

**Findhorn Nairn Lossie Rivers Trust
Board Meeting Minutes**

Venue: Logie Steading

Date: 22nd August 2022 at 5.30pm

Attending: Mark Laing (Chair), Roy Dennis, Frank Clark, Andrew Wallace, Alasdair Laing, Alec Rose.

In Attendance: Robert Laughton (Director), Clare Walker (Administrator), Elle Adams (LivingAlive)

		ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies Apologies from: Marcus Braithwaite-Exley, Crinan Dunbar, Alex Leven, Jamie Whittle</p> <p>Mark Laing welcomed the attendees; a particular welcome was extended to Alec Rose, who was appointed to the Board at the previous meeting, along with Clare Walker (newly appointed Administrator) and Elle Adams (LivingAlive).</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of Meeting of 21st March 2021 Approved</p>	
3	<p>Matters Arising RD updated the Board on attempts to lobby Marine Scotland for information they hold on the condition of the seabed within the Inner Moray Firth. He met with Ariane Burgess, the local Green MSP, including taking her to see the area in question, to discuss the issue of bottom trawling and assisted the MSP to approach Marine Scotland with a number of information requests. The outcome of this was that Marine Scotland confirmed that they held no photographs of the seabed. Marine Scotland did pass on some data for landings for Burghead which indicated a decline for most species, but refused to comment on this being the result of overfishing. RD agreed to circulate the questions put to Marine Scotland and their subsequent response to the rest of the Board.</p> <p>ML asked whether there was more that could be done to encourage Marine Scotland to be more forthcoming. RD will continue to work with the local Green MSP on this issue, but it was also felt that it would be beneficial for RL to pass on the results of the information requests to other pertinent organisations such as Open Seas and FMS as it could provide the potential for the refusal to be challenged if other organisations were willing to lobby in conjunction with the FLNRT.</p>	<p>RD</p> <p>RD/RL</p>
4	<p>Financial Update & Fundraising Unfortunately, due to there being a short period where the Trust office was without full administrative support, there was not an up to date cashflow ready in time for distribution. The Board Agreed that CW be added to the Trust's bank mandate to enable her to fulfil her role as Finance Officer.</p> <p>CW will update this shortly and circulate to the Board but in summary the Trust is facing a deficit of approximately £14k. This has improved since earlier financial projections. This improvement is mostly down to income from several commercial fish rescue contracts; a grant of £10k from Scottish Government for taking part in their scale testing program and an education grant which was awarded pre-covid but not released but which has now been made available. RL highlighted that there are now many more funding avenues becoming available, many of which tie in directly to the aims of the Trust and Elle has been working closely with him to explore which funds may assist the Trust with current and future projects. ML raised the Trust's intention to hold a fund raising online auction later in the year similar to what has been held in previous years. RL asked that any ideas for lots be submitted to the</p>	<p>CW</p> <p>RL/CW</p>

	office, and he will try to find out what lots have been previously and circulate this to the Board to give people some inspiration.	ALL
5	<p>Directors Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress Report • Staff update- RL reiterated ML's previous welcome to CW who started in post as Administrator on 22/08/2022. On behalf of the FLNRT, RL expressed his thanks for all of the hard work and dedication shown by the post's previous holder, Valerie Wardlaw. It was widely acknowledged that her contribution to the Trust over the past nine years has been significant and her input and experience will be sorely missed. • Wind Farms- these are mostly still at the planning stage. • Bridge Repairs – RL noted that there has been a lot of recent bridge repairs undertaken with companies contacting the Trust directly to enquire about fulfilling environmental obligations toward the riverine environment, this demonstrates a marked and welcome shift in attitude. This work is costed at commercial rates and provides a useful revenue source. • Banarack Bridge/Achavrat – Sean had chased SEPA for a progress report and they have asked that the Board submit a written statement outlining the affect the work has had to the fish and river environment to reinforce their case. • Giant Hogweed – work in 2022 to control GH on the Nairn/Findhorn/Mosset/Muckle has progressed well. The program has been harder to implement on the Lossie due to difficulty accessing the plants due to the density of the Japanese knotweed. This will be a target for the next round of SISI. No progress has been made with Network Rail; the Board proposed that some further action could be taken including an SPO against them could be raised by Nature Scotland, the issue could be highlighted on social media and ML agreed to write to the Chairman of Network rail to highlight the problem of invasive species on Network Rail land. • Skunk Cabbage – Only 5% of SK plants remained after treatment at Dallas Pond. The owner has expressed her gratitude for the efforts of the Trust and is very pleased with the results. There are still a number of large infestations in other areas. • Japanese knotweed – a plan is currently being drafted by James Symonds (SISI) and RL hopes to incorporate some different techniques on the Lossie. • Fish – the Spring catch started out well but tailed off due to low water levels. There was a major disease outbreak with estimated losses running at 400 fish, but this is thought to be an underestimate. This represents as much as 1/3 of the spring run with many fatalities being females. The Saprolognia fungus appears to be the main cause of fish mortality during this outbreak; however, several other diseases were observed, including Red Skin disease which is new to the area but for which there is currently no test. RL has circulated the fish disease report and will also update anglers who reported diseased fish. • Several Board members shared observations from this year's Spring run including that increased numbers of people appear to be using the upstream pools recreationally and fish were noted sitting in pools higher up the river earlier in the year, possibly due to temperature. • Scale survey – The FNLRT are taking part in the Marine Scotland scale survey this year • Juvenile Survey – A mainstem survey on the Findhorn has been conducted, there were good numbers of juvenile salmon, however, there is no comparison data as this is the first survey of its kind on the Findhorn. RL suggested that Forres Angling Association be invited to observe a survey for educational purposes. • Spey Tagging – the tagging for the Spey went well and results have begun filtering through. • River Grades – these have remained the same. • Poaching – Two repeat offenders were caught poaching due to the vigilance of the Bailiff team and the case is going to the fiscal. 	<p>Board</p> <p>RL/CW</p> <p>ML</p> <p>RL</p>
6	Findhorn Catchment Restoration	

