

# FNLFT Progress Report 01.2019

R. Laughton, 15/03/2019

The following report provides an up-date on activities from 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2018 to 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The report is set out in the form of the Fisheries Management Tables (1 to 7) and activities relating to each “Issue” are documented for each river.

It is with great disappointment that I report that the Nairn Board have withdrawn their support for the Trusts services, both administration and biological. All paperwork and digital data has been transferred back to the Nairn Board. Contact within the Nairn Board is Pete Sadders.

## 1. The Environment

| Factor/Issues                              | Findhorn  | Nairn | Lossie |
|--|---|-------|--------|
| 1.1 Marine Environment/<br>Marine survival | <p>MSS Adult Salmon Tagging Project: No report yet!</p> <p>AST Missing Salmon Project: The project reached its funding target and is now underway. For further details/updates on the project <a href="#">click here</a>.</p> <p>The Findhorn Board agreed to participate in the project and during December/January purchased the 6ft smolt trap from the Nairn Fishery Board. In addition funds for 50 acoustic tags was earmarked allowing a total of 100 smolts to be tagged on the Findhorn. Two potential sites to install the smolt trap have been identified at Red Craig and Antons on the lower Findhorn and it is likely initial installation will go ahead at the upper site at Red Craig. Installation will depend on weather but we hope to have the trap in and operational by 12<sup>th</sup> April. Acoustic receivers, approx. 5 to 8, will be installed by AST staff with help from Findhorn bailiffs Sean and Don, during the week beginning 26<sup>th</sup> March. The key aim for the trap this year is to provide smolts for tagging however, we will also attempt estimate the size of the smolt run if good operating condition prevail. For tagging larger smolts are required, &gt;130mm, and each day smolts of these smolts will be selected from the catch and held in a holding tank within the trap for the AST tagging team. After tagging the smolts will be release downstream of the trap to continue their journey.</p> <p>The Findhorn trap is fairly close to the sea and the receivers will give us an insight into the time taken to move downstream and reach the sea, it should also shed some light on the losses to predation be it from sawbills, seals or other predators.</p> <p>AST have establish an array of acoustic receivers in the sea which will tell us the migration routes of smolts within the Moray Firth.</p> |       |        |
| 1.2 Freshwater Environment and Land Use    | <p>A96 Dualling: <i>Hardmuir – Fochabers Section</i>: Preferred route selected. Comments on route submitted to developers and some initial discussions on monitoring fish populations completed.</p> <p>A9 Dualling: no further activity.</p> <p>Clashgour WF: Attended drop-in session and comments prepared and submitted.</p> <p>Berry Burn WF Extension: Public drop in sessions due in March and after those I will prepare comments.</p> <p>Roths III WF: Drop-in session at Dallas attended and comments submitted.</p> <p>Flichity Bridge, Nairn: Contract for habitat survey and upgrade of bridge for wind farm traffic awarded from RES. Survey and report completed in February (£950).</p> <p>Clunas Hydro Scheme: Hydro scheme proposed from upper tributary of Cawdor Burn and existing Clunas Reservoir. Fish survey completed under contract to developer's babyHydro Ltd. Scheme involve installation of low head dam, to allow water transfer from upper Cawdor Burn to Clunas Reservoir. The reservoir is part of the Muckle</p>  |       |        |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Burn/Findhorn catchment so there are issues with cross catchment transfer providing potential for transfer of INN species such as Am Signal Crayfish. Plans for the scheme submitted in December 2018. Comments prepared for FNLFT raising issues regarding crayfish, water transfer, design of weir and fish pass. Comments and objection raised on behalf of Findhorn Board.</p> <p>Culvert on River Brin: Site visit with Ali Skinner, culvert installed to access new house under construction. Culvert was ok for fish passage but had been installed without permission from Nairn Board or SEPA. AS to follow up.</p> <p>Muckle Burn Ford for Earth Transfer: Construction of temporary ford for earth transfer from one side of Muckle Burn to the other near Dyke. Approach developed with farmer, and SEPA but as works were undertaken the silt load to the burn was too high and works were voluntarily stopped by the farmer and contractors. Thanks to Sean and Don from attended the site.</p> |
|--|--|

