



## 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 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023 at 10.30am  
 at the Long Room, Logie Steading.

#### Present:

Anthony Laing -AnL (Chairman)  
 Alasdair Laing - AL  
 Mark Laing – ML  
 Alex Leven – AIL  
 Colin Glynn-Percy - CGP

Andrew Howard – AH  
 Campbell Ross – CR  
 Michael Barron - MB  
 Murray Wilson – MW  
 David Paton - DP

#### In attendance:

Alister Taylor (AT) (Bailiff)  
 Robert Laughton (RL) – Director, FNLRT

Clare Walker (CW) (Administrator)  
 Elle Adams (EA) (Living Alive)

A	Item	Action
1.	<b>Apologies:</b> Sean Mclean  AnL opened the meeting and welcomed Colin Glynn-Percy to the Board.	
2.	<b>Minutes of Meeting held on 14th November 2022 and 15th March 2023</b> The minutes of both meetings were approved. CW to publish minutes to the FNLRT website.	<b>CW</b>
3.	<b>Matters Arising not Covered Below</b> AnL asked RL whether it was advisable to keep the smolt trap. RL has found a potentially suitable site for the trap in the upper catchment and would like to do a test run there with a view to setting the trap for 2024. Progress has been made with Tomatin distillery to address the issue of high temperatures in the burn due to water discharge from the distillery. Temperature monitoring equipment has been installed in the burn and a nearby control burn. The distillery is planning an overhaul of their cooling systems in the summer. RL will continue to work closely with the distillery to ensure this issue is addressed. AH raised whether the distillery was in breach of SEPA licensing regulations, RL confirmed that Tomatin was not in breach of any licenses but that current SEPA licenses were issued decades ago and would benefit from an overhaul.	
4.	<b>Budget and Finance</b> <b>a.</b> <i>Draft Accounts for year ending Jan 2023</i> – CW had informed the Board that there may be a delay in receiving the draft accounts. <b>b.</b> <i>budget/cash flow update</i> – AnL informed the Board that there is a change to the assessment income for 2023 from £108k to £105k. This was due to an error with the rateable value of one of the beats. CW provided an updated budget and cashflow. <b>c.</b> <i>Loan Agreement with FNLRT</i> – ML expressed his gratitude to the FDSFB for their agreement to provide a loan facility to FNLRT should it be required. He informed the Board that RL and EA had worked closely with funders to manage the Trust’s cashflow which resulted in there not being a need, as yet, to make use of the loan. <b>d.</b> <i>Revaluation of rateable value of River Findhorn 2023</i> – The revaluation of the rateable value for the river Findhorn has been completed,	

	<p>however, CW is waiting for a valuation role extract from the Highland Assessors office. Once this is received any changes to the rateable values can be recorded and an updated assessment role circulated at the FDSFB meeting in August 2023. These will be implemented when the assessment levy is set at the FDSFB meeting in November 2023 for the 2024 year.</p>	<b>CW</b>
5.	<p><b>River Matters</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- After a good start, work on the Mosset burn bridge was delayed due to supplier issues, but has now recommenced.</li> </ul>	
6.	<p><b>Head Bailiff Report</b></p> <p>The bailiffs have conducted five hours of patrols on the river Lossie. RL is in the process of arranging a meet and greet between Trust representatives, the Findhorn bailiffs, and members of the angling community from the Lossie to improve lines of communication and educate anglers on the work the bailiffs do and how a collaborative approach benefits the river. RL suggested that the FDSFB review the service agreement between the FDSFB and LDSFB at the November Board meeting.</p> <p>AT has been undertaking bird counts. There was an influx of birds coinciding with the smolt run which is expected.</p> <p>A fly tipping and poaching incident was reported at Logie Bridge and this has been reported to the Wildlife Crime unit.</p> <p>CR asked whether any further action was being taken in regard to the disappointing news that poachers caught last year and arrested on site have since been given a warning and the case dismissed. RL confirmed that he worked with FMS to draft a letter of complaint to the Crown Procurator Fiscal, this has been acknowledged but no response has been received as yet.</p> <p>CR raised the issue of the sand and sediment build up in Findhorn Bay, it is filling in rapidly, restricting the channels discharging into the bay. The river level is very low at low tide and the bay so shallow that grilse can't get up the river and cannot go back out where the resident seal population, which has now reached over 700 individuals, can decimate the fish trying to retreat to the sea. It was suggested that a lack of significant spates in recent years might be contributing to this build up, as the water would normally wash it away, opening up the channels. RL reiterated that it was highly unlikely that any seal licenses would be issued in the future and a large body of evidence would be needed to have any chance. CR suggested that monitoring seal numbers in the bay using ariel photographs might be useful to start recording seal numbers.</p> <p>MB noted that the spring run seems to have died off quickly and some of the local anglers speculated that the fish may have travelled straight up to the upper catchment. The upper proprietors present could not confirm this to be the case as they had seen no fish as yet. RL said that the warmer winters can cause fish to move upriver quicker than usual, however, it is probably more likely that this lack of fish is indicative of the overall decline in fish numbers.</p> <p>RL commented that the AA's that have adopted FishPal for selling tickets seem to have found the system working well.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>2023 Spring Catch Returns</i> – There have been 4 spring catch returns submitted so far: 1 catch at Drynachan, 6 at Lethen, 23 at Darnaway and 18 at Altyre. Overall, the fishing has been poor, but this seems to be the case for other similar rivers.</li> </ul>	<b>RL</b>

