



## Minute of Findhorn Nairn & Lossie Rivers Trust Board Meeting

**Venue:** Edinkillie Hall, Dunphail

**Date:** 21<sup>st</sup> August 2023 at 5.30pm

**Attending:** Mark Laing (ML), Alastair Laing (AL), Roy Dennis (RD), Frank Clark (FC), Jamie Whittle (JW), Campbell Ross (CR), Fiona Strachan (FS), Andrew Wallace (AW).

**In Attendance:** Robert Laughton (Director)(RL), Clare Walker (Administrator)(CW), Elle Adams (Living Alive)(EA), Guy Harris (FWI PO)(GH).

		ACTION
1	<p><b>Welcome and Apologies</b> Apologies from Marcus Braithwaite-Exley, Crinan Dunbar, Alex Leven and Alec Rose. ML opened the meeting and welcomed Campbell Ross and Fiona Strachan.</p>	
2	<p><b>Minutes of Meeting of 6<sup>th</sup> March 2023</b> Approved</p>	
3	<p><b>Matters Arising</b></p> <p>a. <i>Appointment of New Trustees</i> – FS and CR were appointed as Trustees to the FNLRT Board. Louis Greig was approached about a position but, due to other commitments, declined. However, he made it clear that he supports the work of the Trust and offered to have a more ambassadorial role.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ML received a disappointing response to his petition of Marine Scotland director Annabel Turpie. Many boats operating in Moray Firth are too small to be regulated. AW highlighted upcoming legislation which will decrease the size of boats requiring a satellite link which can monitor activity. Further action that the Trust is able to take is limited but the Board agreed that support should continue to be given to other organisations taking up this issue.</li> </ul>	
4	<p><b>Financial Update</b></p> <p>a. <i>Draft Accounts for Approval</i> – CW received the draft accounts for financial year 2022-2023 shortly before the meeting and these were circulated to the Board. The Board approved the financial information within the accounts (page 8 onward), however, there were some edits required to some of the information on the Trust’s activities for the year. CW will ask the accountant to make the requested edits and will circulate an updated version to the Board over email. The Board will then make a final approval decision over email. The accounts show that the Trust closed the year with a deficit of £5k, compared to £8k the previous year. Taking into account of a surplus balance of £24k in restricted funds, this takes the overall closing balance to a £18k surplus.</p> <p>b. <i>Cashflow and Budget Update</i> – CW provided the Board with a finance report. There is still some work to be done for the transition to Xero, primarily based around cashflow projections and budget comparisons and this is ongoing. ML thanked Douglas Home &amp; Co along with AL for their help with this transition.</p> <p>c. <i>Trustee ID for Accountants</i> – CW reminded the Board that Douglas Home &amp; Co will require two forms of ID as part of the audit process.</p>	CW
5.	<p><b>Director’s Update</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RL latest Progress Report can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</li> <li>The final claim to NRF was successfully completed.</li> <li>Due to the sad passing of the Factor at Kellas Estate, Gordon Robertson, the pig project was unable to go ahead and the funding from the Baxter Foundation withdrawn, however, they did indicate that the Trust is welcome to reapply.</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL has created a monitoring plan for the windfarm at Clashgour in collaboration with the Hutton Institute and a final decision on whether to adopt this is expected shortly.</li> <li>• The work at the Dallas substation has stalled due to planning issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>INNS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SISI project has been granted funding through the Nature Restoration Fund, for a further three years. The new funding means Elise Cox will be SISI Project Officer for the rivers Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie.</li> <li>• There will be a slight shift in focus going forward to the establishing of landowner agreements to secure a long-term commitment for INNs control.</li> <li>• Moray and Crown Estates continue to support INNS control and funding was received from Moray Council.</li> <li>• RL hired a pressure tank from Kellas Estate for Giant Hogweed control which allowed a lot more ground to be covered in those areas where access for the trailer was not an issue. It is planned to hire it again for Japanese Knotweed control.</li> <li>• Good progress on GH control was made on the Nairn, Findhorn , Muckle and Mosset. Progress was slower on the Lossie where GH growth seemed particularly intense this season. However, increasing support from farmers along the Lossie is very encouraging particularly at Mayne Farm.</li> <li>• Network Rail have finally appointed contractors to control Giant Hogweed on the railway and achieved excellent results between Brodie and Forres.</li> </ul> <p><b>Catches 2023</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It has been a poor season marked by significant disease outbreaks (Saprolegnia) in the Spring on the Findhorn. Pieter van West of Aberdeen University suspects that this indicates the presence of a new more infectious strain and will be conducting research into this in the coming year as part of a PhD study funded by the DSFBs.</li> <li>• This new strain has been seen in fish farms and has been known to affect fry and smolts. Rising temperatures are linked to the increase in these outbreaks. Saprolegnia is always present within the water and only becomes a significant problem in ideal conditions, which the rise in temperatures is producing, hence the increase in prevalence. RL gave thanks for any reports of diseased fish from anglers and confirmed that there had been no reports so far this summer.</li> </ul> <p><b>Juvenile Surveys</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• NEPS is underway this year with the Trust having 30 sites to survey across the three rivers. At the halfway mark juvenile salmon numbers are looking good .</li> </ul> <p><b>Schools go to Fish</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• RL and EA plan to incorporate this educational programme into the role of the FWI funded Education Officer post with WildThings!</li> </ul>	
6	<p><b>Findhorn Watershed Initiative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board agreed that the minutes of the FWI Steering Group meeting should be circulated to the wider Board.</li> <li>• There has been good engagement with the upper catchment landowners with 6 co-development plans being formulated.</li> <li>• Baseline surveys have been conducted and the project is getting closer to finalising a deer management strategy.</li> <li>• Commissions for community engagement elements of the project are underway with WildThings!, Findhorn Bay Arts and Raghnaid Sandilands &amp; Mairi McFadyen.</li> <li>• The project has encountered challenges in terms of what practical action is feasible within the timeframe for the Just Transition Fund and also the problem of navigating the natural capital element. Negotiations with JTF have started and the Trust's JTF Funding Officer has been helpful and understanding. It is hoped that a full proposal for an amendment to the JTF grant will be ready for their consideration in early September.</li> </ul>	CW

