

FNLRT Progress Report 01.2021

R. Laughton, 05/03/2021

The following report provides an update on activities from 23rd November 2020 to 5th March 2021. The report is set out in the form of the new Fisheries Management Plan 2021-2026.

Coronavirus: FNLFT/SISI Staff: Following Government guidelines on Coronavirus the Trust office was closed in late March, Bob, Valerie, and Vicky all working from home. Office remains closed.

Reporting: Management Plan 2021-26 completed and now available from web site [Click Here](#). Annual reports for Boards completed and submitted to FMS. MoU approved by FFB at November 2020 meeting. MoU circulated to Lossie Board but next meeting postponed.

Change of Trust name completed and extensive work by Valerie undertaken to change bank details, web site, etc to reflect this.

Full copy of Zoom purchased, and all meetings have been attended through video link. Home working and travel around river also reduced and so fuel consumption considerably reduced. Changes reflect Covid-19 restrictions but has improved carbon footprint considerably!

1. Climate Change

Riparian Woodland Restoration Project: Joint initiative with the Dee Trust, Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust and funded by Fishmongers Company Ltd. River temperature data obtained from Scot-Gov/CEH and mapped for Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie. Maps produced by Sean Robertson (Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust) and indicate the upper reaches of Findhorn and upper tributaries are most at risk from rising temperatures. Target areas for improving upland woodland being produced along with indicative costs and a report will be available shortly.

Contact has been made with upper one Findhorn proprietor to discuss implementing improvements and discussions will commence shortly.

2. River habitat and Land Use

Findhorn-Lossie: A96 Dualling: Hardmuir – Fochabers Section: Report on fish and habitat surveys completed in January.

Cloddach Bridge: The centre channel underneath Cloddach bridge is in poor condition with a deep undercut at the upstream end and during low flows will fish passage. A letter was sent to Moray Council raising concerns meeting with Daniel Prentice (Moray Council) took place on 1st Dec. Bridge is in very poor condition and there are no plans or budget to replace the bridge. The tonnage limit will drop in 2021 restricting types of vehicles which can cross and some works to install signage etc will be required. I pressed home the issue of fish passage being problematic and there may be room in the budget to assess the channels underneath the bridge. Contact Daniel in March 2021 to discuss further.

Burnside Bride: Replacement of the old bridge at Burnside was completed by Tarmac Ltd in November 2020.



New bridge at Burnside Cottage on the Black Burn improves fish passage and reduces localised flooding. Old bridge on the left, new bridge on the right.

Linkwood Burn: Initial assessment of the two weirs at Longmorn and Glen Elgin distilleries was completed, and a scoping report produced by cbec. I discussed the report with cbec and await the next version, but project is currently on hold until Covid-19 restrictions are eased.

Clashgour Windfarm: Public enquiry results still to be published.

Carn Duhie Windfarm: plans for development being revised.

Lethen Wind Farm: Scoping report on 20 turbine wind farm located on Lethen estate was received. The wind farm impinges on the Tomlachlan Burn which drains into the Findhorn. Comments were prepared and a holding objection was submitted from the Board and Trust.

Wester Greens Distillery Proposal: Although not impinging on the river, distilleries require considerable amounts of water and produce warm water as a by-product. The plans did not address this very clearly and comments on this matter were submitted to Moray Council planning for clarification.



Re-channelled section of the Muckle Burn.

River works, Muckle Burn: I received some pictures from a local resident showing substantial river works on the Muckle Burn upstream from Littlemill. Sean, Ali and I enquired further and found two farmers had decided to re-channel the burn to prevent flooding into one of their fields. Discussions with the two farmers indicated that they had not applied to SEPA for a CAR licence, nor had they informed Cawdor Estate or the Findhorn Board. The works were carried out in Nov/Dec 2020, are approx. 150m in length and are a very poor standard. Significant

instream habitat has been lost due to the dredging and the works will also create addition erosion points both upstream and downstream. No plans to vegetate the new loose banks are in place so it is likely the much of the remove substrate will be eroded during spates leading to further problems. SEPA have been informed and conducted a site visit on the 5th March and we will have further discussion on how to proceed.

Broom of Moy Bank Repair, Muckle Burn: Sean and Ali noticed river works underway just upstream of the bridge at Broom of Moy on the Muckle Burn during November 2020. Works were to repair bank erosion and involved placement of rock armour and backfilling with soil. After discussion with contractor and farmer the works did have a CAR licence but should have been carried out in the summer to reduce the disturbance to spawning fish. The farmer explained the works had been delayed due to Covid-19 restrictions and apologised for not informing the Board. Works were completed to a good standard but little provision for silt control and oil spillage was evident.



Straw bales used to control siltation during drain clearance on Dalvey Estate.

