



River Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Clerk: Anthony Laing Administrator: Clare Walker

Fisheries Office, Logie Steading, Dunphail, Forres, IV36 2QN

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Minute of the Board Meeting

Held on Monday 20th May 2024 at 10.30am

In The Long Room at Logie Steading.

Present:

Anthony Laing -AnL (Chairman)

Alasdair Laing - AL

Colin Cawdor - CC

Campbell Ross – CR

Colin Glynn-Percy - CGP

Michael Barron – MB

Murray Wilson – MW

Mark Laing – ML

Rob Hoskin - RH

In attendance:

Alister Taylor (AT) (Bailiff)

Sean Mclean (SM) (Head Bailiff)

Robert Laughton (RL) – Director, FNLRT

Clare Walker (CW) (Administrator)

Elle Adams (EA) (Living Alive)

A	Item	Action
1.	<p>Apologies: Alex Leven, Andrew Howard, David Paton</p> <p>AnL opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 13th November 2023 – Approved Minutes of Finance Meeting held on 9th January 2024 - Approved The minutes were approved. CW to publish Board minutes to the FNLRT website.</p>	CW
7.	<p>FNLRT Directors Report Due to other commitments EA gave an update on FNLRT’s Findhorn Watershed Initiative (FWI) at the beginning of the agenda</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the project continues to move forward with the first planting scheme underway at Glenkyllachy. There is a growing pipeline of planting schemes being developed and nearing implementation. With so much progress being made in the upper catchment, the project has now started the process of approaching proprietors in the lower catchment. - FNLRT’s corporate partnership with Chivas Brothers Ltd was launched in March - Citizen science invertebrate monitoring training has been delivered to local volunteers with a view to establishing a regular monitoring program. - A trial run of the smolt trap was conducted at Tomatin using funding from LNER - The pilot program of community engagement commissions has now concluded, and the outputs are being analysed. The Headwaters Celebration held in Tomatin on 16th March was extremely successful. - The proposed MOU between the FWI and landowners for collaborative working on the project has received supportive and constructive feedback and a final draft should be ready to circulate to proprietors shortly 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The project will be launching a Deer Forum to facilitate collaboration within the catchment on deer management. <p>CC asked whether eutrophication is a big issue within the catchment. EA confirmed that concerns have been raised locally that the sewage works at Forres could be affecting the water quality, particularly in the area of the Mosset Burn.</p>	
3.	<p>Matters Arising not Covered Below</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AnL informed the Board that Katherine Brodie has had to step down from the Board but that Rob Hoskin, also from Lethen, would be willing to join, the Board agreed to appoint Rob to the FDSF Board. <p>EA left the meeting.</p>	
4.	<p>Budget and Finance</p> <p>a. <i>Draft Accounts for year ending 2024</i> – the draft accounts for financial year 2023-2024 were circulated and approved by the Board. They show a deficit of £6,900 compared to £1,200 surplus the previous year. CW will arrange for these to be signed.</p> <p>b. <i>Budget/Cashflow Update</i> – CW circulated an updated budget and cashflow forecast. Noted was the movement of £43k of cash from the FDSFB current account to the Rathbones savings account on a 6 month term, this is to take advantage of interest rates. The current FDSFB vehicle has required a couple of major repairs recently and it was noted that, given its age, it is likely this trend will continue. CW also informed the Board that FNLRT have made the final outstanding payment on their vehicle loan. CW gave verbal estimates for expected income from the subcontracting of FDSFB Bailiffs for fisheries related activity to FNLRT, she predicts this income will shift the current years forecasted deficit into a small surplus but the charge rates are still being confirmed. Once this has been established, a more accurate update will be given at the next Board meeting.</p> <p>AnL asked the Board whether income from interest on the savings account should be transferred back into the operational budget or be left in the investment portfolio. The Board agreed that the interest should be treated as income and used operationally.</p> <p>AnL asked whether the Board should consider purchasing a replacement for the FDSFB vehicle. It was agreed that the vehicle had come to a point where it was becoming uneconomical to repair and that SM should look into suitable replacements and submit a proposal to the Board for the next meeting. CW will find out what the current value of the vehicle is.</p> <p>c. <i>Review of FDSFB Complaints Procedure</i> – the FDSFB was reviewed and approved subject to a punctuation correction. CW to publish updated version on the website</p>	<p>CW</p> <p>CW/SM</p> <p>CW</p>
5.	<p>River Matters</p> <p>CC asked whether there should be a standing item on the agenda for Health and Safety. AnL confirmed that there should, CW will ensure this is amended for future meetings.</p> <p>There were no health and safety issues to report.</p>	<p>CW</p>

