



Minute of Findhorn Nairn & Lossie Rivers Trust Board Meeting

Venue: Virtual

Date: 27th August 2024 4pm

Attending: Mark Laing (ML), Fiona Strachan (FS), Andrew Wallace (AW), Crinan Dunbar (CD)

In Attendance: Robert Laughton (Director)(RL), Clare Walker (Administrator)(CW), Elle Adams (EA) (Living Alive), Guy Harris (GH) (FWI PO).

		ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies ML opened the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. Apologies were received from Alasdair Laing, Alec Rose, Charlie Black, Campbell Ross, Alex Leven and Jamie Whittle.</p>	
2	<p>Minutes of Meeting of 11th March 2024 The draft minutes were approved. CW to publish them on the website.</p>	CW
3	<p>Matters Arising None</p>	
4	<p>Financial Update</p> <p><i>a. Budget and Cashflow Update</i> - Michael Barron, FDSFB member, has agreed to provide financial oversight/advice to the FNLRT Board until the Board gains this expertise through member recruitment. CW had made some alterations to the budget report which the Board agreed would be useful to adopt going forward. The cashflow is at a steady level with some funds being in deficit due to grant claims being made in arrears and the unrestricted funds showing a surplus to date. Michael Barron has passed on a contact who may be able to assist with a better forecasting model, CW will explore this.</p> <p><i>b. Draft Accounts for Year End 31st March 2024</i> – the draft accounts were circulated to the Board in advance of the meeting. CW highlighted some points to note including the increase in the Trust’s fixed assets over the past twelve months, the clearing of the loan to FDSFB for the FNLRT vehicle and the grant debtors/creditors at year end. The net movement in funds for the period was a surplus of £49k. Having reviewed the draft accounts the Board agreed that the audit could proceed. CW will inform EQ Chartered Accountants.</p> <p><i>c. Trustees Report</i> – The Trustees Report has been updated to reflect the activity of the Trust for the period. The Board Approved the Trustees Report. CW will pass this on to EQ Chartered Accountants.</p>	CW CW CW
5	<p>Director’s Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RL latest Progress Report can be found here. <p>Catch Data – There has been an upturn in catches this season with decent runs reported. Provisional river gradings have been released, they have changed the categorisation, the Findhorn and Nairn are ‘Good’ (old grade one) with the Lossie graded ‘Poor’ (old grade three). RL will submit comments back highlighting the validity of only using catch data and invited additional comments from the Board.</p>	RL

