

Minute of FNL Rivers Trust Annual General Meeting

Venue: The Long Room, Logie Steading

Date: 7th December 2022 7:30pm

Present: Mark Laing (Chair)(ML), Jamie Whittle(JW), Alasdair Laing (AL), Frank Clark, Roy Dennis (RD), Crinan Dunbar, Alex Rose (AR), Campbell Ross (CR), Anthony Laing (ALa), Poppy Houldsworth (PH), Frank Clark (FC), Philip Mackenzie, Willie Barron, Charlie Black, Davie Paton, Anthony Laing, Peter Boulton.

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

		ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies Apologies from: Marcus Braithwaite-Exley, Andrew Wallace (AW), Alex Leven (ALe) ML opened the AGM by welcoming everyone present and thanking them for coming.	
2	Minutes of Meeting of the 29th of November 2021 Approved	
4.	Matters Arising None	
5	Board Elections One third of the board must retire at each AGM in rotation. This year Andrew Wallace, Roy Dennis and Alex Leven are due to stand down. All three board members have expressed an interest in standing for re-election. Jamie Whittle proposed, Frank Clark seconded, and all approved the re-election of AW, RD & ALe and the motion was passed. ML thanked the Board for their service over the past year.	
6	Financial Update & Fundraising Annual Accounts for year end March 2022 have been approved and are available on the website. They showed a small loss of £9k. The current years forecast is currently showing a surplus of £4k. This illustrates that the core position of the Trust is satisfactory.	
7	Director's Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 18 consultations have been undertaken in the past year along the three rivers, mostly repairs to bridges. Two windfarm developments have received planning approval: Clashgour and Rothies. - The SISI project is coming to an end of the first phase. Giant Hogweed on the Findhorn is reaching management levels and good progress is being made on the Lossie. Work is ongoing with Japanese Knotweed. Numbers of Mink have been low, but RL reiterated the importance of reporting any sightings as demonstrated by a Mink capture the previous day due to a sighting reported by a local angler. - The fishing season was poor with low catch numbers and a significant outbreak of disease on the Findhorn in the spring. A survey of the mainstem of the Findhorn conducted this year showed good numbers of juvenile fish. - RL latest progress report can be here. 	
8	Presentation on the Findhorn Watershed Initiative RL introduced EA from Living Alive who has been working in collaboration with the FNLRT to launch the Findhorn Watershed Initiative. The initiative aims to address the poor shape of the habitat in the upper Findhorn. Numbers of salmon are in decline and recent river temperature monitoring data by the Scottish Government shows that the temperatures in the upper river are reaching critical levels for salmon and trout. Creating better shading for the river through the planting and restoration of riparian tree cover is the focus of this first phase to fulfil the Trust's number one priority as outlined in the FNLRT Management Plan 2021-2026 .	

	<p>EA give a short presentation on the project highlighting the need for a landscape scale approach which goes beyond individual landholdings and takes in the different interlinked ecosystems within the catchment.</p> <p>ML opened the floor to comments from those present:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PH asked whether there was any community benefit funding available from the various windfarm developments in the area. EA said that there is the potential for local corporates to have an interest in funding local conservation projects. - Willie Barron highlighted that the upper river Nairn suffers from the same level of habitat loss as the upper Findhorn. AR asked whether the area of Aberarder would be a good candidate for a similar project. RL confirmed that it would be an ideal location should the opportunity arise. - CR asked whether consideration had been given to the type of trees the project plans to replant. AL outlined the concept of focusing on native broadleaf trees. The enclosures at Coingnafearn which are showing excellent natural regrowth with minimal replanting, demonstrates that there is tree stock in the area which can regenerate when given reprieve from grazing. - RL explained that consideration to replanting along both tributaries and mainstem areas would be considered and there will be difficulties due to terrain and permission from landowners but that the project will be working closely with those close to the ground to identify suitable target areas. - RL said that there is a high likelihood that beavers could colonise the Findhorn at some point in the future and at that point a beaver management plan would need to be developed. - ALa asked whether the restoration of peatlands is likely to reduce the Ph of the river to the benefit of spawning salmon. RL said there is some work being done in the Western Isles and early indications are that water clarity in the river is improving, however, not a lot of monitoring of Ph has been done as yet. It is hoped that funding may be available to create a long term monitoring plan which will improve the data available - Philip Mackenzie raised the issue of the high cost of fencing which could be prohibitive for landowners being asked to fence off areas for habitat restoration and asked whether there would be any financial help available from the Trust as part of the project. RL stressed that the Trust will be working closely with landowners to realise the aims of the project. <p>ML thanked everyone for their comments and will look forward to working with the Trust's members to make the project a reality.</p>	
10	<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Philip Mackenzie voiced his support of the recent petition by some of the proprietors of the Findhorn to the FDSFB to extend the fishing season by two weeks in October. Five years of low rainfall has made fishing in the upper river difficult within the season. Anthony Laing said that the FDSFB discussed the proposal at a recent FDSFB Meeting and RL confirmed that he has been actioned by the Board to contact Scottish Government to find out what the application process would involve and what information would be required. Once this is known the Board will decide whether to apply to Scottish Government to extend the season. - Willie Barron confirmed that the Nairn DSFB will be employing three part-time bailiffs next year. RL can assist with arranging training for the bailiffs if required. 	
11	<p>Date of 2023 AGM 27th November 2023</p>	
	<p>Mark Laing thanked everyone for participating in the FNLRT AGM.</p>	