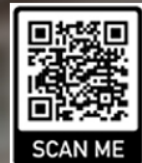


Colin McGRATH

MLA

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To stay updated



Andrew Muir MLA
Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs
Clare House
303 Airport Road West
Belfast
BT3 9ED

Our Ref: CM16718

19 August 2026

Dear Minister

Re: Protection of fish stocks in the Quoile River

I am writing on behalf of local anglers regarding longstanding concerns about the protection of fish stocks in the Quoile River and, specifically, the actions taken by your Department and its predecessor following concerns about seals entering the river.

I understand that correspondence was issued to former MLA Margaret Ritchie on 31st January 2012 which acknowledged concerns regarding seals entering the Quoile, including through the fish pass, and their potential impact on fish stocks. Of particular importance is the commitment contained within that correspondence that Departmental officials would take whatever steps were possible to protect fish stocks in the Quoile River. More than a decade later, local anglers are seeking clarity on precisely what actions followed that commitment.

I would therefore ask that your Department provide all relevant records detailing the actions considered or undertaken to protect fish stocks in the Quoile River following the correspondence of 31st January 2012.

In particular, I would be grateful for records relating to:

- Measures considered or implemented to prevent or reduce seals entering the Quoile through the fish pass;
- Assessments undertaken of the impact of seals on fish stocks;
- Meetings, correspondence, reports, recommendations or internal discussions concerning possible interventions;
- Decisions to proceed with, alter or discontinue any proposed measures;
- Monitoring undertaken to determine whether interventions were effective; and
- The dates on which these actions or decisions occurred.

For clarity, my constituent is not seeking information regarding the actions of NI Water or other organisations. The request relates specifically to the actions taken by the Department, and its predecessor bodies, in fulfilment of the commitment made in the January 2012 correspondence to take whatever steps were possible to protect fish stocks in the Quoile River.

If this information cannot be provided through Ministerial correspondence, I would appreciate confirmation of the appropriate process through which the complete Departmental record can be obtained.

Local anglers have raised these concerns for many years. They are not simply seeking another explanation of the challenges facing the Quoile. They are asking a straightforward question: following the commitment made in 2012, what did the Department actually do to protect the fish?

I would appreciate a comprehensive response and disclosure of the relevant records.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Colin McGrath', written in a cursive style.

Colin McGrath MLA
SDLP – South Down