



# River Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Clerk: Anthony Laing Administrator: Clare Walker  
 Fisheries Office, Logie Steading, Dunphail, Forres, IV36 2QN  
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## Minute of the Board Meeting

Held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> November 2022 at 10.30am  
 at the Long Room, Logie Steading.

### Present:

Anthony Laing -AnL (Chairman)	Andrew Howard – AH
Alasdair Laing - AL	Campbell Ross – CR
Mark Laing – ML	Colin Cawdor - CC
Alex Leven – AIL	Murray Wilson – MW

### In attendance:

Sean McLean (SM) (Head Bailiff),	Clare Walker (CW) (Administrator)
Alister Taylor (AT) (Bailiff)	
Robert Laughton (RL) – Director, FNLRT	

A	Item	Action
1.	<p><b>Apologies:</b> Graham Bell, David Paton, Tony Watts</p> <p>AnL opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and introduced Clare Walker who has replaced Valerie Wardlaw as Administrator for the FDSFB.</p>	
2.	<p><b>Bailiff Pay Review</b></p> <p>SM and AT left the meeting.</p> <p>A salary increase of 10% was approved by the Board after consideration of several factors including the rising cost of living; the effect on the budget and the conclusion that this is in line with other rivers.</p> <p><i>CR highlighted that the bailiffs are expected to undertake more work for the Trust in coming years, outside of their standard bailiff duties and that this should be a consideration. RL confirmed that the Bailiff's employment contracts were reviewed and amended last year to reflect this change and that this type of work was likely to continue going forward.</i></p> <p>SM and AT returned to the meeting.</p>	
3.	<p><b>Minutes of Board meeting 8<sup>th</sup> August 2022</b></p> <p>The minutes were approved. CW to publish minutes to the FNLRT website.</p>	<b>CW</b>
4.	<p><b>Matters Rising</b></p> <p>When reviewing the Conservation Code for 2023, CR noted that the instruction for reporting retained fish due to poor likelihood of survival to the Bailiffs/FNLRT had been removed, along with the specified lengths of fish for catch and release and suggested that this was useful information and should be included in the Conservation Code. The Board agreed to reinstate these into the Code for 2023.</p> <p>AnL asked whether anyone had received notices from the Highland revaluation board for the Findhorn River revaluation being conducted. No one had yet to receive a notice so AnL will contact the Highland office to make enquiries.</p>	<p><b>RL</b></p> <p><b>AnL</b></p>
5.	<p><b>New Board Member</b></p> <p>Colin Glynn-Percy attended the AGM in August and enquired whether the Board were looking for members. AnL proposed that Colin be offered a</p>	

	place on the Board and the Board agreed. AnL will inform Colin of the Board's decision.	AnL
6.	<p><b>Budget and Finance</b></p> <p><b>a. budget/cash flow update</b> – CW gave a summary of the current condition of the cashflow. The finances show that the FDSFB is currently slightly underbudget despite the rise in fuel costs.</p> <p><b>b. Budget and levy for 2023</b> – the river is due to be revalued but this has not yet been completed. It was agreed to set a provisional levy of £0.50 in the pound with the acknowledgement that adjustment could be made the following year to compensate for any issues that the outstanding revaluation may create.</p> <p>Factoring the agreed salary increase of 10% for the bailiffs and a levy set at £0.50 the budget indicates a small deficit of approximately £1,600. Other notable changes to the budget were an increase in fuel budget to accommodate the rise in the price of fuel and removal of hatchery and smolt trap budget.</p> <p>It is possible that the smolt trap is bought back into use in the future but, at present, a suitable site has not been found for it.</p> <p><i>Do you want me to include Campbell's comments about reducing the money paid to the Trust to decrease the deficit?</i></p> <p><b>c. Rathbones Portfolio</b> – AnL will be meeting with Rathbones shortly to discuss the FDSFB Investment portfolio. The value of the portfolio is down 14.7% reflecting turbulent financial markets this year, however, the board agreed to keep the portfolio at the same risk factor as it was felt this is the best long term option.</p>	
7.	<p><b>River Matters</b></p> <p><b>a. Conservation Code 2023</b> – This was covered in item 4.</p> <p><b>b. Biosecurity</b> – There were no biosecurity concerns raised.</p> <p><b>c. Health and Safety</b> – SM and AT have recently attended a personal safety course in conjunction with Police Scotland which included training in the use of restraints. The bailiffs found this to a valuable and informative course. It was stressed that this training was geared toward ensuring the safety of all parties and the use of restraints, such as handcuffs, would be a last resort. AH asked whether the carrying of handcuffs would require any changes to the current insurance policy, CW will speak to the insurers and check whether any amendments to the policy would be required.</p>	CW
8.	<p><b>Head Bailiff Report</b></p> <p>SM gave the board an overview of the season including catch data received so far totalling 764 Salmon and Grilse and 127 Sea Trout, however, there are still some figures to come in.</p> <p>SM attended a Freshwater Pearl Mussel course this year and hopes that an opportunity to survey some areas of the Findhorn next year will arise. Fishermen have been observed fishing for Brown Trout on the river and SM has passed on concerns about a lack of legislation to Brian Davidson of FMS.</p> <p>Over the course of the year the bailiffs had 14 significant incidents of poaching, 3 of which involved the police. In June a prolific poacher was caught, and it is hoped that the case will go to court shortly.</p> <p>AnL thanked the bailiffs for all their hard work.</p>	
9.	<p><b>FNLRT Director's Report</b></p> <p><b>Juvenile survey of main stem</b> – the surveying of the main stem of the Findhorn went very well with some sites containing impressive numbers of</p>	AnL