## 2. Adult Salmon and Trout Stocks

| Factor/Issues  | Findhorn   | Nairn | Lossie |
|--|--|-------|--------|
| 2.1 Adult Salmon and Trout Escapement, Exploitation And Conservation | <p><b>Catch Data:</b> 2018 Catch data:<br/>           Findhorn: Salmon and Grilse 1676, Sea trout 148. C&amp;R 91% and 70%<br/>           Nairn: Salmon and Grilse 298, Sea Trout 30. C&amp;R 83% to 92%.<br/>           Lossie: Salmon and Grilse 37, sea trout 36. C&amp;R 100% and 82%</p> <p><b>Linkwood Burn:</b><br/>           Ben Riach Weir fish pass installed in summer 2018, Linkwood weir fish pass in design. Further meeting of Linkwood group scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> March.</p> <p><b>Cawdor Burn Weir:</b> New fish pass designed by Envirocentre, distillery operators have submitted plans and cost to their capital expenditure budget for consideration and we should have a decision shortly.</p> |       |        |

## 3. Juvenile Salmon and Trout Stocks

| Factor/Issues   | Findhorn   | Nairn | Lossie |
|---|--|-------|--------|
| 3.1 Juvenile Salmon and Trout distribution and abundance Data | <p>National Survey: Marie Scotland preparing report. No confirmation as yet of whether a further survey will be required this year.</p> <p>Nairn Survey 2018: data compiled into SFCC database and few scales still to check to confirm age classes.</p> <p>Lossie: due to be surveyed summer 2019.</p> <p>SFCC Electrofishing Training: Jamie Ribbens (Galloway Fisheries Trust) and I submitted a bid to the Loughs Agency Northern Ireland to deliver the Team Leader Courses next spring. The bid was successful and we will deliver the SFCC training course in NI next spring.</p> <p>I will be mentoring Chris Daphne (Ness-Beaully) through this year SFCC EF courses allowing Chris to take on the training himself from 2020 onwards.</p> <p>SFCC Refresher Course: I'll be leading the course in June 2019.</p> |       |        |
| 3.2 Salmon and Trout Smolt Production                         | See AST summary above.   |       |        |

|      |  |
|------|--|
| Data |  |
|------|--|

#### 4. Protection of Salmon and Trout Stocks

| Factor/Issues   | Findhorn  | Nairn | Lossie |
|---|---|-------|--------|
| 4.1 Predation by sawbill ducks, cormorants, seals, mink and other animals | <p><b>Sawbills:</b> Further counts were completed during February and March by bailiffs, keepers and volunteers and some <i>ad hoc</i> data from a number of anglers and from the bailiffs also collected. The February count was hampered by icy conditions but the March count was fully completed.</p> <p>Licence for 2018-19 received from Roger Knight (Spey). Control measures underway.</p> <p><b>Seals:</b> Further drone survey completed in February. Data compiled and aiming to review data for next Findhorn Board meeting.</p> <p><b>Mink:</b> Mink sightings reported, from the coast between Burghead and Lossiemouth, mink tracks collected from monitoring raft at Daviot on the upper Nairn. James Symonds (SISI) installed traps along coast with volunteers and 15 mink captured over winter so far. No captures from the Nairn but further monitoring rafts and traps have been installed. This is the main period for mink dispersal so a number of other monitoring rafts have been installed, around Findhorn Bay, Muckle and Mosset Burns, along river Lossie and upper Nairn. James and I have recruited more volunteers to help look after these rafts.</p> |       |        |

| Factor/Issues  | Findhorn  | Nairn | Lossie |
|--|---|-------|--------|
| 4.4 Control of illegal fishing and maintaining effective bailiffing. | <p>Seasonal bailiff Don Mackenzie re-joined the Findhorn Board on the 11<sup>th</sup> February and has been conducting patrols with Head Bailiff Sean MacLean on the Findhorn and Lossie. Don was with the Findhorn until the end of October 2018 and proved to be a considerable asset.</p> <p>Regular staff meetings and discussions on work programs continued. Monthly reports prepared by Sean and circulated to respective Boards.</p> <p>Riverwatch: Meeting of Moray river bailiffs and Police Scotland wildlife officers. I chaired meeting on 6<sup>th</sup> March, where we updated on bailiffing activities on each river, discussed training and other wildlife crime.</p> |       |        |

| Factor/Issues          | Findhorn  | Nairn | Lossie |
|------------------------|---|-------|--------|
| 4.2 Non Native species | <p><b>Crayfish:</b> No further progress on finding funds for implementation of a control programme. Heightened interest in the problem again due to Clunas Hydro proposal.</p> <p><b>HLF SISI Project:</b> Project bid was finally approved and formally started on 1<sup>st</sup> November 2017. The project will run from 2018 to 2022.</p> <p><i>Giant Hogweed Control:</i> James has been in contract with all contractors and is reviewing their tender submissions. We have planned GH control activities for the season and due to start spraying in mid-April. James has worked hard on volunteer recruitment over winter and we not have a much wider range of groups and individuals across to help across all three rivers in 2019. Grant support proposal submitted to Crown Estate for the Wester Manbeen section of the Lossie.</p> |       |        |

