

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

Venue: Logie Steading

Date: 21st March 2022 at 5.30pm

Attending: Mark Laing (Chair), Roy Dennis, Frank Clark, Alex Leven, Alasdair Laing, Marcus Braithwaite-Exley, Jamie Whittle.

In Attendance: Robert Laughton (Director), Valerie Wardlaw (Administrator),

		ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies Apologies from: Andrew Wallace, Crinan Dunbar, Alec Rose</p> <p>Mark Laing informed the board that Alec Rose was willing to join the board representing the Nairn DSFB. RD proposed and the board unanimously approved his appointment.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of Meeting of 29th November 2021 Approved</p>	
3	<p>Matters Arising Inner Moray Firth bottom trawling- RL/VW have looked for data relating to damage to the seabed caused by bottom trawling/dredging but have not been able to find images or details. RL has raised the FNLRT Board's concerns with neighbouring Trusts and FMS but they were also reluctant to lobby without direct evidence. RL discussed the issue with Alan Wells from FMS who felt it will be difficult to reinstate the 3-mile trawling exclusion limit. However, he would help draft a letter from the FNLRT board to Antje Branding, Scottish Government's Head of Salmon and Recreational Fisheries, raising their concerns. The timing is good as the Green Party are pushing for Marine Protected Areas and the Scottish Government is committed to a Sustainable Fishing Policy. RD is meeting with the local Green MSP in April to discuss banning bottom trawling. RD has contacted Aberdeen University staff at Cromarty who confirmed there is little film of the Moray Firth seabed. RD suggested that the letter to Antje should include a request for information on an assessment of bottom trawling in the Moray Firth SAC as they are required to assess impact & RD does not think this has happened. RD will send any information he has to RL from his meeting in April. RL to draft letter with Alan Wells by end of April.</p>	<p>RD</p> <p>RD/RL</p>
4	<p>Financial Update & Fundraising VW circulated an updated budget and cash flow forecast for the current financial year to the end of March 2022. The year end forecast has improved from a deficit of £18k to a deficit of £9K for the year. The cashflow forecast indicates a healthy balance at year end. The Moray Firth Predator Management fund, which the FNLRT has been holding for over ten years, is being donated to the Atlantic Salmon Trust to fund the Moray Firth Tagging Project. This was agreed by all the members of the Moray Firth Predator Management Group. Roger Knight will contact VW to arrange the transfer of the money to the AST. This removes a buffer if the FNLRT experience any future cash flow issues. VW circulated a draft budget for the financial year commencing in April. RL confirmed that the NEPS electrofishing surveys are not being funded by the Scottish Government in 2022, but RL thinks they should be in 2023. RL thought there might be some Scottish Government funding for updating management plans, identifying salmon pressures etc. VW will circulate a cashflow forecast for next financial year. RL/VW will be prioritising applications for funding.</p>	<p>VW</p> <p>VW</p> <p>RL/VW</p>

