

## FNLRT Progress Report 03.2021

R. Laughton, 25/11/2021

The following report provides an update on activities from 16<sup>th</sup> August 2021 to 25<sup>th</sup> November 2021. The report is set out in the form of the new Fisheries Management Plan 2021-2026.

**Coronavirus:** FNLRT/SISI Staff: We continue to follow Government guidelines regarding Coronavirus and the majority of staff continued to work from home or were out on fieldwork throughout the summer. The Trust office has now partially re-opened with RL and James Symonds present on most days, although a mix of home working and using the office will continue for the foreseeable future.

### 1. Climate Change

Options for re-creating riparian woodland have been developed with Steve Conolly (Cawdor Forestry) and submitted to one upper proprietor for consideration. Discussions are ongoing and we hope to progress this ambitious project shortly.

Informal discussions have also been had with a few other proprietors and there was positive interest. So, I plan to developing potential options for a selection of areas based on the river temperature map and discuss further with the relevant proprietors and also identify potential funding.

### 2. River habitat and Land Use

**Findhorn-Lossie: A9 Dualling: Hardmuir – Fochabers Section:** Final comments were added to the Environment Impact Assessment Report regarding fish, rivers and bridge crossings. No further work completed and not known if scheme will progress!

**Findhorn: A9 Tomatin to Moy:** The A9 in this section crosses three tributaries of the Findhorn the Allt na Frith, Tigh an Alt and the Dalmagarry Burn. Road Order was issued in Feb 2021 and procurement process for contractors started in August 2021. I had a contact from IKM consultants in October and provided a quote for electrofishing/fish transfer. Contractors likely to be appointed in 2022 and there will be a need to establish good contacts with successful contractor when the contract is awarded.

**Cloddach Bridge:** The centre channel underneath Cloddach bridge remains in poor condition with a deep undercut at the upstream end and during low flows will affect fish passage. The tonnage limit and vehicle height restrictions are now in place and proving problematic to maintain. No progress on surveying the centre channel was made this year. I inspected the bridge with Elgin AA members in August and agreed to submit a licence application for fish transfer to Marine Scotland and a licence was received in October. In general water flows were good through October/November allow fish to ascend. However, Elgin AA members also transferred a number of fish above the bridge.

**Glen Elgin Distillery Pond:** Repairs completed in September with no effects on the Linkwood Burn.

**Clashgour Windfarm:** Public enquiry results still to be published.

**Carn Duhie Windfarm:** plans for development being revised.

**Lethen Wind Farm:** Scoping report on 19 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. No further correspondence so far.

**Achavraat Farm River works, Muckle Burn:** SEPA and farmers in discussions to repair river works at Achavraat. Email (24/11/2021) set to SEPA to seek update on progress.

**Broom of Moy Bank Repair, Muckle Burn:** SEPA and farmers in discussions. Email (24/11/2021) set to SEPA to seek update on progress.

**Lossie-Scottish Water:** Repairs to outflow valve on Glenlatterach Dam are scheduled for August which will interrupt compensation flows for a short period. Lossie Board informed in advance of works.

**Mosset Burn – Sanquhar Mains Sediment removal:** Significant build-up of sediment has occurred on the Mosset at Sanquhar Mains farm raising the riverbed above the level of the surrounding farmland. The farmer has applied and received a CAR licence and removal will begin in August 2021. In-stream works completed by end of September so further bank side works required which have been left to 2022 to allow site to settle over winter.

**Lossie – Mayne Farm Sediment Removal:** Significant build-up of sediment has occurred on the Lossie within the reach at Mayne Farm which has raise the riverbed and blocked the farm drains, leading to drainage and flooding problems. Met with the farmer in July to discuss the issue and provided comments on the planned removal and CAR licence application to minimize impact on fish populations. Instream works completed in September, revisit to site planned to see how river is settling into the channel.

**Muckle Burn – Bridge at Moy Sediment Removal:** CAR application to remove sediment deposits from under the dry arch of the bridge at Broom of Moy to allow high flows to use the second arch. Sean inspected the site and found no concerns for fish populations, proposal approved. Works completed in September.

### 3. Biosecurity and INNs

**SISI Project:** Focus switched to Japanese Knotweed during Sept/October.

Nairn: JK control completed from Howford Bridge to Nairn. JK in decline although a few pockets remain.

Findhorn: JK control completed at Altyre and Mundole near A96 bridge. Densities generally dropping but isolated stands upstream still need to be addressed.