|  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Some questions still to answer before a decision is made.</p> <p>Repeating treatment across the sections of Findhorn, Nairn, Lossie and Mosset will be a the core of our approach this year but we have also targeted the Lossie from Kellas to Elgin as a high priority and hope to start in earnest on the Muckle this year as well.</p> <p><i>Japanese Knotweed:</i> Plans for 2019 still being developed.</p> <p>Claim 4: information collected by Valerie and submitted in January. Claim has been paid.</p> <p>I have secure £2000 for a further drone survey of the hogweed in July. We are into look at further grant support and a bid to EB Scotland who provided funding for Lossie treatments in the past will be submitted in late summer. James and I are also looking to a more co-operative based approach to funding future treatments.</p> <p>Presentation to Heldon CC on INNs control delivered during March and turned up some good information on mink sightings within the area.</p> <p>My thanks to James and Vicky for all their efforts to ensure the SISI project progress rapidly this year and to all the proprietors, farmers, contractors, staff and volunteers who have helped with INNs control. Keep up to date on SISI project at <a href="http://www.invasivespecies.scot">www.invasivespecies.scot</a></p> |
|--|--|


## 5. Habitat Management

| Factor                                 | Findhorn   | Nairn | Lossie |
|--|--|-------|--------|
| 5.1 Habitat Management and Enhancement | <p><b>Mosset Burn:</b> Growing interest locally regarding the burn and concerns raised about siltation, drainage and blockages. An initial meeting to canvass views was organised by Forres Community Council (FCC) in March and I attended. FCC have ring-fenced a small fund to carry out a survey of the burn to identify the key issues. Further funding for a survey has now been confirmed at £2000 and I am hastily re-writing the proposal and should be able to progress this in 2019.</p> <p><b>Black Burn, Lossie:</b> While completing the National Juvenile Survey we visited five site on the Black Burn and it was clear that there is potential for improving both the bankside and instream habitat within the burn. There is considerable siltation largely due to forestry drainage and also substantial bank erosion. Valerie and I are developing ideas and looking into potential funders.</p> |       |        |

## 6. Management of Other Fish Species

| Factor/Issues                                | Findhorn  | Nairn | Lossie |
|--|---|-------|--------|
| 6.1 Other Fish Species/ Better data required | <p><b>Pink Salmon:</b> If the pink salmon spawning successfully in 2017 we can reasonably expect to see some return this summer. FMS have raised awareness of this issue already and we will also do the same. Any sighting should be reported to the FNLFT office.</p> |       |        |