RESEARCH

RESTORE

EDUCATE

	<p>Progress has been made on the riparian woodland with Elle working alongside RL to put together funding bids to help develop this initiative. Elle outlined the current plan to submit funding bids to the Transition Fund and LNER's railway communities fund for a river stewardship program with the aim of creating a biodiversity baseline for the catchment to be used to inform future projects. There are also other potential funds available such as the NatureScot Restoration fund and Riverwoods. The catchment restoration project emphasises the relationship between the river and wider catchment for the benefit of both and early conversations with land proprietors have been positive.</p> <p>RL and Elle attended the Monadhliadh Deer Management Group meeting, and the organisers welcomed their feedback and agreed to take their comments into consideration. There appears to have been a shift towards supporting reinstating woodland as part of the deer management program.</p> <p>ML thanked RL and Elle for their work on this initiative; it has been within the aims of the Trust for some time and this funding may provide an opportunity to get the resources in order to develop these aims.</p> <p>A discussion was had on how the Trust can best deliver on these proposals. It was agreed that it would be useful for Elle to be put in touch with Alison Baker (Forth Rivers Trust) who could be of assistance in securing further funding and that RL would be best placed to spearhead the initiative as he has the contacts and experience in engaging with stakeholders. It was also agreed that RL should work with Elle to establish some initial milestones for the project.</p> <p>Elle has met with Jamie Whittle and they proposed forming a small steering group of interested parties. RL is scheduled to meet with landowners over the next month. AW mentioned that there is a series of 'how to' videos in production off the back of the 'Riverwoods' film which are aimed to helping landowners to carry out restoration works.</p> <p>AR recently attended an upper catchment restoration meeting where he came across a communication leaflet which had been funded by the main landowner. He said it was an excellent piece of work and was worth looking at, he will circulate this to the Board.</p>	<p>RL/Elle</p> <p>AR</p>
7	<p>Scottish Invasive Species Project</p> <p>RL attended a SISI meeting last week to discuss the next round of project funding. He also intends to apply to the Landfill Tax fund for expanding the program on the Lossie.</p>	
8	<p>Catchment Developments</p> <p>A96- RL attended a consultation session following requests by the Green party for a review of the project, but was disappointed with the measures being taken, he pointed out that the review is going back to early development stages, ignoring data already gathered at a cost of millions but which this new review may consider. Initial indications suggest that the A96 dualling project will not go ahead as originally proposed but may still see some areas of the route bypassed.</p>	
9	<p>AOCB</p> <p>RD raised the issue of pollutants in the Mosset Burn, RL has reported a few incidents to Scottish Water who have attended. The habitat is in poor shape with the flood alleviation scheme retaining a lot of material causing the area below to degrade</p>	

	<p>quicker than anticipated. Moray Council is maintaining the structure of the flood works but isn't managing the flood plain and upstream some good agricultural land has turned boggy as a result. RL assisted one farmer with applying for permits to improve the area and the results of the work have shown rapid improvement. It can be expected that the flood alleviation measures may cause other changes to the river both upstream and downstream in the future.</p> <p>AR updated the Board on recent developments within the Nairn; their Bailiff has recently left the post and after a mink sighting the animal was successfully trapped by Elise.</p> <p>RL had received an email today with photographic evidence of freshwater pearl mussel shells found in the Nairn, the first since 2017. RL suggested a funding bid to survey the three rivers would be worthwhile, the Nature Restoration Fund may be appropriate.</p>	<p>RL</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>The next Board meeting will be followed by the AGM. It was agreed to put a doodle poll round the Board to establish the best date hold it. The AGM will include an update from the Atlantic Salmon Trust and RL will update on upland restoration progress.</p>	<p>CW/RL</p>

The meeting closed at 19:00.