	<p>b. <i>Review of handcuff carriage by water bailiffs</i> – The FDSFB’s public liability insurance had been increased to cover the carriage of handcuffs by the FDSFB Bailiffs. AT confirmed that the bailiffs would like to continue this and that refresher training on their use would be undertaken annually. The Board agreed that the Bailiffs can continue to carry handcuffs and the annual budget to be amended to account for the increase in insurance premiums.</p>	
7.	<p><b>FNLRT Director’s Report</b>  The FDSFB annual report is now complete. CW will publish online and will circulate to the Board and proprietors.  <b>SISI/INNS-</b> The SISI project has secured funding for a further three years, Elise Cox will remain in post as Project Officer and she will be assisted over the next six months by FNLRT’s new graduate placement, Sarah Hadfield. Spraying of Giant Hogweed has started with RL estimating the mainstem being tackled in late May.  <b>Network Rail</b> – have commissioned a company to begin control of Giant Hogweed along the railway from Brodie to Forres. It is hoped this work will begin shortly after many months of attempts to urge Network Rail to do something about their infestations.  <b>Kellas Estate</b> – It was with deep sadness that RL informed the Board of the sudden passing of Gordon Robertson, the factor at Kellas Estate. Condolences have been passed on to the Estate and RL highlighted what a privilege it had been to work with Gordon. Understandably, this may impact the pilot project in planning to control Japanese Knotweed using pigs at Kellas.  <b>The Findhorn Watershed Initiative</b> - RL and EA gave the Board a brief overview and update on project progress.  AH asked for clarification on where the funding was going to be spent given that much of the practical elements of the project would be eligible for funding from the Forestry Grant Scheme. RL agreed that this is an important consideration and anticipates that there will be areas where costs can be covered by the FWI funding but acknowledged that the project and funding were fluid and the budget for the next funding year is still a work in progress.  RL praised MW for his recent work to install large woody structures in the river at Glenmazeran using windblown trees, structures such as these provide shade, protection from predation and create deeper pools which can function as rest areas for migrating fish. MW confirmed that the impact on the riverbed was swift with pools appearing at the structures already. MW asked whether any provision for hare management had been made within the project. RL confirmed that this isn’t a current factor but that it is one that should be explored.  RL confirmed that, as part of the project, a temperature monitoring network will be deployed, and this will be monitored on an ongoing basis to provide a baseline and ongoing data over the life of the project.</p>	CW
8.	<p><b>Season Extension</b>  AnL and RL met with Marine Scotland and Scottish Government to discuss the possibility of extending the fishing season on the river Findhorn by two weeks in October. AnL provided the Board with meeting notes detailing the requirements which would have to be met in order for an extension to be granted. In summary, a sufficiently good reason would have to be provided with evidence to support that there would not be an adverse impact on salmon stocks; all proprietors must be consulted, and the proposal advertised in the local papers; any objections raised would result in</p>	

	<p>Government ministers referring the proposal to public enquiry. It was also noted that the annual close times are currently being reviewed by the Scottish Government for the 2024 season.</p> <p>The Board the discussed the various pros and cons of extending the season but it was agreed that, given that the result of the Scottish Governments review of the close times is underway, it would be sensible to wait until the result of this is published as it will likely impact the decision to apply for a season extension.</p>	
8.	<p><b>AGM August 2023</b></p> <p>The AGM is due to be held at Coulmony, however, this may be subject to change depending on the numbers predicted to attend.</p>	
10.	<p><b>AOCB</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>Fishing Marathon</i> – DP approached the Board with an idea for a fundraising event to raise money for local charities which would, in turn, raise the profile of fishing on the river Findhorn. The proposal is for a 24 hour fishing marathon where teams move their way up the river fishing different beats over the course of the 24 hours. Teams pay to enter with the proceeds being donated to a local charity. The Board agreed that this sounded like a good idea that they would support. More detail of how the event will be run is required.</li> <li>b. <i>Rob Hoskins</i> – a previous FDSFB member, AnL would like to offer Rob a position on the Board given his previous experience, the Board agreed.</li> <li>c. <i>Disease Report for 2022</i> – CGP enquired whether a report was available detailing findings of the disease outbreak last Spring. RL confirmed that there was a report available with the findings confirming the presence of a number of pathogens which, in themselves, are not unusual, but combined with the environmental conditions in the river last year caused the widespread outbreak of disease. AIL asked whether diseased fish should be removed from the water, RL confirmed that any dead fish should be removed safe to do so and that he would collect these specimens for testing and analysis.</li> <li>d. <i>AST Tagging Project</i> – AH asked whether the Atlantic Salmon Trust's tagging project was still ongoing. RL informed the Board that they are currently reviewing their data but that he has been disappointed with initial reports and AST will need to improve the way they communicate the data gathered to make it more meaningful. He will circulate the results of this project when they are available.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DP</b></p> <p><b>AnL</b></p> <p><b>RL</b></p>
12	<p><b>Date of 2023 Meetings</b></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 12:30.</p>	