



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

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

**Date: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2024 at 5.30pm**

**Attending:** Mark Laing (ML), Campbell Ross (CR), Alex Leven (AL), Fiona Strachan (FS), Roy Dennis (RD), Andrew Wallace (AW) (Remote).

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

		<b>ACTION</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcome and Apologies</b> ML opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. Apologies were received from Alasdair Laing, Alec Rose, Charlie Black and Jamie Whittle.	
<b>2</b>	<b>Minutes of Meeting of 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023</b> The draft minutes were approved. CW to publish them on the website.	<b>CW</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Matters Arising</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CW and JW circulated a written resolution to FNLRT Members to change the maximum number of Board members from 13 to 17. The deadline for responses is the 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024.</li> <li>Changes to the policies at the last meeting have been actioned and circulated by email.</li> </ul>	
<b>4</b>	<b>Financial Update</b>  <b>Grant Funding/Claims</b> – our change request to JTF has finally been approved. A grant extension of one year to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025 has been awarded. The amount of funding remains the same, however, funds not spent this financial year can now be carried into next financial year. RL has redrafted the FWI staff contracts to extend their employment term to 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2025 and requested approval from the Board to issue these to the staff – the Board approved. ML congratulated the FWI team for the work to push for this extension and underlined what a significant achievement this represents.  <b>Finance Reports</b> – CW provided the Board with financial reports for the financial year to date. The operational running costs for the Trust are in a deficit of around £9k. There are still funds outstanding and confirmation of when the Chivas management fee and Clashgour monitoring program fees will be paid is still to be confirmed. The budget for 2024-25 has been amended to reflect the continued funding from JTF and shows a healthy predicted surplus. As the Trust is still growing at a pace and this has led to unpredictable increases in general running costs, this surplus is still subject to reassessment.	
<b>6</b>	<b>Findhorn Watershed Initiative</b>  <b>Nature Recovery</b> – The scheme at Glenkyllachy is underway. The fence has been erected; it surrounds a larger area than originally planned to provide better access to estate vehicles. We have drawn down our contribution to the scheme from JTF in advance, but funds will not be paid before final sign off by Scottish Forestry. Other schemes are in planning and progress is being made downstream. Work is being done to get everything in place for the schemes in an advanced stage, such as bird surveys, and these could represent over 100 hectares of riparian planting/regeneration if they all reach completion.	

	<p>Edward Crookes and Philip Arkell have both provided constructive feedback on the MOUS/LSA's circulated to some landowners.</p> <p><b>Deer Management Strategy</b> – An event to launch the strategy involving key stakeholders is being planned for May. The FWI proposes that FNLRT play a convening role in disseminating information, experience and best practice to a network of stakeholders and interested parties through a 'Deer Forum' and 'Tree Forum'.</p> <p><b>Community Engagement</b> – All three community engagement commissions are coming to the end of their contracts. They have all hosted successful and well attended events. EA will be reviewing the monitoring and evaluation data from these programmes to inform next steps. There is a 'Headwaters Celebration' concert planned for 16<sup>th</sup> March at Tomatin which is sold out.</p> <p><b>Citizen Science</b> – Buglife are providing invertebrate survey training to local volunteers in the upper and lower catchments. This is to allow volunteer groups to be established to conduct invertebrate monitoring on the river at more regular intervals in the future. If there is sufficient interest some further in-depth training may also be provided in the Autumn by Smart rivers.</p> <p><b>Operational</b> –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helen Nasrat, the FWI Communications Officer has settled in well.</li> <li>• EA has been working with a local Monitoring and Evaluation consultant to help set up an evaluation framework for the project which can be used to track the impact and outcomes of the FWI as it progresses.</li> <li>• The Chivas partnership will launch on World Water Day (22<sup>nd</sup> March).</li> <li>• EA and GH will be speaking at the FMS annual conference on 28<sup>th</sup> March.</li> </ul> <p><b>Funding</b> –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payment of the management fee for the Chivas partnership hasn't been received yet – now that the launch is so close CW will chase them for payment</li> <li>• EA plans to submit a full funding application to Esmee Fairbairn in April</li> <li>• The Finnerne Trust currently have funding available for employment posts in the area, this could potentially fund an additional FWI post.</li> </ul> <p>ML congratulated the whole team on their work so far, it has been a monumental year for the Trust and a huge amount of progress on the project has been made.</p> <p>RD suggested calculating a figure for the total area to be wooded in a best case scenario – it is acknowledged this would be a substantial figure and the project may have to be more selective of where resources are allocated in the future, with priority given to woodland creation.</p> <p>RD also suggested including chemical water analysis as part of the river monitoring program.</p>	<p>CW EA</p> <p>GH</p>
5	<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>RL provided the Board with a presentation on river temperatures over the past year using data collected from the temperature monitoring network installed last summer. Initial analysis of this data suggests the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tomatin and Moy burns are regularly reaching temperatures above 20 degrees in summer</li> <li>• Mild winter temperatures in December and January saw the river reach 6-8 degrees, above 5 degrees damage to developing eggs can occur.</li> </ul>	

RESEARCH

RESTORE

EDUCATE

	<p>RL is looking into a continuous monitor that will allow real time data to be gathered. RL thanked Sean, Alister and Sarah for their assistance installing and downloading the temperature gauges.</p> <p><b>INNS</b> – Elise Cox is meeting with landowners and planning this seasons work.</p> <p><b>Fishery Management –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Saprolegnia samples are being taken at regular intervals and sent to Pieter van West at Aberdeen University</li> <li>• RL has almost completed the Fisheries Management Plans for FMS</li> <li>• RL is looking into submitting a funding application to the Landfill Fund for staff costs and equipment</li> <li>• Confirmation has been received that there will be no NEPS this year, it is likely that a two-yearly program will be established</li> <li>• RL has completed the FDSFB annual report and this has been published online</li> </ul> <p><b>Catchment Developments –</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work at Dallas Substation went well, although they have used slightly too many rocks, and some may need removing</li> <li>• The Clashgour Windfarm water monitoring program is underway</li> <li>• Plans submitted for the A9 bridge across the Dalmagarry Burn are not within current guidelines and RL will submit comments.</li> </ul> <p><b>Schools Go To Fish Program</b> – RL hopes to deliver the schools program, with the help of WildThings, after the Easter break, although he is still awaiting confirmation from Alves Primary School.</p>	<b>RL</b>
<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>Expenses Policy</i> – the body of the policy was approved. The suggestion to increase evening meal expenses to £50 per person and accommodation to £100 per night were approved.  <i>Scheme of Financial Delegation</i> – The policy was approved subject to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• removal of reference to subgroups to be replaced by a blanket clause that any expenditure above £10k requires Board approval (consisting of not less than two Trustees).</li> <li>• Administrator can approve expenditure up to £1000 if the cost is already in the budget, unexpected expenditure up to £250</li> <li>• Director can approve up to £10k if it is already in the budget and up to £5k for unexpected costs.</li> </ul> <p><i>Reserves Policy</i> – the policy was approved subject to removal of the set figure for reserves as it was acknowledged that this could change regularly depending on current income and expenditure.  <i>Donations and Fundraising Policy</i> – Approved</p> <p>CW to action the amendments and circulate approved policies to Board and Staff (where appropriate).</p>	<b>CW</b>
<b>8.</b>	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>	

The next Board meeting will take place on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024. CW will arrange for a trip to Glenkyllachy. Further details to be confirmed.

ML closed the meeting at 18:55.