



RIVER STINCHAR DISTRICT **SALMON FISHERY BOARD**

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MINUTES

of

Meeting of River Stinchar District Salmon Fishery Board

on 16 December 2025 at 5:30pm

by video conference by Microsoft Teams:

1. Welcome – Johnny Warrender, Chair (JW)

JW welcomed those present and indicated he was particularly pleased to welcome the new Board Members who were to be formally co-opted. JW also note his thanks on behalf of the Board to the previous Members of the Board who had given long service to the Board, namely Roger Pirrie and Gordon Hyslop.

2. Persons Present

<i>Johnny Warrender (JW)</i>	<i>Benan, Pinmore, Board Member (Chair)</i>
<i>Iain K Clark (IKC)</i>	<i>Gilson Gray LLP (Clerk to the Board)</i>
<i>Stuart Brabbs (SB)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>
<i>Struan Candlish (SC)</i>	<i>Ayrshire Rivers Trust</i>

Previously C-opted Salmon Angler's Representative:

<i>Pamela Dunlop (PD)</i>	<i>Glenginnet, Barr</i>
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Appointment of Additional Co-opted Members

The Clerk noted that discussions had taken place amongst the Board's existing Members, including JW, RW and FY. As RW and FY were unable to attend, they had sent confirmation to the Clerk to confirm that they agreed, together with JW, in the Co-option of the following additional Co-opted Members to the Board:

<i>Lord Frederick Wellesley (FW)</i>	<i>Kirkhill, Colmonell</i>
<i>Hamish Dalrymple (HD)</i>	<i>Ballantrae Estuary</i>
<i>Derek Smith (DS)</i>	<i>Alton Albany, Barr</i>

The Clerk therefore recorded that all three had been so co-opted.

3. Apologies

<i>Lord Richard Wellesley (RW)</i>	<i>Knockdolian, Colmonell (Mandate sent)</i>
<i>Francis Young (FY)</i>	<i>Balnowlart, Board Member (Mandate sent)</i>

4. Declaration of Members' Interests - Iain K Clark, Clerk (IKC)

The Clerk explained that, in accordance with the Board's good governance obligations, the Board had agreed a Meetings Protocol and Policy on Members Interests. 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”). The Clerk stated that all Board Members (new and old) would be asked to sign fresh Declarations of Interests. For the moment, no new or amended declarations were made by the existing Members.

5. Minutes of the Last Meeting (DOC 1)

The Minutes of the Annual Public Meeting of 3 June 2025 drafted by IKC were proposed for approval by SB and accepted unanimously by those in attendance.

6. Report from the Clerk – IKC

(a) Correspondence (DOC 2)

IKC presented a Written Report of Correspondence and Actions since the previous meeting. There were no questions arising.

(b) Report on Fishery Assessments (DOC 3)

IKC presented a Written Summary Report on Fisheries Assessments, as follows:

	RECOVERED BY GGLLP	% RECOVERED	Total Outstanding	No of Beats Outstanding	Comments
Arrears 2020/2021 to 2022/2023	£15,784.00	98.69%	£210.00	1	Proposed Write Off
Arrears of Fishery Assessments 2023/2024	£19,304.00	98.69%	£256.00	2	Proposed Write Off
Of which Arrears 2020/2021 to 2023/2024 remaining Queried/Disputed			£466.00	2	Proposed Write Off
Fishery Assessments 2024/2025	£18,608.00	95.13%	£952.00	4	
Fishery Assessments 2025/2026	£16,864.00	86.22%	£2,696.00	11	
TOTALS	£70,560.00	94.49%	£4,114.00		

It was noted there had been a longstanding dispute/arrears by one Proprietor. However, after extensive correspondence from IKC/JW and a meeting between JW and the proprietor concerned, the Proprietor has paid the Fishery Assessments for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 and given a commitment to make payment of annual Fishery Assessments thereafter. The individual concerned has also made a Contribution towards the work that ART does on the river in the sum of £500. On the basis of all of these circumstances, on the Proposal of JW, Seconded by HD, the Board unanimously agreed to write off Arrears from 2020/2021 to 2023/2024, totalling £338.00.

Consistent with that decision, the Board also unanimously wrote off £128 of arrears for another individual relating to the Year 2023/24, leaving the outstanding balances of £128 each for 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 outstanding.

SB commented that the Clerk was to be commended for the considerable work undertaken in securing the extent of recovery of arrears over the last three years, since his appointment.

