

River Report

The updates below are for December 2025 – February 2026.

1. Protecting Fish Migration

Coastal & Marine

In this period, we have responded to 4 coastal and marine consultations:

1. Written consultation response was submitted for - Green Volt Offshore Wind Limited for a variation to the existing section 36 consent and marine licences. The wind farms maximum export capacity is 560 MW, maximum number of turbines, 35 and consented red line boundary is proposed to remain as originally consented in April 2024.
2. Written consultation response submitted for - Morven Offshore Wind Limited – Hawthorn Pit Grid Connection - Consultation on HRA Screening Report. The project seeks to establish a grid connection between the Morven North or Morven South Offshore Wind Array Projects located approximately 61km at its closest point from the Aberdeenshire coast in Scottish waters, and the National Grid Hawthorn Pit Substation in northeast England.
3. Written consultation response submitted for - Port of Aberdeen - Maintenance Dredge of Aberdeen north and south harbours.
4. Written consultation response submitted for - Muir Mhór Offshore Wind Farm - Consultation on Further Additional Information. Offshore generating station, located approximately 63 km east of Peterhead. The generating station installed capacity of approximately 1 GW, comprising a maximum of 67 wind turbine generators with tip heights of up to 340 metres above Mean Sea Level.

2. Protecting Adult Fish

In-river

We have responded to 5 proposed in-river/riverside developments:

1. Water of Dye – Written response for the proposed Glendye Wind Farm Overhead Line Grid Connection.
2. River Dee – Further response to Aberdeen City Council on the EIA scoping consultation request for proposed housing development at Inchgarth road.
3. Water of Dye – Written response to the Glen Dye Moor Environmental Impact Assessment Report. The project will increase native riparian tree cover from under 5% to 54% with over 240 hectares of new riparian woodland and 1,800 hectares of degraded peatland will be restored.



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4. River Dee – Written response to CNPA planning for an application to create 10 ponds as habitat for Northern Damselfly, a Priority Species in the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan, Abergeldie Estate.
5. Burn of Findon – Further liaison and advice (due to proposed method statement changes) provided to Scottish Water regarding works to replace part of the mains pipe at Findon.

Fish handling

We are about to receive water temperature loggers for installing into 3 locations in the mainstem Dee (Dinnet, Banchory, Altries) and one site on the Feugh (funded by Scottish Government's Marine Fund Scotland). The loggers will record water temperature every 15 minutes and will be available to members of the public through the DDSFB website. It is intended that this will help guide angling decisions during warm spells and help adherence to the Conservation Code. The Trust has published [its report on water temperature monitoring in 2025](#), based on 33 continuous temperature monitoring sites, showing that temperature could have had a significant impact on juvenile fish in 2025, with water temperatures exceeding 20C in May at many sites and maximum temperatures reached of 27C.

Illegal exploitation

No rod and line poaching incidents were recorded, which is normal for this period. As we move into shorter nights and hopefully an increase in fish numbers, staff shifts will be adjusted to provide cover.

Active policing patrols are currently being actioned into late evening. Information regarding netting gangs suggests the threat is current and known gangs are active and have planned to target the Dee.

A boost to the policing work has been provided by the surveillance kit supplied by FMS (through a grant received from the government's Marine Fund Scotland). The quality of night vision and thermal gear is helping us monitor the river in far more challenging conditions than we have previously been able to and it is a welcome sign to see Scottish Government's financial commitment to protecting salmon.

Please always report any ongoing or suspected poaching activity so we can act on this as a priority.

3. Managing Predation

Seals

12 in-river seal sightings (within the licensing area between Park and RGU) were reported. The sightings this year seem to be greatly reduced and mainly of harbour seals. As ever, thanks to the ghillies for assisting in observations.

The Sea Mammal Research Unit (SMRU) began testing the 'detect and deter' system late in the year and this has now been completed. This was the 'detection' element and early reports are that this was very successful, in terms of using sonar to reliably identify seals within the river. We



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are now planning for a further funding application to Scottish Government to test the full 'detect and deter' system later this year. This will be based on the sonic deterrent that proved highly effective on the North Esk in previous tests.

A meeting was held with Cabinet Secretary Mairi Gougeon MSP, along with the Marine Directorate (MD), NatureScot, FMS and SMRU, to discuss seal predation. There was widespread agreement that the detect & deter work should continue to be supported, with the next phase being delivered this year. The seal licensing was also discussed as a necessary tool when other options fail, and there was widespread agreement on this for grey seals. Discussions pinpointed some existing audit-related blockers with NatureScot that all agreed could be addressed. We will focus on addressing these whilst FMS support a review process with the MD Licensing team.

Goosanders

One cormorant was shot during this period. The licence for goosanders was temporarily halted over the winter months and is due to re-start on 1st April, this is done to ensure there are sufficient birds remaining on the licence to protect smolts during their downstream migration.

Bird counts will resume at the end of March.

4. Protecting Water Quality & Quantity

Water quality

A contractor installed 0.9km of new stock fencing along the River Muick to continue the corridor of wider buffers recently facilitated by the Dee team. Tree planting is to be carried out here over the next couple of years.

