

Minute of FNL Rivers Trust Annual General Meeting

Venue: The Long Room, Logie Steading

Date: 27th November 2023 7:00pm

Present: Mark Laing (ML), Jamie Whittle (JW), Campbell Ross (CR), Crinan Dunbar (CD), Andrew Wallace (AW), Sean Mclean, Alister Taylor, Poppy Houldsworth, Peter Boulton, Helen Nasrat, Katherine Brodie, Anthony Laing, Seymour Monro

In Attendance: Robert Laughton (Director) (RL), Clare Walker (Administrator) (CW), Guy Harris (FWI PO) (GH).

		ACTION
1	Welcome and Apologies Apologies from: Marcus Braithwaite-Exley (MBE), Alex Leven, Alec Rose, Alastair Laing, Roy Dennis, Frank Clark (FC), and Fiona Strachan (FS) of the FNLRT Board and apologies were noted from several FNLRT members and supporters. ML opened the AGM by welcoming everyone present and thanking them for coming.	
2	Minutes of AGM held on 7th December 2022 Approved	
4.	Matters Arising None	
5	Board Elections One third of the board must retire at each AGM in rotation. This year Jamie Whittle, Crinan Dunbar, Frank Clark and Marcus Braithwaite-Exley are due to stand down. JW and CD expressed an interest in standing for re-election. MBE and FC confirmed their intention to retire from the Board. FS and CR were appointed to the Board at the previous Board meeting. All approved the re-election of JW and CD and the motion was passed. ML thanked the Board for their service over the past year and gave particular thanks to MBE and FC for their significant contributions to the FNLRT Board during their years of service.	
6	Financial Update & Fundraising The annual accounts for year end March 2023 have been approved and are available on the website. They show a surplus of £18k compared to a deficit of £9k the previous year. The Trust's financial position remains strong with a significant increase in the volume of grant funding being received, £326k so far, this financial year. This is from a range of funders to support a range of FNLRT projects. As the organisation increases in size the operational running costs also increase and it remains a priority for the Trust to secure unrestricted funds. ML highlighted the importance of recognising the scale of change experienced by the organisation in the past twelve months. Excellent progress has been made against the Trust's goals laid out in the management plan with the Trust gaining national recognition for the work being done.	
7	Director's Report and Presentation on the Findhorn Watershed Initiative <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the FNLRT Management plan continues to be used to inform the Trust's activities. - Catch data for 2023 suggests another poor season, this is due to a number of factors with the primary ones being marine. Reports of salmon spawning have been received from the upper catchment. - A number of juvenile surveys have been conducted this year, including the National Electrofishing Program (NEPs), and have shown good numbers of juvenile fish. One sample site as part of NEPs was on the Cro and was the highest site surveyed so far with salmon found at an altitude of 600m. Eel numbers have been particularly good this year and 	

	<p>salmon were found above the fish pass on the Cawdor for the first time. It is hoped that NEPs will continue next year and also planned is a full survey of the river Lossie.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The lack of support for grade 3 rivers is having a detrimental effect on those DSFBs, including the LDSFB, RL may raise this issue with Fisheries Management Scotland. - The Spring season on the Findhorn was again marked by an outbreak of saprolegnia causing a loss of approximately 70-80 salmon. Ideal conditions for the pathogen plus a mutated strain has made saprolegnia a highly infectious primary infection. A research PhD will be underway next year, conducted by Pieter van West of Aberdeen University and funded by the DSFBs, including the Findhorn DSFB. - RL highlighted the importance of biosecurity, especially when moving between rivers. - Cloddoch Bridge remains closed. Fish rescues have been undertaken in previous years, however, due to the high water, it was not felt this would be necessary this year. - SEPA have been exploring the potential for weir improvements on the Mosset Burn. - Control of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) continued this year through the SISI project, along with additional funding from other sources. The hire of a pressurised spray tanker from Kellas made a significant difference in the volume of plants sprayed. Twenty volunteers took part in control measures representing 630 hours of work on INNS control. - The Trust currently facilitates the deployment of twenty-two mink rafts and seventeen mink traps, manned by nineteen volunteers with eleven captures last years, mostly on the Lossie. RL expressed thanks on behalf of the Trust to all the volunteers who make the INNS projects a success. <p><i>Findhorn Watershed Initiative (FWI)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - GH gave a presentation on the progress made on the FWI in the past twelve months. - SM asked whether any provision was being made within the project to control hare numbers as this will have an impact on planting initiatives. GH confirmed that the Initiative is aware that hares will be a problem. - PB highlighted the plight of Atlantic Salmon in the immediate future and how the apparent success of hatcheries elsewhere is providing evidence for the establishment of a hatchery on the Findhorn with the hope of seeing positive returns quickly, as appose to the outcomes of the FWI which won't be tangible for many years. GH explained that the Trust is taking a multi-faceted approach to Salmon conservation with the FWI being just one approach which aims to create resilience within the catchment and that different discussions can run concurrently but that projects must be science led, with current scientific evidence still indicating that hatcheries aren't an appropriate option for the Findhorn at the present time. RL confirmed that he is more than happy to talk in more depth with anglers and other interested parties about the issues raised. 	
8	AOCB None raised.	
11	Date of 2024 AGM 25 th November 2024	
	Mark Laing thanked everyone for participating in the FNLRT AGM.	