



Minute of Findhorn Nairn & Lossie Rivers Trust Board Meeting

Venue: The Long Room, Logie Steading

Date: 24th November 2025 5:30pm

Attending: Mark Laing (ML), Roy Dennis (RD), Fiona Strachan (FS), Alec Rose (AR), Crinan Dunbar (CD).

In Attendance: Elle Adams (Director)(EA), Clare Walker (Administrator)(CW)

		ACTION
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies ML opened the meeting and thanked everyone for coming. Apologies were received from Alex Leven, Jamie Whittle, Campbell Ross, Andrew Wallace and Alasdair Laing.</p>	
2	<p>FNLRT Salary Review EA and CW left the meeting.</p> <p>The Board considered a paper previously circulated to members regarding the proposed salary increase for staff, due to be implemented on 1st April 2026. The Board discussed the paper and in the light of the excellent performance of the Trust and the current prevailing conditions, approved the paper with one amendment: It was agreed that the Executive Director’s salary should be increased by 10%</p> <p>RD stressed that it was important that a key metric for the Trust must be related to physical progress made on the ground and that this metric should be included in appraisal objectives for all staff and therefore relate to future salary changes.</p> <p>The Board reviewed a Pay Guidance Paper from The Rivers Trust. This was a useful guide for positioning Trust roles in the overall sector, but not to be used as a rigid framework for salary setting.</p> <p>EA and CW returned to the meeting.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of Meeting of 26th August 2025 The draft minutes were approved. CW to publish them on the website.</p>	CW
4	<p>Matters Arising</p> <p>None</p>	
5	<p>Financial Update CW circulated finance reports including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) <i>Operational budget 2025-2026</i> – expenditure is on budget so far this year. There have been some overspends but these have been balanced by underspends in other areas. There is some uncertainty over income expected from Balfour Beatty for A9 fish rescue work and Clashgour wind farm water monitoring contract. b) <i>Surplus/Deficit Report</i> – there is an unrestricted surplus of £86k, this is made up in part of our Esmee grant funding which is released at the beginning of the year and drawn down as the year progresses. c) <i>Cashflow Forecast</i> – the 12 month rolling forecast to November 2026 shows a healthy surplus across the period with no funding bottlenecks which may cause cashflow issues. 	

	<p>The savings account with Charity Bank has now been opened and some ringfenced funds have been moved into it.</p> <p>AR asked whether FNLRT had any other bank accounts to spread funds over given that the Financial Services Compensation Scheme only protects funds up to £85k. CW confirmed that FNLRT only has one current account, and now a savings account. It was agreed that it would be prudent to investigate another current account to provide increased protection of the charity's funds.</p> <p><i>Draft Accounts for FY 2024-2025</i> – An independent external audit of the annual accounts has been successfully completed, and the final draft accounts were approved by the Board. CW will arrange for them to be signed.</p> <p><i>Budget review and approval</i> – An initial draft budget for next financial year has been created. It includes the proposed salary increases as well as staff posts which are still to be recruited for. There is a small deficit indicated but there is an expectation that this can be closed as current prospective income sources are confirmed. A final draft will be approved at the Board meeting in March 2026.</p> <p><i>Audit Recommendations</i> – The audit team made a recommendation to carry out a checking exercise after year end to ensure that all accruals are captured and accounted for correctly. CW confirmed that she would implement a double check of accruals at year end. The Board approved the letter of representation and CW will arrange for this to be signed and sent to the auditors.</p> <p><i>Accountancy and Audit Services Tender</i> – The draft tender document was approved.</p> <p><i>Policies for Review</i> – the following policies were reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scheme of financial delegation – approved - Expenses policy – the Board proposed that the policy be changed to state that the Executive Director's expenses are approved by any one Trustee over email. Policy approved subject to that change. - Safeguarding policy and procedure – the Board proposed naming the FNLRT safeguarding lead within the policy, it was agreed that this position should be held by the Executive Director. Policy approved subject to this change. - Equality Diversity and Inclusion Policy – approved. - Grievance policy and procedure – approved. - Disciplinary policy and procedure – approved. - Bullying and Harassment policy – approved - Data Protection Policy – approved. - Donations and Fundraising Policy – approved. - Reserves Policy – reviewed and agreed to keep the reserves level at 3 months. The policy was approved and a request made that CW includes an assessment of reserves as part of financial reports. 	<p>CW</p> <p>CW</p> <p>CW</p> <p>CW</p>
6	<p>Director's Operational Report</p> <p>EA circulated a Director's report to the Board, highlights include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Network & relationship building</i> – EA has continued to foster relationships with peers, attending regional meetings and exploring collaborative approaches to shared issues, including collective funding opportunities. - <i>Update on project activities</i> – implementation of the woodland creation scheme has started at Glenmazeran but the Upper Divie scheme has been delayed due to response times from Scottish Forestry. EA has also submitted a funding application to the Scottish Marine Environmental Enhancement Fund (SMEEF) for a seagrass restoration project, building on seagrass mapping in Findhorn Bay in 2024. Work on the Lower Findhorn Catchment development project funded by the Nature Restoration Fund continues with surveys underway and good levels of engagement with local estates, including with upcoming woodland cattle grazing workshop. 	<p>CW</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>INNS</i> – The SISI project continued its control work this year. Funding for the project has been secured for another two years to March 2028. - <i>Freshwater and Catchment Science</i> – EA and other FNLRT staff attended a recent public meeting to address concerns about the proposed Moray FLOW Park. Unfortunately, the developer did not attend. FNLRT will collate historic data on fish migration pathways through the Moray Firth to assess potential impact on migrating salmonids, as part of any potential future consultations. SEPA’s investigation into the fish kill incident on the A9 dualling works at the Dalmagarry Burn continue with Ollie Smaje and Sean Mclean providing statements next week. At their Board meeting last week, the FDSFB decided to write a letter to the CEO of Balfour Beatty to raise their concerns over the handling of the in river works to date. EA attended the Nairn DSFB’s AGM and gave a presentation alongside Guy Harris and Ollie Smaje. - AR expressed his thanks on behalf of the NDSFB. Ongoing invertebrate monitoring has recently proved its worth by triggering a report to SEPA following low sample numbers on the Mosset Burn, downstream of the water treatment plant. RD reiterated the importance of prioritising a sampling program along the river to test for chemicals, including pesticides, which may be contaminating the river. EA agreed and highlighted some previous research on this area GH has undertaken, and suggested RD meet the team to discuss. <p>- <i>Operational Updates</i> – team appraisals are currently being undertaken.</p>	OS
7	<p>Review of Actions from Trustee Away Day</p> <p>The Trustees attended an away day at Dunphail House in October, which was facilitated by an external governance professional. The Trustees agreed that it was a useful day, and several actions were agreed upon to make FNLRT’s governance more robust:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A professional review of the FNLRT Memorandum of Association and Articles of Association. - Increase the number of Board meetings to 4 per year and establish a number (to be agreed) of subcommittees to meet between these times and report to the wider Board. - Change the way that Trustees are recruited to the Board with an emphasis on skills and experience - Adapt one of the Board meetings to cover a whole day and include project site visits and follow up away days. 	
8	<p>AOCB</p> <p>None</p>	
9	<p>Dates of 2026 Meetings</p> <p>CW will circulate suggested meeting dates over email, incorporating RD’s suggestion of a mid-summer extended meeting to include site visits and governance workshop.</p>	CW

ML gave special thanks to FS and AR for the tenure on the Board and closed the meeting at 6:50pm.