



River Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Clerk: Anthony Laing Administrator: Valerie Wardlaw

Fisheries Office, Logie Steading, Dunphail, Forres, IV36 2QN

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Minute of the Board Meeting

Held on Monday 24th May 2021 virtually at 10.30am

Present:

Anthony Laing -(Chairman)
Alasdair Laing
Julie Balgonie
Alex Leven

Andrew Howard
Mark Laing
Graham Bell

In attendance:

Sean McLean (Head Bailiff),
Alister Taylor (Bailiff)

Robert Laughton – Director, FNLFT
Valerie Wardlaw – Administrator, FDSFB

| | Item | Action |
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| 1. | <p>Discussion of 2022-23 costs (held in camera) The Board discussed the role and future direction of the DSFB in conjunction with anticipated income and expenditure for financial year 2022-23. In particular the future role of the bailiffs was discussed in relation to the proportion of their time spent on enforcement duties and assisting with environmental monitoring and scientific research. The Board agreed that in future the bailiffs would spend a greater proportion of their time on scientific work, while maintaining proportionate time on enforcement. RL/AnL/SM/AT to discuss further with the intention of agreeing new job descriptions. The board agreed that the bailiffs would not be furloughed during the rest of this season now that the river was fully open again.</p> | RL/AnL/SM/AT |
| | 11.10am SM & AT joined the meeting | |
| 2. | Apologies: Colin Cawdor | |
| 3. | <p>Minutes of Meeting 9th November 2020 Minutes were approved. The SLA between the FDSFB and the FNLRT needs to be amended to delineate the responsibilities between the DSFB and the FNLRT for the line management of the bailiffs and their health & safety.</p> | AnL/ML/RL |
| 4. | <p>Budget & Finance Budget VW circulated an updated financial budget for this year which shows no deviations from forecast figures two months into the financial year. There is one assessment for last year unpaid- the board agreed to charge 8% interest if it remains unpaid by the middle of June. The majority of proprietors have paid this year's levy which was due by the end of April. VW will send reminders to the five proprietors who have yet to pay. Three estates are paying by quarterly instalment.</p> | VW |
| 5. | <p>River Matters H&S- SM/AT and RL have completed training in using their lone working GPS system, Trackplot. Fire extinguishers have been replaced. Life jackets will be serviced once the smolt trap is out of the water. Monitoring of compliance with Covid restrictions continues.</p> | SM RL |
| 6. | <p>Head Bailiff Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SM reported on two river works carried out on the Muckle Burn earlier in the year aiming to prevent flooding of farmland. The works were done without | |

