

FNLRT Progress Report 02.2024

Bob Laughton 26/08/2024

The following report provides an update on activities from 11th March 2024 to 26th August 2024. The report is set out in the form of the Fisheries Management Plan 2021-2026.

Table 1: Funders and Grant Summary	Management Plan Target	Description of the bid	Decision/ Timescale	Amount
Scot Gov: Just Transition Fund	1.1 Climate Change 6.1 Education and Awareness	To develop to rejuvenate riparian forest to ameliorate the effects of rising water temperatures plus re-connecting communities with the river Findhorn.	Successful. Funding extension granted to 31/03 2025	£970,000
LNER: Customer and Community Investment Fund	1.1 Climate Change 4.6 to 4.11 Fish and River Data	Gathering ecological baseline data and fostering river stewardship in the Upper Findhorn Watershed	Successful. Completed by 31/03/2024	£75,000
NatureScot: Nature Restoration Fund	3.3 INNs control	Three-year extension to SISI control project.	Successful Operating to 31/03/ 2026.	£2.08M FNLRT £237,494
FMS: Fisheries Management Plan Storybook	All	Development of online version of fisheries management plan	Successful Completed 31/03/2024	£9,600
Moray Estates	3.3 INNs Control	Continuing control of GH and JK on Moray Estates at Bogside and Darnaway	Successful. Completion due 30/10/2024	£3,375 £800
Crown Estate	3.3 INNs Control	Continuing control of GH and INNs at Wester Manbeen	Successful Completion due 30/10/2024	£2,510
Moray Council	3.3 INNs Control	Continuing control of INNs across Lossie and Findhorn	Successful Completion 31/03/2024	£5,000
Windfarm Contracts	4.6 to 4.11 Fish and River Data	To conduct juvenile fish surveys as part of EIA for Windfarm developments	Successful Completion 30/11/2024	£13,500
Heldon Community Council	6.1 Education and Awareness	Schools go to fish program with Alves, Dallas and Mosstowie Primary Schools	Successful Not completed, considering options	£4,125

1. Climate Change

[Findhorn Watershed Initiative](#)

Update provided by Elle and Guy

Follow the progress of the Findhorn Watershed Initiative by clicking [here](#).

2. River habitat and Land Use

Clashgour Windfarm: Water, invertebrate and fish monitoring programme developed with the Hutton Institute (HI) was approved by developers (EDF). Monitoring covers the upper Lossie, Auchness Burn,

Clashgour Burn and Burn of Casnasmorrach within the Lossie catchment, the Divie, Reenlairig, Berry Burn and Corshellach Burn within the Findhorn catchment.

Dip water samples and other environmental data are collected from 14 locations across these burns by Sean Mclean and Ali Taylor each month. Samples are sent to HI for analysis.

Continuous monitoring water monitoring equipment was installed By Helen Watson and the team from HI at three locations in March/April and after a few teething problems now operating well. Invertebrate samples collected by HI during May. Electrofishing surveys planned for early September. First payment for the plan was received this month.

[Rothes III](#): No further correspondence.

[Carn Duhie Windfarm](#): No further correspondence.

[Lethen Wind Farm](#): Planning permission not granted.

[Tom nan Clach Extension](#): No further correspondence.

[Kellas Wind Farm](#): No further correspondence.

[Ourack Wind Farm](#): No further correspondence.

Daltomach Wind Farm: FNLRT Contracted to provided fish and water surveys for EIA and scoping study. Surveys started in late August.

[Pauls Hill 3](#): Proposal for fish, invertebrate and water surveys prepared with the Spey Fishery Board and submitted to the developers for consideration. Awaiting a decision.

[Lynemore](#): Submitted comments on development.

A number of other windfarm developments are under consideration. Clare and I regularly review the Moary and Higland planning sites and submit comments where appropriate.

Flichty Bridge Replacement: Fish rescue was successfully completed with assistance from David Bowie (Bailiff Nairn DSFB) and Will Brown (Seasonal Assistant) during May 2024. New bridge is nearing completion.

A9 Dual carriageway: Letter received from Scot Gov indicating Balfour Beatty will be the preferred contractors for the dualling. RL/CW will draft comments and seek close liaison through the development and raise further concerns regarding the design of the Dalmagarry Burn bridge.

3. Biosecurity and INNs

INNS Progress Report: Additional funding through SISI allowed the appointment of Garth Meadows as season Project Office for six months. Gareth has previously volunteer to help with the project through his connection with Green Hove in Nairn and is a very welcome addition to the team.

Elise and Gareth plus help from numerous volunteers and local organisations such as Green Hive, Wild Things, completed all Giant Hogweed treatments across all three river catchments by the end of July.

Nairn: Whitebridge to Nairn harbour, plus the Auldearn Burn were completed by the SISI team, Green Hive, Cawdor Estate, Kilravock Estate and local volunteers. Additional areas around the Balmakeith Industrial Estate, Safeways and Auldearn were also completed.

Muckle Burn: GH control completed from Earlsmill Bridge to Dalvey Estate and a noticeable reduction in density after 4+ years of treatment is evident. Contractors, Groves Forestry, supported to carryout work on Dalvey Estate but still some high densities to deal with here.

Findhorn: GH treatment completed from Logie Bridge/Coulmony to A96 Bridge, Wild Things continued GH treatment downstream from A96 on lower Findhorn. Control supported by Moray Estates, Logie Estate, and Altyre Estate through landowner agreements and providing staff for spraying.