	<p>Smolt Trap – FNLRT ran a trial of the FDSFB smolt trap at a site in Tomatin in the Spring, using funding from London and North Eastern Railway. The trial went well but the site was difficult in high water. Initial analysis suggests a recapture rate of 5%, RL can begin extrapolating population estimates from this data.</p> <p>Atlantic Salmon Trust (AST) – The results of the smolt tagging project run in 2019-2021 are beginning to be published. The first paper shows some interesting data and has been well received, RL will circulate the link to the Board.</p> <p>Juvenile Surveys – RL hopes to begin the electrofishing survey of the Lossie next week. There are two windfarm contracts underway.</p> <p>Wind farm Developments – there has been an increase in planning applications submitted for windfarm developments in the catchment. Monitoring contracts are underway for Clashgour and for Daltomach, with another contract pending for Pauls Hill. During the initial fish surveys for Daltomach several healthy resident brown trout populations were found. This highlights the need for careful management of these areas to ensure that developments do not unduly disturb these unique, remote populations. While the revenue from contract work such as that for these windfarm developments provides a significant income for the Trust at a time when it can be difficult to source core funding, RL raised concern over the volume of developments in planning and the potential effect this could have on the catchment in the long term.</p> <p>INNS – An underspend in the SISI budget was reallocated to enable the employment of a seasonal post for partner organisations, FNLRT employed Gareth Meadows who had previously volunteered with the project. Giant Hogweed targets were largely met. The Lossie has proved challenging again, but progress has still been made. There has been some tackling of Himalayan Balsam on the Nairn with the help of Green Hive. There was some negative feedback on social media aimed at the project early in the year which took up time and resources to deal with. RL has suggested developing a blanket policy statement to issue in response to negative comments rather than addressing them directly. There has been a rise in mink captures this year with nineteen being caught. This is partly due to an increase in the volunteer network and number of rafts being manned.</p> <p>Fish Disease – There were initial reports of fish with Saprolegnia infections in early May but subsequent wet weather and higher river flows appear to have prevented the wider spread of the infection. However, a number of infected salmon and grilse have been observed in the River Divie. Sean and Alister are taking regular water samples to feed into the PhD research being carried out by Pieter van West at Aberdeen University into new strains of Saprolegnia.</p>	RL
6	<p>Findhorn Watershed Initiative (FWI)</p> <p>EA and GH gave a presentation highlighting the work and key milestones of the FWI project including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of first scheme at Glenkyllachy representing 40 hectares of planting and natural regeneration and 5Km of river shading. • Twenty Seven landholdings have been engaged and there are now eighteen woodland/river restoration projects in development with the potential to provide 40Km of shading along the river Findhorn. • Each of these schemes has been developed and adapted to meet the individual needs and land uses of the landholding • ‘The River Within’ corporate partnership with Chivas Brothers Ltd (CBL) is now underway. The first two schemes have been submitted and approved for funding by CBL and there are plans to submit a further two in the near future. 	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Deer Management Forum was launched in May with a well-attended and well received event at Logie • A concert was organised in Tomatin in March as the culmination of the work of the cultural heritage commission piece. It was a very successful evening. • A number of volunteering opportunities have been held including invertebrate monitoring, peatland survey training and sea grass mapping. • The citizen science invertebrate monitoring program with Buglife now has two established groups, one upper catchment and one lower catchment, who are meeting regularly to survey. A deeper survey will soon be underway in collaboration with Wildfish as part of their 'Smart Rivers' project. • The mapping of outflows into Findhorn Bay is almost complete, this information should help build a picture of what is going into the bay after concerns about the water quality. • The project recently had a ministerial visit where ML, EA and GH were able to share the progress being made using the Scottish Government's Just Transition Fund. • Other funding for the FWI is being sought including an application to Esmee Fairbairn for four year funding, an award decision is expected in September. • Work continues on developing a nature finance strategy with assistance from Dark Matter Labs. • EA reiterated concerns raised earlier about the cumulative impact of windfarm developments in the upper catchment. • The project will have a presence at a number of upcoming events including Logie Timber Festival, Findhorn Bay Arts Festival and MorayCAN climate conference. 	
7	<p>Policy and Procedure Review</p> <p>CW has circulated draft copies of the following policies and procedures for Board approval: <i>Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy – Approved</i> <i>Safeguarding Policy and Procedure - Approved</i> <i>Bullying and Harassment Policy - Approved</i> <i>Flexible Working Policy – Approved</i></p> <p>CW will circulate approved policies to all staff.</p>	CW
8.	<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None 	
9.	<p>FNLRT Board Only</p> <p>RL, CW, EA and GH left the meeting.</p> <p>The Board met in private session to discuss succession plans for the Trust. ML had informed the Board privately at the last meeting in March of RL's intention to retire as Director in March 2025.</p> <p>ML presented a proposal to those present for a succession plan to identify and appoint a new Director and to restructure the management of the Trust to support the anticipated strategy of the Trust for the future.</p> <p>The principal work of the Trust for the foreseeable future falls under three main headings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To drive forward the catchment scale work of the Findhorn Watershed Initiative, which has made excellent progress in the past eighteen months. • To maximise the impact of the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative in the catchments of the Findhorn Nairn and Lossie. • To support the three District Salmon Fishery Boards with the biological, ecological, monitoring and control work which they require the Trust to carry out for them. 	

RESEARCH

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	<p>The proposal was discussed and those present agreed the proposal.</p> <p>It was agreed to convene a Teams Meeting of the whole Board, when further information on future funding streams are available, to ensure all Board members had the opportunity to comment on the proposal.</p>	
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The next Board meeting will take place on 25th November 2024.

ML closed the meeting at 17.10