JW, as Chair, commented that it was his intention to keep more on top of such matters, and noted it was important to note when beats on the river change hands; and that he intends to reach out to new proprietors and introduce himself and discuss and explain how the Board operates.

(c) Financial Report (DOC 4)

IKC presented a written report and noted that, due to the regular expenditure, it was essential that all efforts are made to recover the balance of any arrears of fishery assessments.

7. Revaluation of Rateable Value of River as at 1 April 2026 – IKC/JW

The Clerk noted that he was still trying to establish who at Ayrshire Valuation Joint Board (AVJB) was carrying out the Revaluation, as personnel had moved on twice in the last two years. IKC will pass on the Direct Dial number that he had to SB, who has also been trying to make similar enquiries with AVJB. Once the relevant person has been established, IKC, JW (and perhaps one other) are hoping to arrange a meeting with AVJB.

8. Report on Budget and Proposed Fishery Assessment Rates – IKC/JW

There was a general discussion about the Budget and that the Fishery Assessment Rate for 2026/2027 cannot be fixed until the Revaluation of the River has been completed by AVJB with effect from 1 April 2026.

9. Scientific Report – Stuart Brabbs, Ayrshire Rivers Trust (SB) – (DOC 5)

SC presented the Report from ART. Highlights included:

It appears from the electro fishing that there is a 4 year cycle for higher fry numbers and that 2025 was another higher year. He also presented data from the other Ayrshire rivers, but warned against not comparing too much between rivers, as they are quite different habitats. However, it did appear that they all do share the oceanic phase that, if there are good returns to the river, then there will be good numbers of fry on the river. That is not always reflected in Annual Catch Returns (e.g. on the River Girvan there are good fry numbers, but the Annual Catch Returns do not seem as high, which may be symptomatic of poor rod effort).

There was a general discussion about the two Fisheries Management Plans which had been prepared (both of which will be circulated). One was prepared ahead of time and was more detailed and more nuanced. A second was commissioned by Scottish Government, designed to be more high level and to give a clearer picture of investment required

River Categorisation - it was noted the river would once again be categorised as Category 3 / Poor, requiring mandatory Catch and Release, with which ART and the Board agree.

ART continue to handle Consultation Responses for the Board. For the new Board Members, SC clarified that the Board is a statutory Consultee for a number of

developments and ART is the Scientific Adviser to the Board and provides feedback to developers and regulators, as required

One example was windfarm developments in the head waters, where the concern is that a watercourse acts as a vector for potential population and we want to be able to monitor impact and feedback. SC commented that ART have a good relationship with developers on the whole.

ART have put in a lot of work to monitoring and making submissions on behalf of the Board, if they receive notice of a development or potential development. For example, there is a proposed early stage objection regarding a new salmon farm proposed for the Isle of Sanda in the Mull of Kintyre – and ART are liaising with FMS, who are liaising with the relevant persons regarding potentially putting in objections.

SC pointed out that invasive weeds are a real issue on the river. ART have secured around £70k from Carrick Futures to allow them to deliver more of work of this nature. This will likely result in a reduction of the Board's investment into the system. In the past, ART has done around £5k of work per annum on Japanese Knotweed (**JK**) injection for the Board. Normally they would require Match Funding, but they may now be able to reduce the Board's contribution to around £2,500 and be able to do around £20k of JK Control.

JW asked about whether the work being done will result in JK being eradicated. SC explained that it can still be spread by spates, inappropriate strimming etc. Where it is undisturbed, it is OK. SC indicated it will not be eradicated over the next 3 years, but it will allow ART to make a much bigger dent in it and they may possibly go back to further funders etc

It was also noted that Fisheries Management Scotland (**FMS**) have been working on bringing more private money into fisheries management. It is understood we need funding to help controlling Invasives – monoculture die back over winter – left with bare banks – spates over winter, lose land to the river, silt and sediment mobilised when salmon back in the river to spawn – principle reasons to get project in place.

They got a report back on possible funding for the Duisk. It was agreed that JW and SC would discuss offline.

Another piece of good news was that ART have secured £12,363.15 from the Riverwoods Development Fund. With some community and landowner engagement, with baseline monitoring to deliver riparian planting on Water of Assel. This is a significant tributary, but has a lack of riparian planting and could contribute significantly for juvenile trout and salmon. They are going to look to other funding sources etc and will be preparing a small management plan to take to funders. They will be looking for a viable project which needs funding. In the first instance they will be visiting requisite landowners. This might be done in tandem with a Board Meeting sometime next year. There will be an element of match funding.