Green bank engineering (in association with new water margin fencing) was installed to slow erosion and bank collapse on the Cholzie Burn (Glen Muick). Willow weaving was backfilled with brash and a willow deflector installed, and bankside tree planting is planned for Spring.

Walkover surveys were carried out in upper Glencat and Balloch (Feugh) to assess potential for riverbank habitat enhancement/restoration.

Pollution

No pollution events were reported during this period. Please pass on details of any ongoing issues and to keep reporting them to SEPA.

5. Controlling Fish Disease & Biosecurity

All beats have been provided with biosecurity supplies and we ask you spread the word on how vital this is with anglers. Please contact the River Office if supplies are running low.

Saprolegnia

We arranged a fish health and anatomy workshop attended by our staff, Don and Spey Fishery Boards and the James Hutton Institute. This was to develop a better understanding of the visible



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signs of infection/injury in salmonids and provide guidance on how to take samples from dead fish and perform necropsies.

6. Controlling INNS

Plants

We are delighted that NatureScot is continuing its support of the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative for a further 2 years, beyond March 2026. This fully supports the Trust's Invasive Species Officer, and for summer 2026 will also enable a Seasonal Officer to be employed to help deliver control work across both the Dee and Don.

As part of SISI and working with the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI), there is development of a rust fungus trial on the Lower Dee. The fungus is a potential biological control agent to tackle the spread of Himalayan balsam and is approved for release in the UK. So far, the lab has been able to grow the Himalayan balsam seeds collected here and a match with a suitable fungus seems likely.

Mink

We currently have 10 rafts/traps out on the Dee and as we come out of winter we will be looking to deploy more.

We have also met with Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels on possible ways to support each other's work, particularly where we overlap in Aberdeen.

7. Restoring Bankside Habitat

Tree planting

- 2,000 alder, treated with Trico deer repellent, were 'mob-planted' on the upper Darrarie Burn in Glen Muick.
- As part of our winter planting programme in partnership with Trust volunteers and Guardians, 3,700 trees were planted in fenced margins in Glen Muick.
- Preparations are underway for further volunteer events with riverbank tree planting in Glen Muick and at Balnault Farm (Coldrach Burn).
- Development of a riverbank woodland Forestry Grant Scheme proposal in Glen Girnock with Abergeldie Estate is progressing slowly.
- Liaison with Mar Lodge Estate is investigating new riverbank woodland expansion along upper Dee tributaries, with several site walkovers carried out.
- 3,000 trees have been supplied to Balmoral Estate for additional planting in Glen Muick and Ballochbuie upper tributaries.
- 1,400 mixed native broadleaves were planted within existing enclosures on the Clunie.

Floodplains & wetlands



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Culter Restoration Project

The development project, 'Reviving the Leuchar Burn' (funded by Nature Restoration Fund; NRF), is in the stage of finalising options for 5km of the Garrick and Leuchar burns. Ground investigations are planned for March before the final design report is produced.

Upper Dee Restoration

The Upper Dee River and Floodplain Restoration Project aims to restore approximately 3 km of the Upper Dee River and its 135-hectare floodplain, west of Braemar (this is led by CNPA as part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme). In partnership with the CNPA, we have awarded a contractor for the implementation of the restoration design. Site meetings have been held with the successful contractor to plan logistics for this major project.

Selective felling of non-native conifers to enhance bankside habitat was carried out on the upper Aultonrea Burn (Glen Muick).

Survey and design of a restoration proposal for the Clarack Burn (Dinnet) has been modelled and design development is taking place through the Save the Spring programme.

Our application to NRF for the development of a restoration proposal to restore a site on the floodplain of upper River Muick has been rejected due to a lack of deer management strategy.

8. Restoring Instream Habitat

Large Woody Structures (LWS), boulder additions, flood channels

A walkover survey was conducted by specialist contractor and Dee DSFB staff along several tributaries in Glen Muick to identify suitable locations for spawning gravel enhancements.

At the recently opened historic lade in Glen Muick, a compacted brash deflector was installed to encourage high flows across the floodplain.

Creating Free Passage

Culter Dam

Modelling of the removal of the Culter Dam (funded by Open Rivers Programme) is still underway, although weather conditions during early 2026 have held up some fieldwork to inform design and are now rescheduled for March. A project extension has been granted by the funders to accommodate this delay. A community drop in event to update on the progress of the dam removal feasibility study will be held on 26th March.

9. Gaining Support



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Communications

Our two new websites went live for the river opening at the start of February; this has been a big project, and we now have the right visibility on each site for our two organisations. Some content is included on both sites when it is relevant to a wider audience and staff are split as to which organisation they work for, although LH/DC cover both. The content will increase on both websites. New analytics dashboards have been loaded to each website which will give us a better picture once the websites have been live for 6 months.

www.riverdee.org is now the DDSFB site and has more fishing content including an increased section on guiding, greater visibility for the fishing reports, fisheries protection, and restoration work. There is a button to take people to the RDT website. Events on here are around angling development.

www.riverdeetrust.org is now the RDT site and has no fishing content, the focus on this site is for a much wider audience and focus in on how people can get involved and support the RDT, the education programme has a large dedicated section on this site, INNS is on this site, and Save the Spring is anchored on this site with a link on the DDSFB site. There is a Science in Action page to highlight the work of the biologists. The shop is on this site, the donate button is on here and so is a new “Leave a legacy” page. Events on this site are around fundraising.