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| | <p>CAR licences or any other permissions and were very poorly implemented. Both have been reported to local SEPA representatives who are considering remediation actions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poaching- there has been an increase in anglers fishing without permits and a trio of youths who are repeat offenders. The latter have been reported to the Wildlife Crime Officer. There have been a few reports of fishing on a Sunday on the Lossie, which the bailiffs continue to patrol. However, the high river levels and cold water this spring have reduced the likelihood of poaching and also ensured that spring fish are healthy and able to move upstream. There have been no reports of diseased fish this year. • Spring catch data- SM has received three returns so far (117 fish) and will circulate final catch data for the Spring run once he has received all the returns. • The bailiffs have been helping run the smolt trap throughout April and May, and SM thanked the volunteers who helped installing the acoustic receivers. | <p>SM</p> |
| <p>7.</p> | <p>FNLFT Director Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RL reported that the AST tagging project has been going well, with 93 salmon tagged. Water levels have been high, affecting the efficiency of the trap to capture smolts, so less smolts have been sampled and tagged than anticipated. RL intends to complete the sampling and remove the trap by the end of May. There has been very positive publicity about the AST tagging project with coverage by Radio Scotland and local press. There is an AST webinar about the project tonight, RL will circulate the link. RL said that the reduction in sampling efficiency meant that population estimates would not be possible where the trap is this year when water levels are high, so alternative sites need to be looked at in future. There should be another year of the AST project, but RL is not aware what direction that will take. RL felt the information on smolts gathered during the two years of the project is very useful for ensuring that future developments, such as the A96 Duelling, do not impact on smolt migration. • RL reported that spring catches and fish distribution in the river appear to be good, with only a report of a diseased eel and no diseased salmon. • Sawbill control is continuing under licence and regular bird counts conducted to inform the application for next year. It was decided not to apply for a control licence for seals as it is very difficult to undertake control safely with so many people on the river. The bailiffs were also concerned about their own safety. RL will discuss options for next year with Roger Knight at the Spey. • Upland Catchment Restoration- RL has been working with Andrew Wallace from the Fishmongers Company and Cawdor Forestry to develop a riparian restoration project along the Mazeran Burn in Glenmazeran Estate. RL is hoping the project will include tree planting in a wider zone than just the riparian zone. Andrew Wallace is very keen to develop projects to reforest the Upper Findhorn catchment to keep water temperatures down. Marine Science Scotland is interested in being involved and helping with data analysis and monitoring. • NEPS-a further national juvenile fish survey is yet to be confirmed, however RL will organise a survey of the Findhorn this year if NEPS does not go ahead. • INNS- The SISI project has been extended for a further year to October 2022 and a Seasonal Project Officer has been appointed to work with volunteers again this summer. GH treatment along the Muckle Burn and at Mundole has started and landowners are also organising treatment. • Mink- there have been sightings of mink and the monitoring raft network of volunteers has expanded. Please report any sightings asap to James Symonds at the SISI Project. | <p>RL</p> <p>RL</p> |
| <p>8.</p> | <p>Catchment Developments</p> | |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RL reiterated that the two incidents of unauthorised works on the Muckle Burn were very poor and RL hopes that SEPA will ensure remediation is carried out. In a further incident, two farmers shored up their flood embankments with concrete on the Muckle Burn near Dyke. SEPA are investigating. AIL felt it was important that the FDSFB ensures SEPA takes action on the three incidents. RL to write to SEPA on behalf of the FDSFB if SEPA does not take appropriate action. RL has also discussed the incidents with Alan Wells to ensure SEPA management are aware of these issues. • A96 Dualling- the preferred route is at the design stage with all river crossings in the Findhorn catchment open span. RL continues to monitor. • Mosset Burn- a farmer has permission and licences to remove gravel build-up this summer. • Lower Mosset-RL is monitoring some tree blockages. • Tomatin housing development- VW to check whether this is likely to have any impact on the river. | <p>RL</p> <p>VW</p> |
| | <p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Highland Assessor has asked the FDSFB's opinion about publishing an extract from the Valuation role for the salmon fishings. This information is already available from the Scottish Assessor's portal, but on a beat by beat basis. The Board agreed that they were not concerned if an extract detailing beat ownership and Rateable value was published. • GB- asked what the limits and constraints are for the Forres AA to undertake repairs to riverbanks when they do not own the land. RL will send a document about the CAR licence process, repairing groynes and general binding rules which should detail what is permissible without requiring a licence. • RL updated the board to say that Moray Council has appointed a contractor to continue the maintenance of the flood scheme, starting in June. • SM- has been approached about a brown trout angler wanting to fish after the Salmon and Sea Trout season ends on the 30th September, but before the end of the brown trout season on the 6th October. The Board agreed that it would not recommend fishing for brown trout at that time of year in stretches where salmon and sea trout are present, as the tackle could catch salmon and sea trout or otherwise disturb them during their spawning season. RL to ask for guidance on this issue from FishLegal. VW to check local bylaws about fishing seasons. • AGM in August- AnL asked for suggestions on venues and ways to encourage participation in the AGM, assuming the meeting can be held in person. | <p>VW</p> <p>RL</p> <p>RL/ SM/ VW</p> <p>ALL</p> |
| | <p>Dates of 2021 Meetings August 9th Board Meeting and AGM November 15th 10.30am Board Meeting</p> | |