Rafting through the gorge was completed with support from Ace Adventure and rope experts Blokes on Ropes completed treatment of GH on the cliffs at Broadreeds. Several local farmers in the lower Findhorn also continuing control and we provided round up in support but need to develop stronger support for them in the future.

Mosset Burn: GH treatment completed from Altyre and Sourbank, Rafford down to the mouth at Findhorn Bay. Good support from local volunteers and farmers.

Lossie: GH treatment completed through SISI at Kellas, Brokentore, Elgin and additional support continues from Moray Estates at Bogside-Cloddach, Crown Estate at Wester Manbeen and Mayne Farm. Contractors used more widely this year and control has improved with good reductions in GH in the upper Lossie estates at last. However, further there areas still several dense areas of GH within these areas and access to treat them is difficult due to lack of tracks/roads and high densities of Japanese knotweed. Downstream from Wester Manbeen remains largely untreated although we again tackle the GH at Sherrifmill in Elgin where it has significant effects on public access. Roundup also supplied to the Elgin Angling Association members to assist with control along the fishing areas. However, there is considerable more work to do to bring the Lossie into the same level of control as the other rivers.

Elise and the team utilised the pressurized spray tank from Kellas Estate again this year and where vehicle access was available this proved a very effective. We are also exploring the potential for large drones to deliver aerial control particularly for Japanese knotweed.

Himalayan Balsam: Gareth team up with Green Hive in Nairn to continue the control of Himalayan Balsam within the town. Gareth and Caroline from Green Hive also identified the source of the plant on the Galcantray Burn and are developing a control strategy to tackle this in future years.

Japanese Knotweed: Elise and Gareth are planning the approach to JK control which will begin in earnest in September.

Mink: There has been quite an increase in sightings and captures (19) of mink this year, particularly on the Nairn, the coast and lower Mosset. Elise and Gareth have widened the raft and trap network and recruited more volunteers to tackle this. Remoti units are also used more extensively on traps, these reduce the need for visiting the trap every day and these send a signal to a mobile phone if a mink is captured.

Jane Hamilton continues to promote the project and had to deal with some particularly awkward and nasty social media comments earlier this year leading to the development of a new policy toward responses. This has settled down with more positive comments recently. Local publicity has generally been good with a recent article in the Forres Gazette, Elise supporting Forres in Bloom at the annual judging, and a range of updates and blogs present on the [SISI site](#).

4. Fish and Fisheries

Catches 2024: Salmon catches have shown a welcome improvement from the last two years. Wetter conditions have helped and there appears to be a good stock of adult salmon throughout the river. Official salmon catch statistics were published in August with the Findhorn and Nairn grade as good and the Lossie as poor.

Poaching Control: Sean and Ali have continued regular patrols around the Findhorn and Lossie. A range of incidents including fishing without tickets have been dealt with and a number of more serious incidents are being dealt with.

I chaired the Riverwatch meeting in April which was well attend by local bailiffs, representatives From Angling Associations and Police Scotland. A wide range of issues were discussed, and we were particularly pleased that Andrew Kerr (FishPal) also attended to discuss ticketing issues through the Fishpal website.

Fish Disease: Peiter van West and his team at Aberdeen University was successful in securing funds for a PHD to study the new variant of Saprolegnia. A student, Vasileios Kyparis (Billy) has been appointed to undertake the study. Sampling programme has been devised and after training Sean and Ali are carrying out regular two weekly samples from two locations, Logie Bridge, Findhorn and the lower Divie, from March through to December 2024. A temperature logger was installed at Logie Bridge and DNA samples are also being collected once per month from this location.

Reports of infected spring salmon were very low this year, wetter conditions and higher river flows during May may well have help reduce infection rates. However, we have been picking up more infected fish in the Divie in the last few weeks. These are a mix of grilse and some larger salmon and don't appear to have been the river for very long. After discussions with Pieter we will attempt to get some fresh samples form the infected fish over the next weeks and Pieter will also provide some training and sampling kits for our staff.

Fisheries Management Scotland Story Map: Completed by the end of March 2024.

Juvenile Surveys: General survey this year will focus on the River Lossie due to start in Sept 2024.

River Temperatures: Fifteen temp loggers were installed at various locations in the Upper Findhorn and Dorback and Divie. Twelve of these were successfully retrieved and downloaded by Sean, Ali and Bob during March 2024.

The data has been stored and some initial analysis completed. A further four loggers were downloaded during August and the remainder will be visited during Sept/Oct.

Tomatin Distillery: Anthony Laing (Findhorn DSFB), Sean, Ali and I meet with Tomatin Distillery to discuss temperature uplift in the Allt na Frith resulting from the discharge of cooling water from the distillery. I summarised a full year of temperature data from the burn was reviewed and significant uplifts in temperature were evident during the summer and the spawning period for salmon and trout which will affect the survival of both fish species. The distillers indicated that cooling towers had been installed and overhauled and were now expected to work much more effectively and agreed to maintain temperature monitoring to determine the success of the approach. Temp data will be uploaded monthly and made available to the Trust to review.

5. Marine and Inshore Environment

No further work.

6. Education and Awareness

Schools Go To Fish: I contacted Heldon Community Council to confirm that funding is still available for Alves, Dalles and Mosstowie Primary Schools however, we were unable to advance this project last year. Further contact with the schools and Heldo CC to try and deliver the project over winter 2024/spring 2025 terms.

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