Muckle Burn: JK no control undertaken.

Lossie: JK densities along the Lossie from Kellas to Elgin are very high and with funding from SISI, EB Scotland, Crown Estate and Moray Estate we are beginning to make progress. Kellas Estate have also provided considerable assistance with spraying and also tried pigs as a means of control which showed good potential. Volunteer help from Elgin AA members has also started to develop.

This year further JK treatment was completed on Kellas, Brokentore, Moray Estate (Brokentore to Cloddach) and Wester Manbeen. However, although good progress has been made still several years of treatment are still required.



*Photo 1 Results of one year treatment applied to Japanese Knotweed on Kellas Estate, 2020-2021.*

Control has been led by SISI project officer James Symonds and Vicky Hilton continues to promote the project through a wide variety of social media platforms and processes the data on volunteer input. Seasonal project officer Ellis Cox also assisted with control and also completed this year's survey of non-native plant distribution across the Findhorn, Nairn, Lossie and Spey. A time-consuming task but produces very valuable data. Ellis completed her post in September and we are very grateful for all her hard work.

James has also maintained the mink monitoring raft and trap network and we've picked up a slight increase in sightings this Autumn. A mink was sighted in the Kyllachie area in October and Sean worked closely with the estate keeper to set traps but no captures or further sighting so far. Several sightings have also been reported on the Lossie from Elgin to Cloddach and also a number of observations have been reported from the upper Spey. As a result, we are expanding monitoring rafts coverage and trapping so any volunteers to run a raft would be welcome and please report any sightings.

Keep up to date on SISI project at [www.invasivespecies.scot](http://www.invasivespecies.scot) and for our biosecurity plan, click [here](#).

#### 4. Fish and Fisheries

**2021 Catches:** Provisional catches for the Findhorn 1164 salmon and grilse and 179 sea trout with a few estates still to declare. Lossie catches are also still provisional and at the moment stand at 14 salmon and grilse and 50 sea trout.

#### Juvenile Surveys

**National EF Survey Scotland (NEPS):** 30 sites were completed across the three rivers and all data has been submitted to Marine Scotland (see Table 1).

**General surveys:** Findhorn (34 sites) and the Nairn (21 sites) completed for comparison with previous years data (Table 1).

The Nairn survey was carried out under contract from the Nairn DSFB. All scales and data has been processed and a report will be completed shortly.

The Findhorn survey concentrated on repeating core sites from previous surveys to allow a comparison over time. Thankfully weather was good this year allowing the full quota of sites to be fished for the first time in approximately 6 years. Scales and data will be processed shortly, and a report prepared for Jan 2022.

Table 1	Findhorn	Nairn	Lossie
NEPS	12	4	16
General	34	21	0
Total	46	25	16

Juvenile surveys on the Findhorn were carried out with Sean and Ali this year and both have developed an excellent understanding of the techniques. Ali also completed the SFCC Introduction to EF course.

Dylan Price (Aberdeen Uni), Rhys Pumphrey, Holly Gray (UHI), Ellis Cox, Steve Turner, William Whyte (Elgin AA) and Dave Wickham also assisted with the surveys, and I am very grateful for all their help.

**AST Missing Salmon Project:** Provisional report has been prepared and discussions into the next steps are ongoing. Further details/updates on the AST Missing Salmon Project, [click here](#).

**Protection of Fish Stocks:** Moray Firth licence application was successful and based on our count data we received a similar quota to previous years 5 mergansers, 1 goosander, 2 cormorants. My thanks to Roger Knight (Spey) for co-ordinating the application. A further sawbill count was completed November 2021.

Poaching Control: Sean and Ali maintained patrols across the Findhorn and Lossie (under contract to Lossie DSFB). A range of minor incidents were dealt with four more serious issues leading to further action by Police Scotland.

After a gap of over two years the Riverwatch meeting was re-instigated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> November, allowing bailiffs from the Moray coast rivers to meet with Police Scotland and discuss issues. RL chaired the meeting.

#### 5. Marine and Inshore Environment

Informal discussion held with local anglers on the sea bass fishery in the Moray Firth. Sea bass appear to be becoming more common in number with a number of anglers now targeting the fish!

#### 6. Education and Awareness

**Schools Go To Fish:** All schools projects still generally on hold however, some positive discussions with two schools could see the project re-commencing in Spring 2022.

Meeting with Ian Robertson and neighbouring Trusts on a Scotland wide angling initiative due in December/January.

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