



## Minute of Findhorn Nairn & Lossie Rivers Trust Board Meeting

**Venue:** The Long Room, Logie Steading

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 5.30pm

**Attending:** Mark Laing (ML), Jamie Whittle (JW), Campbell Ross (CR), Crinan Dunbar (CD), Andrew Wallace (AW).

**In Attendance:** Robert Laughton (Director)(RL), Clare Walker (Administrator)(CW), Guy Harris (FWI PO)(GH).

		ACTION
1	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b> ML opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. Apologies were received from Marcus Braithwaite-Exley, Alex Leven, Alec Rose, Alastair Laing, Roy Dennis, Frank Clark, and Fiona Strachan.</p>	
2	<p><b>FNLRT Staff Salary Review</b> ML asked the FNLRT staff present to step out of the meeting for this item. ML circulated a paper proposing changes to salaries for all staff. The paper was discussed by Board Members. Following the discussion, the paper was approved.</p>	
3	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting of 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023</b> The draft minutes were approved. CW to publish them on the website.</p>	CW
4	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p>	
5	<p><b>Financial Update</b> <i>Budget and Cashflow Update</i> – CW circulated finance reports for the financial year to date. The operational running costs for the Trust are in a deficit of around £6k. General running costs have risen this year and a number of unrestricted funds are still to be received, such as NEPs and FMS management plan funding. There is around £75k cash in the bank, made up of restricted and unrestricted funds, this is forecast to rise to £80k at the end of three months.</p> <p><i>2024-25 Budget</i> – The budget for next financial year is forecasting a deficit of around £4.5k, on the proviso that further funding is secured for the two FWI staff members beyond current funding which is to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. There are several funding avenues being explored and it will be a priority within these bids to maximise recovery of core running costs.</p> <p>At both recent DSFB meetings it was acknowledged by the respective Boards that it is becoming increasingly difficult for them to fund their activities using the fishing levy. While both Boards are taking proactive action to look into this, it may have an impact on the funding received by the Trust from the DSFBs in the future.</p> <p>Scottish Government have been extremely slow to decide on the change request to the Trust's Just Transition Fund (JTF) grant for the FWI and this has had an impact on planning funding and expenditure. Elle Adams has contacted Richard Lochhead to ask him if there is anything he can do to speed up a decision but has not had a response. CD will be seeing Richard at an event next week and will bring this up to him.</p>	
6	<p><b>Director's Report</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL latest Progress Report can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</li> </ul> <p><b>Catchment Developments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL has created a monitoring plan for the windfarm at Clashgour in collaboration with the Hutton Institute and this is expected to start in January.</li> <li>RL made contact with Rothes III windfarm about a monitoring contract but has not received word of whether the contract has been awarded.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The works to the Kirkhill Bridge in Lhanbryde are complete. The contractors used a water jetting technique to remove the old concrete which was very effective, and the works were completed quickly.</li> <li>• RL was contacted by Highland Council about some emergency bridge repairs to Dava Station Bridge. The work is due to start very shortly, and the Findhorn Bailiffs will monitor.</li> <li>• RL has been advising on the removal of sediment buildup from the high flow relief channel upstream of Pansport Bridge, Elgin, part of the flood alleviation scheme.</li> </ul> <p><b>INNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good progress has been made again this year towards the treatment of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. RL thanked the SISI project staff and volunteers for their hard work and Kellas for the hire of their pressurised spray tank.</li> <li>• Eleven mink captures were made this year, many around the Lossie.</li> </ul> <p><b>Catches 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Findhorn have reported a combined catch of 819 Salmon and grilse during 2023. There is no data for the Lossie and Nairn yet.</li> </ul> <p><b>Juvenile Surveys</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEPS has been completed.</li> <li>• The Nairn EF survey was completed.</li> <li>• An upper Findhorn survey funded by LNER was unable to be completed due to wet weather, the funding will be used for trialling the smolt trap near Tomatin in the spring.</li> <li>• RL reported salmon present in the Black Burn and in the Cawdor Burn, upstream of the fish pass.</li> <li>• RL noted the high number of eels surveyed this season.</li> </ul> <p><b>Predator Control</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL met with Roger Knight and Alan Wells to discuss seal licensing. Roger has agreed to share the structure of his application so that RL can adapt it, which will save time on what is a lengthy process. There are also plans to lobby Scottish Government to officially state the parameters for seal licensing. The current indication is that Grade 1 rivers would not be granted seal control licenses as the river contains a sustainable Salmon population, however, this is not official guidance.</li> <li>• Predator counts have been organised with the Findhorn Bailiffs and count numbers are being fed into the FMS app.</li> </ul> <p><b>Fish Disease</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The PhD research study into Saprolegnia has been fully funded and a PhD student is in place. There is a meeting between the research team and the River Trust's/DSFBs in December.</li> </ul> <p><b>Schools go to Fish</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heldon Community Council confirmed that funding for Alves, Dallas and Mosstowie Primary Schools is still available. RL plans to team up with WildThings to deliver this in 2024.</li> </ul>	
7	<p><b>Findhorn Watershed Initiative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FWI Community engagement program in partnership with Findhorn Bay Arts, WildThings! And Raghnaid and Mhairi is well underway and has received very positive feedback.</li> <li>• Twelve estates have been engaged; six woodland plans are in co-development covering 600+ hectares.</li> <li>• A number of baseline surveys have been done. Including a large seedling survey at Coignafearn which will be repeated in May 2024.</li> <li>• The Deer Management Strategy is in the final draft stages and arrangements are underway for a coordinated upper catchment deer count.</li> </ul>	