	<p>fry. As there is no historic data available the only comparable is a neighbouring river but the Findhorn appears to be in line with other rivers. This data will be a valuable tool in the future to monitor fish numbers.</p> <p><b>NEPS</b> – RL is expecting this project to continue next year, however, this has not yet been confirmed by Marine Science.</p> <p><b>Scales project</b> – 15 sets of scales were taken and submitted to the project. CR enquired whether the packets used for collecting scales could be distributed among anglers. RL confirmed that, if the project continues next year, packets can be given out and he also hopes to provide anglers with training on how to correctly take scale samples.</p> <p><b>Predation</b> – Numbers of Goosander appear to be dropping while Merganser are increasing – <i>is that right?</i> The counts are an important part of the control of these species as 15% of the count is what the annual quota is based on. Any updates on the numbers and location of predators should be passed on to the bailiffs.</p> <p>RL had applied for a seal scaring license but this was refused. It is thought that most other applicants were also refused and while some Boards have decided to appeal the decision, this has not resulted in licenses being granted. The Board noted that the seal population in Findhorn Bay has the potential to cause serious harm to salmon numbers in the future as new generations of seals are taught to predate the Bay. RL confirmed that conservation was the basis of the licence application but it was still refused. It was agreed that a licence should still be applied for and any appeals submitted so that emphasis is given to the continued need for control of seals which enter the Bay and lower river to predate salmon.</p> <p><b>INNS</b> – Significant headway has been made in tackling Giant Hogweed and Japanese knotweed. There is a significant infestation of Giant Hogweed at Dalvey to be addressed next year and a few stands of Japanese Knotweed to be tackled elsewhere. CR informed the Board that the Forres Angling Association have now hired groundsmen whose remit will include tackling INNS. RL welcomed this move and will look forward to working alongside them.</p> <p>ML has written to the Chairman of Network Rail in an attempt to gain assurances from the Company that they will start addressing the serious infestations of Giant Hogweed affecting Network Rail land, which currently undermine the work of the Trust and put surrounding land at risk.</p> <p>The SISI project has put in a new bid for funding to continue the project for another 3 years and it is expected that, if granted, the project will branch out into the lower Findhorn.</p> <p><b>The Findhorn Watershed Initiative</b> - the Trust has received significant funding from the Just Transition Fund to support this project. The details are still being finalised, but the focus will be the regeneration of riparian woodland to riverbanks in the upper Findhorn in partnership with local stakeholders with the purpose of creating shade in an attempt to reduce rising water temperatures which are reaching highs that are fatal to salmon.</p>	
10	<p><b>Catchment Developments</b></p> <p><b>Dyke Bridge</b> – SM has emailed SEPA about this issue but has had no response, the Board will draft a letter to request that remedial action is taken to address the issue. RL and both bailiffs compiled a report on the impact of the situation at Dyke Bridge, AL asked that a summary of steps taken so far be forwarded to him.</p> <p><b>Tomatin Distillery</b> – it was observed that the hot water discharged into the burn from the distillery is creating a water temperature 4-5° higher than the surrounding burns. The distillery has not reviewed their discharge</p>	RL

	<p>procedure in line with other distilleries in the area who have made significant attempts to lower the temperature of water discharged into the river. The Board agreed that the next step should be to draft a letter to the holding company to express our concerns.</p> <p><b>Bridge Repairs</b> – several habitat surveys and fish rescues have been carried out at Freeburn, Tomatin and at the Muckle Burn railway bridge. Surveys for the Mosset are ongoing.</p> <p><b>Clashgour Windfarm</b> – planning permission for this development was recently granted.</p> <p><b>Roths Extension</b> – planning permission for this development was recently granted.</p>	RL
11	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <p><b>Season Extension</b> – CC proposed that the Board extend the fishing season by two weeks to close on 15<sup>th</sup> October with a 100% release, barbless hooks only policy. He cited strong support from upper Findhorn proprietors and provided letters of support from two of them. The basis for the proposal was that the upper river does not see the same level of benefit in terms of fishing as the lower river as it is so late in the season before fish reach these beats. A two week extension to the fishing season would provide increased economic benefit to the upper river beats which provides the proprietors with a better fishing experience and the FDSFB with financial support through the assessment levy.</p> <p>The Board agreed that a decision would need to be based on evidence of whether the extension would compromise the fish in a significant way and consideration needs to be given to the conflict an extension might cause with the Board’s efforts to conserve salmon populations in the Findhorn. Concerns were raised about the risk to gravid fish when caught and handled near to spawning but it was also noted that other rivers had seen little change to populations when similar changes to the season were made. The Dee have been through the process of extending the fishing season and were required to provide comprehensive investigative evidence to support their application to the Scottish Government before the extension was granted. It was felt that there was enough support for the proposal that enquiries should be made to the Scottish Government to ascertain what information or measures will need to be taken if the Board decided to apply for an extension.</p> <p><b>Thanks</b> – RL relayed sincere thanks from Valerie Wardlaw for the Board’s farewell when she left her post earlier in the year.</p>	RL
12	<p><b>Date of 2023 Meetings</b></p> <p>May 15<sup>th</sup> 2023 – Meeting of Qualified Proprietors</p> <p>August 14<sup>th</sup> 2023 – Board Meeting followed by AGM</p> <p>November 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 – Board Meeting</p> <p>AnL thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting at 12:15.</p>	