	<p>ML would like to organise an auction this year as the one in 2020 raised £10K. ML asked all board members to start thinking about lots or people or organisations to contact for lots. An attention grabbing star lot would be a great help in publicising the auction.</p>	ALL
5	<p>Directors Update</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Progress Report • Staff update- Vicky Hilton left the FNLRT in January for a job with Cairngorm National Park. Jane Hamilton has been appointed to the post of Volunteer & Communications Officer for the remainder of the SISI project to the end of October 2022. She is employed by the FNLRT but will be based in the Tay area. Jane was a Seasonal Project Officer last year and so is familiar with the project. • RL has agreed new contracts with the Findhorn bailiffs to reflect a stronger emphasis on scientific data collecting. Their remit has widened to include EF surveys, smolt sampling and scale reading. In addition, Sean Mclean is taking on more of the river inspections from RL which releases more time for RL. • Riparian Woodland- the initiative at Glenmazeran has stalled at the moment and RL thanked AL and others for all their help in starting this process. RL has applied to Fishmongers Company for a small grant to pay for consultation with other upper river proprietors to assess the potential for other riparian planting schemes. • A9- next section for dualling is progressing & SM has met with contractors to ensure the works do not damage the riverine environment. • Cloddach Bridge has been closed to traffic as the bridge is in a dangerous condition. RL is trying to contact Moray Council to get action on altering the bridge apron to allow improved fish passage. • Wind Farms- RL is submitting comments on Kellas and Lethen WF. • Muckle Burn- there is slow progress to improve the riverworks which were undertaken without a CAR licence. SEPA has issued warnings and some remedial action has been taken. Trees blown into the river during the storms will be removed by Network Rail, but they are not a barrier to fish passage. • Mosset Burn- works to lower the burn have been completed and adjacent farmland is now draining. • Llanbryde Burn- works to repair erosion damage to the flood barrier are in process and RL has inspected them. • Lossiemouth Footbridge is under construction without interference with the River Lossie. • Catch Data- the figures for the Findhorn and Lossie have been collated for last year with good catches reported from the Findhorn. RL thinks the Elgin anglers are likely to be under reporting catches. This year's spring catches for the Findhorn are promising with large fish in good condition being reported. • Juvenile Surveys- the NEPS survey is not going ahead this year. RL is considering a Findhorn mainstem survey, which has not been done before, or the regular triennial survey of the Lossie. • AST Smolt tagging project- results from 2021 are similar to those from 2019, with smolt survival higher in 2021, possibly reflecting higher water flows. High predation in Findhorn Bay was not found, so the AST will not be tagging smolts on the Findhorn this year. AST are experimenting with different sizes of tags and will be tagging on the Spey. The Spey Board has contracted RL to help with the tagging on the Spey, as they do not have a biologist in post at the moment. This will give the FNLRT revenue and keep RL's tagging skills up to date. • Findhorn Smolt trap- RL and the bailiffs have been unable to identify a better site for the rotary screw trap so they will be installing it at Red Craig again to collect basic smolt data, population estimate and trap efficiency. • Findhorn DSFB 2021 Annual Report- RL & SM have produced the report 	<p>RL</p> <p>RL</p> <p>RL</p>

RESEARCH

RESTORE

EDUCATE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Angling Development- RL and other Inner Moray Firth Trusts are working with Ian Robertson to identify ways to encourage angling participation. RL is chairing the group. <p>RD asked why the storm damaged trees are being removed from the river -RL explained that these were very large trees which would collect debris and need to be moved to prevent a bigger blockage and accumulation of rubbish.</p> <p>RD asked about the outflow from the sewage treatment works in Forres and dissolved pollutants contaminating the burn. RL said the treatment plant is being upgraded and expanded to take effluent from the new housing developments. However, it may be an issue- the Deveron staff have been researching this issue and are finding pollutants of concern.</p> <p>AL updated the board to say he had talked to Richard Benyon about Glenmazeran riparian planting. The Englefield Estate have appointed a company to look at their carbon footprint over the whole estate. A small riparian scheme could be developed, but anything larger would need to wait for the outcome of their report.</p>	
6	<p>Scottish Invasive Species Project</p> <p>The contractor budget for GH and JK treatment is sizable this year and James Symonds will be contracting for treatment on the Lossie and Findhorn. JS will be meeting landowners to start setting up landowner agreements to ensure they take over responsibility for continuing treatment. The SISI project currently runs to the end of October, but RL is optimistic that it will be extended to March 2023. A new project is being developed to continue from 2023 for a minimum of 3 years.</p>	
7	<p>Catchment Developments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Included under item 5. 	
8	<p>AOCB</p> <p>MBE asked about poaching on the Findhorn-RL responded to say there were no netting incidents last year, most incidents were anglers fishing without a permit, except for a group of youths who were repeat offenders and were eventually charged and had their equipment confiscated.</p>	
9	<p>Dates of 2022 Meetings</p> <p>August 8th Board meeting 5.30pm</p> <p>November 28th Board Meeting followed by AGM</p>	

RL & VW left the meeting in order for the FNL Board to discuss further financial matters.

The FNLRT Board approved a 5% salary increase from the 1st April 2022 for the Administrator.