<b>7</b>	<b>Scottish Invasive Species Initiative</b> Covered in item 5.	
<b>8</b>	<b>Catchment Developments</b> Covered in item 5.	
<b>9</b>	<b>Governance Review</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. <i>IT Systems Upgrade</i> – The current IT systems used within the Trust staff team are no longer fit for purpose and require an overhaul with an emphasis on moving to a cloud based system which incorporates all staff in the same system. This will make staff management, time management and information sharing much smoother and more efficient. It is hoped that funding for this will come from the JTF.</li> <li>b. <i>Policy Register and Review Proposal</i> – After reviewing the Trusts current policies a number of areas of improvement were identified. The Board agreed that CW should draft new policies, prioritising those required by law, and have them externally reviewed before submitting them for approval by the Board at the next Board meeting in November. AW offered to provide resources from the Fishmongers Guild to help with wording and content.</li> </ul>	<b>AW/CW</b>
<b>10.</b>	<b>AOCB</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FNLRT Board would like to invite Willie Fraser to join the Board as representative of the Elgin Angling Association.</li> <li>• ML proposed that, as the Trust expands and consequently relies more heavily on a wider range of skills and experiences within its Board members, that a special resolution be proposed at the AGM in November to increase the maximum number of Board members from thirteen to seventeen. JW and CW will draft a special resolution to be circulated prior to the AGM.</li> <li>• CR enquired whether the details of the special area of conservation in the Lower Findhorn were recorded anywhere. JW confirmed that the details could be found on the Scottish Natural Heritage interactive map and agreed to provide a link for CR.</li> </ul>	<b>CW</b>  <b>JW/CW</b>  <b>JW</b>

The next Board meeting will take place on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> November 2023 at 5:30pm in The Long Room, Logie Steading. Followed by the FNLRT AGM.

ML closed the meeting at 19:00.