## 7. Education and Publicity

| Factor   | Findhorn  | Nairn | Lossie |
|--|---|-------|--------|
| <p>7.1 To educate and publicise fisheries management</p> | <p><b>Schools Go To Fish:</b><br/> <i>Farr and Daviot Primary Schools:</i> Both completed their classroom presentations in January and then installed mink rafts and wildlife cameras on nearby rivers. Daviot recorded mink tracks on their raft a few days later and although James set a trap no mink were captured. The wildlife cameras proved highly successful with otter, pine marten, fox (picture below), red squirrel and even a rat all recorded much to the delight of the pupils.</p>  <p>Casting tuition will start in the first week April and I hope to conclude the project in late May with a fishing trip to Dunlichty Fishery. This project is supported by the Strathnairn Community Fund (£1875).</p> <p><i>Andersons, Pilmuir and Kinloss Primaries:</i> Five classes across the three primary schools participated in the project. Classes were introduced to both the Salmon Go To School or Alien Invaders presentations. Mink raft and wildlife camera was installed on the Kinloss Burn and we await the results. Casting tuition will be started after the Easter holidays and again the project concluded with a trip to a local fishery (Kellas) in May. This project is funded by Tesco Bags of Help (£2000).</p> <p>Volunteers are required to help with casting tuition and the day out to the fishery. Please let me know if you can assist.</p> <p>2020 Schools Funding Bids: Three funding bids were completed during January to Strathdearn Community Fund (£743.00), Rothes Wind Farm Community Fund (£4125.00) and Woodward Charitable Trust (£1875.00). To date the Strathdearn application has been approved, and I gave a presentation to the Heldon CC in support of the Rothes WF application.</p> <p>Publicity- See <a href="http://www.fnift.org.uk">www.fnift.org.uk</a> <a href="#">Facebook</a> for INNS control see <a href="http://www.invasivespecies.scot">www.invasivespecies.scot</a><br/> Spring Newsletter will be available in April.<br/> Findhorn Fishery Board Annual Report completed in February.</p> |       |        |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| 7.2 To contribute to wider Fisheries Management | <p><b>Boards Merger:</b> FNLFT submitted a grant application to the Scottish Government to fund a portion of the costs, £12,500, to establish a business case for the merge of the Findhorn and Lossie DSFBs. The grant was provided from the Marine Scotland, Wild Fisheries Governance Fund. If the Boards agreed to progress with a merger then a further £37,500 would be made available to facilitate this process.</p> <p>A sub-committee from the two Boards and FNLFT was formed to steer the review and in October 2018 appointed independent business consultant, Mr Bob McAlpine, Dalriada Management Services, to perform a review of the merits of any amalgamation of the two Boards with emphasis on the following elements;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The merger process steps.</li> <li>• Identification of the benefits of any amalgamation for both Districts.</li> <li>• To quantify any financial efficiencies that may arise.</li> <li>• The impact on the Proprietor assessment levels for both rivers.</li> <li>• Treatment of the Board assets in the event of a merger.</li> <li>• Representation of the interested parties on an amalgamated Board.</li> <li>• The involvement of the Trust.</li> <li>• To provide a recommendation on whether to proceed</li> </ul> <p>The work commenced in late October 2018 and consisted of a series of meetings and telephone interviews, supported by desk-based research into the topic. Draft report completed and presented at sub-committee meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2018. After review by the sub-committee the report was circulated to all Board members. Joint meeting of both Boards held on 18<sup>th</sup> December 2018, presentation on the findings made by Bob McAlpine. (Document 4). Key recommendations were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>The medium term operational benefits of a merger would not appear to be sufficient to offset the short-term cost in time and money of embarking upon a merger process.</i></li> <li>2. <i>The agreement for the re-distribution of assets amongst the Findhorn Proprietors prior to a merger might be difficult to negotiate and arrive at a solution that satisfies all. The treatment of assets should be included in any proposal submitted for consideration by the Proprietors at an early stage. Any proposal for distribution of DSFB assets should secure near unanimous approval from the Proprietors.</i></li> <li>3. <i>The process to effect a merger is contained within the Act and summarised in this report, but advice from Fish Legal, FMS or other experienced experts should be obtained prior to embarking upon the statutory consultation element of the process. The consultation should neither be too wide nor too narrow in scope and expert guidance would assist in this process.</i></li> <li>4. <i>Any transfer of staff to a new organisation should be carried out in accordance with the TUPE regulations and expert advice should be obtained.</i></li> <li>5. <i>In the event of a decision not to merge, there would be merit in agreeing a longer-term Service Agreement (5 years minimum) between the Boards that accurately reflects the scope of the services to be provided and the costs of provision.</i></li> <li>6. <i>The Board and Trust should utilise electronic banking to improve the administrative tasks and a simple accounting package to manage the financial transactions more efficiently.</i></li> <li>7. <i>The Fishery Management Plans should be updated following the decision to either form a new District or to remain with the status quo. The development of the FMP would assist in the communications process with other interested parties.</i></li> <li>8. <i>There is a clear benefit to the Proprietors from a high performing River Trust which can raise external funds to help offset increases in Assessments and this activity should be given a higher level of focus. The responsibility for Trust fund raising activities should be formally described and included within a statement of Roles and responsibilities of the relevant members of staff.</i></li> <li>9. <i>The Trust staff should give an increased amount of attention to generation of</i></li> </ol> |
|---|---|

*income from sources other than the Proprietors.*

After discussions Board were members asked to consider the recommendations and submit vote in early January 2019 on whether to take merger proceedings further. Votes from the Board members were collated with 14 against and 1 no vote, providing a majority in favour of not progressing with a merger.

Comments from Board members in general favoured the continuation of the two existing Boards, improve operating procedures such as banking, develop a longer term agreement to cover join services such as bailiffing, continue to support, promote and enhance the role of the Trust as fund raiser for riparian and fisheries projects. Fisheries Management Plans for both rivers would be updated to reflect this.

**Fisheries Management Scotland:** Annual Conference Salmon and People in a Changing World, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2019. [Click here](#) for more details.