

Minute of Findhorn Nairn & Lossie Rivers Trust Board Meeting

Venue: The Long Room, Logie Steading

Date: 6th March 2023 at 5.30pm

Attending: Mark Laing (ML), Alastair Laing (AL), Alec Rose (AR), Roy Dennis (RD), Crinan Dunbar (CD), Alex Leven (ALe), Frank Clark (FC), Jamie Whittle (JW)

In Attendance: Robert Laughton (Director), Clare Walker (Administrator), Elle Adams (Living Alive), Guy Harris

		ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies Apologies from Marcus Braithwaite-Exley and Andrew Wallace. ML opened the meeting and thanked Guy Harris for attending the beginning of the meeting to give a short introductory talk about his life and work as part of the application process for the position of Project Officer for the FWI. Guy Harris introduced himself and gave a presentation to the Board. He thanked the Board for the opportunity and left the meeting at 5:45pm. The Board approved the decision to formally offer the Project Officer position to Guy Harris. CW to inform Guy of the Board's decision. Post meeting note: Guy Harris accepted the Board's offer.</p>	CW
2	<p>Minutes of Meeting of 7th December 2022 Approved</p>	
3	<p>Matters Arising</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - At the last Board meeting several names were put forward as potential Board members for the FNLRT. The Board can consist of up to thirteen Trustees so there would be room to appoint a further three people to the Board. It was agreed to offer these positions to Campbell Ross, Fiona Strachan and Louis Greg. - RL received a call earlier in the day from Network Rail to arrange a meeting for the following day to discuss the issue of control of INNS on their land. - RD had continued to pursue the issue of bottom trawling with Anna Burgess MSP and Marine Scotland who have been unable to give any assurance that environmental impact assessments have been carried out in the Moray Firth on the effects of bottom trawling. ML agreed to write to the Director of Marine Scotland, Annabel Turpie, to request to view any environmental impact assessments relating to the Moray Firth as they may affect the activities of the Trust, with a particular emphasis on bottom trawling. - AL informed the Board that, through Andrew Wallace, the Fishmongers Association have agreed to award the Trust a grant for the purchase of videoconferencing equipment. This will allow meetings to be more inclusive. 	RL ML AW/AL
4	<p>Financial Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CW circulated an updated budget and cash flow forecast for the current financial year. The cashflow currently shows a deficit of £83k. This is the result of the first part of some large outlays associated with the FWI project which will be claimed back from the funders and is not a true reflection of the Trust's cash balance. - The budget currently indicates the Trust will end the current financial year with a surplus. This is made up, in part, of income from fish rescues/habitat surveys and funding for Trust staff time on the FWI. - RL has been working closely with the grant funders to manage the Trust's cashflow and they have been flexible with the grant claim process to allow the Trust to do this effectively 	ML/CD

