



Held at Pitgaveny.

Present

In attendance Clare Walker, (Minutes) (CW), Robert Laughton (RL) (Remote)

Item		Action
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies: CD opened the meeting and welcomed those present. Apologies were received from Tim Atkinson, John Fielding and Mark Laing</p>	
2.	<p>Financial</p> <p>CD reminded the Board that this additional meeting had been arranged so that the Elgin AA had the opportunity to feed into the decision on where to set the assessment levy for 2025.</p> <p><i>Finance and Fundraising Update</i></p> <p>It is recognised by the Board that the current funding model for DSFBs is not sustainable, and Scottish Government needs to be lobbied to review and update the current system. The only avenue to do this is through Fisheries Management Scotland (FMS) and this issue is regularly fed back to FMS in order for them to lobby on our behalf. It is acknowledged that these changes will not help in the immediate future so other avenues need to be explored to bridge current funding gaps. CW will draft a letter from the LDSFB to FMS and Scottish Ministers to lobby for change.</p> <p>The reduction in anglers in general on the river Lossie has a direct impact on the financial position of the Elgin AA, and therefore, an indirect impact on the financial position of the LDSFB. The strategy for improving this position will need to be two-fold; assisting the Elgin AA to increase membership and tickets sales and diversifying the LDSFBs income outside of the levy to reduce dependence on this income which is increasingly difficult to sustain.</p> <p>CD will introduce the Elgin AA to Alasdair Kennedy of the community council who would be willing to help them with sourcing funding and writing funding application bids.</p> <p>WF raised the issue of poor disabled access to the river which prevents disabled and elderly anglers from fishing. CD suggested approaching Gordon & Macphail for funding and speaking to Kinloss barracks about potential volunteer manpower to implement a project to improve disabled access. The Council will also have to be contacted as they own the banks.</p> <p>RL stressed that there is an urgent need to source revenue funding as a priority rather than capital funding for projects. RL asked whether the Elgin AA had considered Fishpal – the AA have not used Fishpal. CD suggested making tickets available from the caravan parks.</p>	<p>CW</p> <p>CD</p>

	<p>John Fielding was unable to attend the meeting but did provide a season update from the Dallas AA which showed an increase in catch numbers but a decrease in membership. He highlighted that improving access to parts of the river would attract members, but the Dallas AA does not have the manpower to carry this out. They are still pursuing registering with Fishpal and aim to have this up and running for this season.</p> <p>The suggestion of a roving river ticket was proposed whereby anglers can buy a day ticket that would cover the whole river. The Board agreed that this could be a good initiative but would take some work to set up. The initial step will be to contact proprietors for initial permissions which CW will do.</p> <p>CD suggested holding a fundraising event and inviting local catchment based artists to exhibit. The Board agreed that this would be worth pursuing. CW and CD will develop further.</p> <p>RL updated the Board on funding opportunities for the Lossie River through the Trust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Although the initial pilot phase of the Findhorn Watershed Initiative focused on the river Findhorn, the long term objective is to roll this catchment based restoration plan out to the Lossie and Nairn. - Through FNLRT's partnership program with Chivas Brother Ltd, 'The River Within', a number of potential projects on the Lossie have been identified for development. <p>RR asked what justification there is for the Lossie to be a Poor grade river as this affects membership. RL confirmed that the full information on how the gradings are assessed can be found on the government website but that it is based on average catches over a five year period which is why submitting accurate catch returns is so vital. There is anecdotal evidence that the actual catch on the Lossie is higher than reported with anglers seemingly reluctant to report catch. Scottish Government have talked in recent years about changing the information used to assess grades, but this has not been actioned yet so, in the meantime, encouraging anglers to submit accurate catch returns is the only tangible way to improve the river grading. CW will add a link to the website to the government's river grading information. CW will create some social media content to encourage catch returns.</p> <p><i>Budget for 2024-2025</i></p> <p>For the 2024-2025 financial year the Board agreed to reduce the budget for bailiff patrols from £1500 to £1000. The Board discussed the fees for biology services provided by FNLRT through the service level agreement and the Board decided to keep this fee the same. The draft budget was agreed subject to those amendments.</p> <p><i>Assessment Levy 2024-2025</i></p> <p>The assessment levy was set at £1.20 in the pound.</p>	<p>CW</p> <p>CD/CW</p> <p>CW</p>
3.	Catch and Release	

	<p><i>FMS proposal for changes to catch and release policy</i></p> <p>FMS tabled a motion to change their catch and release policy to 100% catch and release for both salmon and sea trout. The paper was circulated to the Board, Board's are invited to feedback to FMS on the paper.</p> <p>RL gave some more context to go with the paper from FMS; it is becoming increasingly difficult to justify funding requests for salmon conservation when there is still salmon being taken from rivers across Scotland, particularly now that Atlantic Salmon have been classified as endangered; this paper is also an attempt to pre-empt legislation which is highly likely to be imposed. RL also highlighted that Sea Trout stocks are declining in the same manor as Salmon.</p> <p>There is an increasing trend in anglers practicing 100% catch and release anyway, but the Elgin AA confirmed that their membership would oppose the adoption of the FMS catch and release proposal. The remainder of the Board were in favour of adopting the proposal for 100% catch and release. RL will feedback these comments to FMS.</p>	RL
4	<p>AOCB</p> <p>None Raised</p>	
5	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>- 18th March 2025, Annual Public Meeting (AGM)</p>	

With no further business CD closed the meeting at 16:30