RESEARCH

RESTORE

EDUCATE

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ML gave his thanks on behalf of the Board for all the hard work of the FNLRT staff and congratulated them on the significant progress made towards the FWI in the past year.</li> </ul>	
<b>8</b>	<p><b>Policy and Procedure Review</b></p> <p>CW has circulated draft copies of the following policies and procedures for Board approval:  <i>Grievance Policy</i> – the term ‘Director’ and ‘Line Manager’ are used interchangeably throughout the document. It was agreed to use the term ‘Director’ consistently. Subject to this change the policy was approved.  <i>Disciplinary Procedure</i> – the procedure claims that the list of behaviours constituting ‘gross misconduct’ is not exhaustive. It was felt that some clarity should be sought on whether it is more appropriate to have a clearly defined and exhaustive list. CW will seek advice on this and report back to the Board. It was agreed that any changes can be approved over email.  <i>Gifts, Hospitality, Anti-corruption, and Bribery Policy</i> – Approved  <i>Trustee Conflict of Interest Policy</i> – Approved  <i>Trustee Declaration and Consent Form</i> – Approved  <i>Trustee Register of Interests</i> – Approved</p> <p>It was agreed to prioritise new finance policies for the next Board meeting in March. ML thanked CW and AW for their work on this.</p>	<p><b>CW</b></p> <p><b>CW</b></p> <p><b>CW</b></p>
<b>9</b>	<p><b>Board Membership</b></p> <p>Charlie Black from the Nairn Angling Association was put forward for appointment to the FNLRT Board. RL confirmed that Willie Fraser of the Elgin Angling Association has decided not to join the FNLRT Board as a Trustee.</p> <p>Four Trustees will be stepping down at the AGM; JW and CD intend to stand for re-election; Marcus Braithwaite-Exley and Frank Clark intend on retiring for the Board.</p> <p>ML expressed his thanks to Marcus and Frank for their service to the Trust and Board.</p> <p>JW confirmed that it would be possible to circulate a written resolution to the Trusts membership to propose a change to the Article of Association allowing the number of Board members to rise from 13 to 17. CW and JW will look into drafting a written resolution for membership approval to be circulated via email.</p>	<p><b>CW/JW</b></p>
<b>10.</b>	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CR congratulated Roy Dennis on his recent lifetime achievement award from the Raptor Research Foundation for his inspirational work with birds of prey.</li> </ul>	

The next Board meeting will take place on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 5:30pm, venue tbc.

ML closed the meeting at 19:00.