for a large farm off SANDA Island at Mull of Kintyre. ART are doing what they can on behalf of all of the Ayrshire Boards and the expectation is to submit letters for each of the Boards.

### **Bailiffing Equipment Fund**

Fishery Management Scotland (FMS) were successful in securing Bailiffing Equipment through the Marine Fund. The equipment will be received in February. This is worth £17,120 and the equipment list comprises of: x4 spydabots, x4 thermal monoculars, x2 digital thermal binoculars.

**Invasive Weeds** – ART have carried out Giant Hogweed control again on a shoestring every year.

They have also done two years of Himalayan Balsam removal and there are some improvements, but we need more people to get involved, as there is only a small team.

**Barriers Easements** – ART are in the process of preparing a tender submission for the removal/easement of Burnock Mill Weir and the Ness Falls Weir on the Water of Coyle from the SEPA Water Environment Fund. The landowner has now agreed to cooperate and this potentially opens up 30km of spawning grounds.

Ochiltree Dam was discussed. This is a partial obstruction and it would not be easy to get funding + there are concerns re heritage.

Stair Dam – there is the possibility of considering a rock ramp, longer term.

ART to consider future projects and make recommendations at the next Board Meeting.

## **8. River Watch Scheme**

It was agreed to defer the discussion to the next meeting, when **KW** can be present (as the Rive Watch Coordinator).

## **9. Any Other Business**

**Fish Counter** – no update on developments

**Cameras** – now got 7 cameras – can be installed to assist monitoring alleged poaching spots etc. KW is coordinating with ART. Kelts had been seen on the water and also otters.

There were reports at seeing many spawned fish at Glenmuir and there were a number of kelts seen at the Catrine Dam last year.

It was noted that kelts will go out the river by late April.

**Bird Licence** – The Applications are being made to NatureScot and it is believed that, assuming the Licence is granted, this will make a big difference to protecting the smolts.

**Payment to Mauchline & District Kilmarnock Supporters Club** - the Board agreed that a Payment is to be made to Mauchline & District Kilmarnock Supporters Club in the sum of £100 towards the use of their premises for our meetings.

## **10. Dates of Next Meetings**

**(a) Board Meeting - 18 February 2026**

**(b) Annual Meetings – 22 April 2026**

6:30pm Board Meeting (re Fishery Assessment Rate and Proposed Work)

7pm Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors

7:30pm Annual Public Meeting

AH thanked everyone for attending and the meeting concluded at 20:38