6.	<p>Head Bailiff Report</p> <p>After a review of the widening roles of the water bailiffs it was proposed that a change in job title to ‘Fisheries Officer’ would be more reflective of the work being done, the Board agreed to the proposal.</p> <p>SM and AT conducted a successful trial of the smolt trap at a new location in Tomatin. A good number of salmon smolts were caught, along with other fish, with one morning seeing 800 smolts caught. Regular water samples are also being taken and sent to Aberdeen University as part of the research PhD into Saprolegnia.</p> <p>They have also been working with FNLRT to collect temperature data, and water monitoring samples.</p> <p>There have been two poaching incidents, one in Findhorn Bay and the other at Banchor.</p> <p>There have been a few reports of diseased fish in the past week at Lethen and Altyre.</p> <p><i>2024 Spring Catch Returns</i> - The spring catch has been good with 221 spring salmon caught.</p> <p><i>Predator Control</i> – There is still one goosander to get on licence this season. The FDSFB have been given an acoustic seal deterrent device by FNLRT which has been funded by FMS. SM and AT tried this device in Findhorn Bay and it successfully moved the seals out. It is hoped this device can be used within the river in winter to deter rogue seals moving upstream. CR highlighted the high number of goosanders in Findhorn Bay and asked whether these numbers were recorded. RL confirmed that bird counts were done to cover the bay and that these numbers are included in the data used to apply for a control licence.</p> <p><i>Conservation Code</i> - There are still lots of examples of poor fish handling practices being seen on social media platforms and biosecurity among visiting anglers is still poor. Estates are encouraged to provide disinfectant in huts for anglers to use to disinfect their gear.</p> <p>CC asked whether fish handling best practice could be better covered in the conservation code. This point could be reworded to give firmer direction that photographs should be taken in the net/water. Further work could be done to highlight this point by promoting FMS fish handling best practice on the FNLRT social media channels and by lobbying FishPal to censor photos posted on their channels which demonstrate poor fish handling.</p>	CW
7.	<p>FNLRT Director’s Report</p> <p><i>Smolt Trap</i> – This was a test rather than a full run of trapping. Despite this, 1644 smolts were caught. The trap ran well except in heavy water. The site was very public and there was a lot of positive engagement by the local community. RL thanked the FDSFB bailiffs along with the landowners, keepers and other volunteers who helped.</p> <p><i>Seal Licence</i> – a licence for seal control will be submitted to NatureScot shortly.</p> <p><i>Fish Disease</i> – RL highlighted the FMS fish disease reporting app as a useful tool to report sightings as well as getting in touch with FNLRT and the FDSFB Bailiffs.</p> <p><i>INNS</i> – Giant Hogweed control is underway. There are reports of isolated spots in the upper river, but big progress is being seen. There was a sighting reported at Logie Bridge of an American Mink but nothing was caught.</p> <p><i>River works</i> – RL will be submitting comments for proposed windfarms at Dalmagarry and Dalmigavie.</p>	RL

	<p>RL has reviewed the proposed design for the A9 bridge over the Dalmagarry Burn and recommends that the FDSFB object to the development. The bridge design, as it currently stands, is not suitable. RL met with Tomatin Distillery to show them the latest temperature data from the burn. It is clear that the recently installed cooling towers have not been effective at reducing the temperature in the Burn and a further push to get the Distillery to make improvements is required.</p>	
8.	<p>AGM August 2024 The AGM will be held on 19th August 2024 at Logie Steading. There will be a presentation about the FWI and RL will contact Pieter van West to see whether any initial data from the saprolegnia sampling could be available to present.</p>	RL
10.	<p>AOCB - None</p>	
11.	<p>Dates of 2024 Meetings August 19th 2024 – FDSFB Board Meeting and AGM November 18th – FDSFB Board Meeting</p>	

The meeting closed at 11:50am