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - CW and RL will be working on improving the cashflow forecast for the next financial year to provide the Board with a better idea of the financial position of the Trust - It was agreed that no further immediate funding should be sought as the staff team have reached capacity for managing project funding, however, it was acknowledged that thoughts will need to turn to securing long term funding for the FWI beyond the JTF - AL asked whether the Trust had a dedicated bank manager and that it might be prudent to discuss the Trusts situation with them as our transaction volume is likely to be very different to what it has been historically. CW confirmed that she was not aware of the Trust having a dedicated business case manager but would make enquiries. - ML informed the rest of the Board that he had opened discussions with the FDSFB about the possibility of them providing a financial facility to the Trust to provide a cash buffer if required. ML, RL, and CW will meet with the FDSFB shortly. - Douglas Home & Co Ltd have been appointed as Accountants and auditors to the FNLRT from next financial year. A few other companies were approached but it was felt that DH&co were best placed to fulfil the needs of the organisation. - CW has opened a subscription to the accounting software 'Xero' and will be working with AL later in the week to set up a chart of accounts. Training and set up assistance will be undergone with DH&co to ensure the transition to new software is done correctly. 	<p style="text-align: right;">CW/RL</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CW</p> <p style="text-align: right;">ML/CW/ RL</p> <p style="text-align: right;">CW/AL</p>
5.	<p>Director's Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RL latest Progress Report can be found here. • There has been some windfarm activity recently, notably Clashgour have requested a monitoring plan. • SISI project has been granted funding through the Nature Restoration Fund, for a further three years. There will be a slight shift in focus going forward to the establishing of landowner agreements to ensure that the work of the project continues beyond the projects run time. • RL is still seeking funding for the pig pilot project at Kellas. The committee agreed to support the project and RL indicated it may be possible to establish a 'sponsor a pig' initiative to recoup some of the costs of the pilot. • Five mink have been caught on the Lossie this winter. Four of these were on the Mosset Burn, this was off the back of a sighting reported to RL through Frank Rhind on the LDSFB, this highlights the importance of anglers and other river users reporting sightings. • There are still a few beats left to declare catch returns but the picture is of very poor catches for both Salmon and Sea Trout. • Results of the NEPS surveys have been published. So far, there appears to be no plans to fund NEPS again this year. Early analysis of the data collected for the smolt tagging project indicate that smaller smolts are going out to sea which could be affecting their survival rate. • The salmon pressures map which RL contributed data to has also been published. • RL met with Tomatin distillery to discuss the issue of raised water temperatures in the burn due to water discharged by the distillery. The staff their have tried a numbers of measures to improve the temperature of the water going into the burn but have not been successful. Sean and Ali assisted distillery staff to deployed temperature loggers into the burn, and one nearby to act as a control, to monitor the situation. Tomatin Distillery are close to commissioning some water cooling towers which they hope will provide a resolution. RL will continue to liaise with the distillery; they are also keen to initiate a Riverwoods project on their stretch of the burn and are expressing interest in working with the FWI to do this. 	<p style="text-align: right;">RL</p> <p style="text-align: right;">RL</p> <p style="text-align: right;">RL</p> <p style="text-align: right;">RL</p>
6	<p>Findhorn Watershed Initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Funding was secured from the Just Transition Fund and Nature Restoration Fund. - The FWI steering group was formed and has met twice since December. 	

RESEARCH

RESTORE

EDUCATE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A meeting with five major landowners from the Upper catchment met in London in January and follow up meetings have been made with two of these landowners. - Community engagement events are being organised at The Strathdearn in Tomatin and EA is in talks with Findhorn Bay Arts to nurture links with them. - Ben Clinch at Darnaway has offered the project a number of windblown trees. - Unit 12 at Logie Steading has been taken on for a year's lease to provide a dedicated office space for the FWI. - RL has interviewed two candidates for the river graduate program and hopes to confirm an appointment soon. - EA has been working with Scotland: The Big Picture to condense and develop a coherent vision statement which encapsulates the aims of the FWI. Feedback from the Board was that the language in the vision statement could be altered to make it more accessible to a wider range of audiences. RD felt that it was important not to limit the scope to the local population; the outcomes of the project should have ramifications for all people as part of the wider issues of climate change. EA will circulate the statement to the Board. - Tender documents for the survey work required for the FWI have been drawn up and invitations to tender sent out. - Part of the communications strategy for the project includes an overhaul of the FNLRT website and the project team are working on outlining our needs before developing a tender for this work. - A recent screening of 'Riverwoods' at the John Milne Institute was attended by over one hundred people. EA and RL gave a short talk about the FWI and this was also well received. 	EA
7	Scottish Invasive Species Initiative Covered in item 5.	
8	Catchment Developments The A9 dualling project between Tomatin and Aviemore has stalled after the only tender received was rejected. It is unclear what subsequent action will be taken.	
9	AOCB None raised.	

The next Board meeting will take place on Monday 21st August 2023 at 5:30pm. The venue is tbc.

ML closed the meeting at 19:10.