Drains at Dalvey: Sean and Ali inspected drainage work underway on Dalvey during February. Again, no contact with the Fishery Board and a site inspection revealed that while the digger operator was experienced there was not provision for silt or oil spillage control, and no warning signs for anglers accessing the fishing beat. The work was being managed by Watson Bell

Associates and we contacted them to raise concern. The work was carried out under general binding rules (GBR) and so no CAR license required. Straw bales were installed to prevent silt entering the river and our other comments to improve safety were noted. I've also written to Watson Bell outlining these concerns and the need to contact the relevant Fishery Board/SEPA etc. However, the work was completed to a high standard.

Lossie-Scottish Water: Organised meeting with Scottish Water and Lossie Board to discuss water supply and SW drought plan. Communications between Scottish water and proprietors has been poor in the past and the meeting allowed SW to outline the current supply requirements and their plans for maintaining this particularly in drought years. The meeting was very useful, and comments have been passed back to Scottish Water.

3. Biosecurity and INNs

SISI Project: Work over winter has concentrated on updating data and planning for 2021. Good management of the project has allowed the funding to be stretched out to an additional year which is very welcome news. Lockdown has also curtailed field work activities, but a network of mink monitoring rafts is being maintained. Initial discussions with a number of landowners regarding control for 2021 completed. Our biosecurity plan was also updated and is available on web site click [here](#).

Keep up to date on SISI project at www.invasivespecies.scot

Wester Manbeen: Report on INNs control at Wester Manbeen completed and submitted to Crown Estate agents. Proposal for 2021 control being prepared and will be submitted in March.

EB Scotland Funding: Report on progress and funding claim submitted by Valerie and some funds will be carried over into 2021 for stem clearance and giant hogweed control. Plans for 2021 being developed.

4. Fish and Fisheries

2020 Catch Data: Although a good part of the early season was lost due to COVID-19 lock down restrictions, Fishing on both the Findhorn and Lossie was relatively good when it recommenced. Catch for the Findhorn was 1010 salmon/grilse and 66 sea trout, for the Lossie 61 salmon/grilse and 87 sea trout.

National EF Survey Scotland (NEPS): Report for 2019 completed by Marine Science scientists. [Click Here](#) for copy. In general Salmon fry densities were lower in 2019 than 2018 across much of the country. Abundances were particularly low in north-east and west. Salmon parr abundances were more stable but declined particularly in the north and west. For the FNL area this pattern was also evident with salmon 0+ dropping from grade 2 to grade 3 and salmon parr remaining at grade 2. For juvenile salmon overall FNL area is Grade 2.

Due to COVID-19 the 2020 survey was postponed until 2021 but to date there is no confirmation that it will go ahead. Planning to review juvenile survey approach in line with NEPs this year.

Scottish Fisheries Co-ordination Centre ([SFCC](#)): Attended annual biologist meeting and continued with review of electrofishing training.

AST Missing Salmon Project: Smolt tagging will progress in 2021. And follow a similar approach to 2019 with 100 smolts tagged and released in the Findhorn and similar numbers in the other Moray Firth rivers. Trust/Board staff will carry out the tagging procedures on their respective rivers.

Mirella and I completed the second part of tagging training in early March which allows us to progress on to tagging live smolts. The trap will be re-installed at Red Craig in early April 2021 which would allow a direct comparison with the 2019 data. The tagging team will consist of Mirella, Sean, Ali and I and we will have a number of practice runs before starting tagging in earnest in late April.

Further details/updates on the AST Missing Salmon Project, [click here](#).

Protection of Fish Stocks: Further sawbill count was completed on 08th Dec 2020 with both goosanders and mergansers present but in low numbers. Licence received from SNH for scaring and control for Findhorn and Lossie from 1st Oct 2020 to 31st May 2021.

Next count in late March 2021 as always volunteers are welcome to help with counts and any ad hoc sightings are very useful data in support of our licence application. Text/email any data to Sean or me.

Significant changes in the seal licence application procedure are evident due to the The Animals and Wildlife (Penalties, Protections and Powers) (Scotland) Bill which was passed by the Scottish Parliament on 17 June 2020. This includes amendments to section 110 of the Marine (Scotland) Act 2010 removing the ability of Scottish Ministers to grant licences for the purpose of preventing serious damage to fisheries and fish farms from predators such as seals. The Bill allows salmon produced in Scottish fish farms to be compatible with US Marine Mammal Protection Act and so exports to the US to be maintained. Licensing arrangements for the Moray Firth have been under the Moray Firth Seal Management Plan but this approach is now under review and Sean and I are discussing matters with Roger Knight (Spey) regarding future applications.

5. Marine and Inshore Environment

Attended online seminar on offshore wind farm developments and fisheries.

6. Education and Awareness

Schools Go To Fish: All schools projects still suspended due to coronavirus restrictions.

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