

Beaully District Fishery Board Annual Public Meeting

Date: 9th December 2025

Location: Lovat Arms, Beaully, IV4 7BS and Microsoft Teams

Attendees: Alastair Campbell (AC), Charles McAndrew (CM), Donald Fraser (DF), Eugenie Haniel (EH), Hamish Hope (HH), Jim Braithwaite (JB) and Ruth Watts (RW).

Public: Gordon Armstrong, David Crerar, Reece Paton, Mike Spencer-Nairn, Frank Spencer-Nairn and Peter Smith.

MINUTES

1. Apologies and Introduction

Ali Skinner (BDSFB Bailiff) was not in attendance.

Alastair Campbell welcomed and thanked those in attendance and introduced Ruth Watts who primarily presented the meeting.

2. 2023/24 Summary

The 2023/24 annual report is available on the Beaully District Salmon Fishery Boards website. The presented slides relating to 2023/24 are enclosed within these minutes.

3. 2024/25 Summary

The 2024/25 annual report is available on the Beaully District Salmon Fishery Boards website. The presented slides relating to 2024/25 are enclosed within these minutes.

4. Future Plans

Ruth Watts presented the priorities for 2026 with a focus of ensuring a strong bailiffing presence, smolts and habitat improvement.

5. Fish Counts

The fish count data can be seen on the enclosed slides. The total rod catch data has not been received but what has been received for 2025 suggests an extremely poor year.

6. Accounts

Hamish Hope presented a summary of the accounts for 2023 and 2024 with full accounts being available within the annual reports, all available on the website.

7. AOCB

The floor was opened for questions.

Frank Spencer-Nairn asked for information on a potential online portal from SSE that shows information such as fish pass outages and fish count data. Such portal has been discussed by the Board with SSE, it is hopeful that one will be made available but this will not be in the immediate future. The importance of communication between SSE and the Board was highlighted to ensure that any fish pass errors are communicated to proprietors at the earliest opportunity.

Frank Spencer-Nairn asked if adult sampling was planned for 2025. Ruth Watts said yes, the Board is hopeful the adult sampling will take place in 2026 with the help from the Lower Beauly Fishing Syndicate ghillies. Gordon Armstrong, LBFS ghillie, mentioned that the 2025 conditions did not allow for as many samples to be taken as had been hoped.

Frank Spencer-Nairn brought out the proposed works at Black Bridge and expressed his disappointment on the impact SSEN will be having on the landscape. He spoke of how the Black Bridge could be an opportunity for SSEN to improve on the aesthetics and that by not doing so, it is a wasted opportunity. There was a general agreement and concern in the room on the impact SSEN will have to the area in the future. He asked if the Board will put comments in to the planning application. The Board will respond to the planning application when able.

Frank Spencer-Nairn asked what the Boards view on the widening of River Trusts scopes to include further environmental factors other than fish. River Trusts is an Agenda item for the Board meeting taking place immediately after the public meeting.

Mike Spencer-Nairn asked if SSE are validating their fish counts as there is a concern of low numbers of fish. Ruth Watts explained that it is understood that the AI counters are the most accurate way to count. Alastair Campbell said that Chris Conroy (SSE) has a high confidence in the AI figures but the data transfer is the problem. Jim Braithwaite asked if the counts are independently validated. The Board will take this back to SSE. Charlie McAndrew highlighted that there was a difference in seasonality this year, that earlier in the season there did appear to be less fish but generally the numbers increased towards the end of the season.

Peter Smith spoke of how there were weeks on end where he did not see any fish in the river.

Frank Spencer-Nairn briefly explained the genetic evaluation of the salmon population in the River Farrar. This report is available to view on the Beauly District Salmon Fishery Boards website.

8. Date of Next Meeting

The next annual public meeting will be held in December 2026 with a specific date to be confirmed closer to the time.