It was noted that the National Park Proposal has been scrapped and they have taken on board a lack of desire to progress this.

Pinmullan Burn Tree Planting - ART staff have completed the planting of 350 native broadleaf trees across the lower reaches of the Pinmullan Burn having secured funding of £952.50 towards the cost of trees, guards and stakes, as well as updating the water gates to make them stockproof.

FMS – secured equipment from the Marine Fund to a value of £11,760 to help with the River Watch Scheme i.e. x2 Thermal Imaging Minoculars, x2 Digital Binoculars and x2 Spydabots (roof mounted camera systems).

All in all, that is approximately £100k of investment into Stinchar over the next few years and is a testament to FMS, and to the partnership between ART and the Board. . – Bailiffing Equipment + Partnership Trust and Board. IKC wanted to note his congratulations and thanks to ART for all that they have done for the Board in this connection to secure these various grants of funding to carry out work on the river.

It was noted that in early October 75,000 salmon escaped from a MOWI facility in Loch Linnhe during Storm Amy when one of the pens was damaged. As the salmon season is closed, there is no way to remove the fish from the rivers. There are concerns about introgression with wild salmon stocks. FMS have been liaising to find would is to be done to recover the fish and what monitoring protocols will be put in place

JW thanked ART very much on behalf of all the Board Members for following up and getting these funding plans under way. It was noted that for the Riverwoods Project, this was going to need a certain amount of core funding from the Board and it was agreed JW will accompany Struan to meetings etc

The expectation is that the additional funding secured will reduce the Board's match for JK control to £4k overall compared to £5k.

As regards the Smolt Shepherding, it was discussed whether this was planned again to happen this coming year. ART would be recommending to the Board that they do this again. In the past year, it led to early notification regarding the issues with the gravel/shingle build up and the problems were identified of smolts being prevented from going out to sea, which resulted in early rectification by ART with the relevant agencies including SEPA

SB also commented that anglers could see the direct efforts being made to protect smolts leaving the river.

ART will circulate the Fisheries Management Plans or a link to where they can be downloaded

IKC also agreed to circulate a link to the Freshwater Fisheries (Consolidation) (Scotland) Act 2003 (“**the 2003 Act**”), which was amended by the Aquaculture and Fisheries (Scotland) Act 2013 (“**the 2013 Act**”) – and to the Fisheries Assessments – FAQs documents which he had prepared and circulated to Proprietors.

10. Annual Catch Returns – IKC

IKC provided a verbal report, explaining that Annual Catch Return Forms were coming in, having been sent out just a few days earlier

11. Annual Bird Cull Licence / Bird Count / Smolt Shepherding - JW

The Chairman of the River Ayr DSFB, Alan Hill (**AH**) is liaising with Gordon Hyslop, who is happy to supervise the Bird Cull. AH knows the system and is happy to apply for licenses for the Stinchar at the same time as he is submitting those for the River Ayr DSFB. JW will be sending AH a small token of our appreciation of the work he's done on our behalf.

SB commented about also confirming that the Smolt Shepherding is also being done in an effort to scare birds as well, as well as bird counts. He noted that ART had produced a pro forma document for the Smolt Shepherding and there is a better chance of NatureScot issuing the Licence, if data is recorded.

SB commented that they were waiting on the results of a study carried out by the Atlantic Salmon Trust and Salmon Alliance about bird scat analysis.

At this point, FW apologized that he had to leave for another meeting.

12. Update re River Watch Scheme - JW

JW provided a short update. It is acknowledged that, whilst the relevant personnel have been recruited, progress on this is dependent on Jack Warrender, who will liaise with IKC in the New Year and then put in place the relevant routines and details of what we are expecting our river watchers to do. JW noted that we are extremely grateful to ART for liaising with FMS to secure the bailiffing equipment, due to be delivered in February 2026, to support the River Watch Scheme.

13. Any Other Business

HD noted that they had been served notice by AMEY, who intend to do works to footings in Ballantrae Bridge in Spring. SB noted that ART would certainly like to be included in discussions. HD has instructed Savills to act on their behalf as Landowner. HD will keep the Board informed, should no formal notification come to the Board.

ART noted an invitation to any Board Members who would like to accompany ART in electrofishing in the summer next year.

14. Dates of Next Meetings

(a) Board Meeting – likely to be February 2026 (date TBC)

(b) Annual Meeting of Qualified Proprietors / Annual Public Meeting – May 2026 (TBC)

JW thanked everyone for attending.

The meeting concluded at 19:16.