Reports added to the [resource library](#) are the Redd Count, Water Temperature and Muick Fish counter ones.

Social media

All social media sites have seen an increase in followers this last quarter –

- Fish Dee Facebook – 5199 followers; increase of +132
- River Dee Facebook – 12,721 followers; increase of +1474
- River Dee Instagram – 3106 followers; increase of +63
- River Dee Trust LinkedIn – 2195 followers; increase of +131.

Facebook and Instagram algorithms are giving short videos (reels) priority, and this quarter we have had outstanding traction on reels -

- Video of Redd counting – 297k reach and over 1000 interactions
- Video of high water at Dinnet Bridge – 72.2k reach
- Video of grue on the river at Banchory Bridge – 72.7k reach
- Video of high water at the Muick Falls and mention of the Vaki counter – 44.8k reach
- Static post on Culter Dam Removal feasibility – 25.7k reach.

Save the Spring

- The December update has a full comprehensive round up of the 2025 work
- Our next major messaging will be around the catchment audit
- New poster and literature for the beat huts are due in March



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- Work continues with True North to get our message to MSPs and Civil servants as well as potential incoming politicians in the May election
- Filming in February with BBC ALBA, the broadcast date is TBC
- We presented for the ORRI award after being shortlisted but did not get placed.

Fundraising

The RDT Ceilidh is now rebooked at the Banchory Legion for Friday 30th October 2026, tickets are £25 pp and will be launched straight after easter.

Omexom (a River Dee Guardian) have been filming on location at the Muick and in 1-1 interviews with Guardians and staff, this was done FOC and will be given to us copyright-free to use at the end of March.

Auction

The Trust's online auction will run this year during November 2026. We have started to get some auction items confirmed and are looking for more please.

Education

The Trust's Education and Outreach Officer visited 353 children from 4 different schools during this period and supported Oldmachar Academy's Duke of Edinburgh Awards and Kemnay Academy's John Muir Awards with practical activities as part of both initiatives. Oldmachar Academy was also one of the recipients of the Trust's Transport & Lunch fund (sponsored by Adura), facilitating a visit from Aberdeen to Glen Muick. Out of the 11 visits hosted during this time, 2 visits were held on the riverbank, while others had to be moved indoors due to adverse weather conditions.

The Wildlife Conservation class from Aberdeen University came out for a visit to look at mink traps and have a chat about the difficulties around animal trapping more generally.

A meeting was held with the organisers of TechFest and the Aberdeen Science Festival to explore collaborations on upcoming events in 2026. The Trust will take part in both TechFest's festival for primary-aged children in May, and the Aberdeen Science Festival for all ages in September of this year.

Developing volunteers

The DDSFB's habitat team and Trust's education and outreach team are implementing a programme of volunteer events during this current tree planting season. In this period, 46 individuals join the team across 5 full days of volunteering. Over 1,500 trees were planted in the Glen Muick area with their support.

The Trust held a stall at the University of Aberdeen's Volunteer Fair, which was attended by approximately 200 people and gained 20 new sign-ups for our volunteer network.

10. Keeping Customers & Appealing to New Ones



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River Opening

This River Opening took place once again at the Milton of Crathes, this provided a good atmosphere, plenty of parking, good food and service and easy access to the river. The weather, however, did not play ball, with sideways rain/sleet! We had sponsorship from Royal Lochnagar Distillery for the whisky and we hope to develop this relationship with the River Dee. Colin Espie was a great speaker and was supported well by William Peake from TwinPeakes.

Call for entries for the Tor Na Coille Trophy and the Junior Trophy produced some strong entries and 2 very worthy winners, however they could not attend the Opening Ceremony.

STV picked up the opening day story about tourism, and this was broadcast on the 6pm news. The regional director from Visit Scotland attended the Opening Ceremony, as did the CEO of Visit Aberdeenshire and he was interviewed by STV and broadcast as well.

A huge thank you to Colin Espie, Leys Estate, Milton Brasserie, TwinPeakes, Fergus Mutch, Royal Lochnagar Distillery, Tor Na Coille Hotel and Heather Mackenzie.

11. Selling the Dee to the World

Weekly social (Fish Dee) posts are being done this season after each Wednesday, including last minute availability and weather forecasts to try and help beats top up their bookings.

Fishing reports commenced again for the season and have had good traction on social media, with a reach of over 18.8k for the first week. All reports will be on the FishDee part of FishPal and on the DDSFB website weekly, then posted on social media.

Demonstrating good fish handling is of top priority and we will keep to the photo policy and mentioning this in our reports, we have to show those that licence us that we can look after fish properly.

12. Absolute Beginners

The first Come & Try Day is scheduled for March and is already fully booked.

The Aberdeenshire Fly Fish 50 dates have been agreed for May and June and already have bookings.

Ladies events have still to be confirmed.