



River Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Clerk: Will Cowie

Administrator: Valerie Wardlaw

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Minute of Meeting of the Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Held on Monday 21st November 2016 in the Long Room, Logie Steading at 10.30am

Present: Alasdair Laing – Chairman
Andrew Howard
Tony Watts

Anthony Laing
Graham Bell
Robert Hoskin

In attendance:

Sean Mclean- Head Bailiff
William Forrester- Bailiff

Robert Laughton – Director, FNLFT
Valerie Wardlaw – Administrator, FDSFB

	Item	Action
1.	<p>Apologies: Mark Laing, Julie Balgonie, Colin Cawdor</p> <p>AlaL welcomed Tony Watts who has just been elected as President of the Forres AA.</p>	
2.	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 21st August 2016 Minutes were approved. VW to remove the draft watermarking on minutes available on the website, once they have been approved.</p>	VW
3.	<p>Matters arising None</p>	
4.	<p>Budgets and Finance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An updated budget for the year was circulated- a new item of expenditure for the juvenile fish surveys (£4k) is covered by the £5k contingency. The income from bailiff patrols for the Lossie is likely to be £1500 rather than £2200. Still anticipating a small surplus for the year. Two assessments are outstanding; totalling £1938- VW will send reminders and AH will remind the Pollachaig tenant. The hatchery costs in the budget are for retaining an electricity supply, which is considered sensible for H&S reasons since the location is used for equipment storage and may be accessed in the dark. The board agreed to keep the hatchery building and equipment in case a situation arose where restocking was essential. RL to assess storage requirements over the winter and confirm if an electricity supply is still required by the next board meeting. Lethen Estate do not require an active supply to be maintained Reserves- VW to estimate 6 months expenditure for the board to retain as a reserve in the BoS current account. The remainder to be transferred to Rathbones for investment. AlaL to sign off on the transfer amount. VW to close the interest bearing current account which has a £2 balance. Budget for 2017- VW/AlaL to draft a budget to enable the assessment for 2017 to be set - for circulation to the board for approval. AlaL anticipates the levy will remain static. 	<p>VW/AH</p> <p>RL</p> <p>VW</p> <p>AlaL VW</p> <p>VW/ AlaL</p>

<p>5.</p>	<p>Head Bailiff Report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SMcL presented the catch data for 2016 (download here). Overall catch is down 200 fish from 2015, but still a good catch with generally excellent return rates. There was a good spring run, but water levels were low in August & September, so grilse numbers were low. The bailiffs have visited the upper river and seen numerous large fish, and good runs of fish have been seen in Findhorn Bay late on. Forres AA have had the best catches for five years. SMcL has still to receive returns from Balnespick, and if their release rate is poor again this year, then he will remind them of the Conservation Code. AlaL/AH to investigate who to contact to obtain the Findhorn Bay AA and Muckle Burn catch data as these should be included in the catch figures. • Poaching has increased this year- the bailiffs apprehended 26 poachers whose tackle was confiscated, with one angler charged on the Lossie. All poaching has been by rod and line, not by netting or organised teams of poachers. More fishing permits have been sold for Findhorn Bay due to the regular bailiff patrols. The Moy beat agents appreciate the increased presence of the bailiffs and plan to discuss other measures which could be put in place to deter poaching on that beat. (Locked gates are unlikely to succeed, but camera traps and liaising Police Scotland may be effective). One incident involved a poacher with a gutting knife, which was not used threateningly, but raised the issue of whether the bailiffs should use anti-stab vests in certain circumstances. The board agreed that the bailiffs should be issued with stab vests. These should be unobtrusive so as not to inflame situations. The risk assessment for dealing with poachers should reflect this additional PPE. RL and SMcL will also keep up to date with advice on this issue from the Bailiffing Group. The Board also asked for H&S to be added as a standing item on the agenda. The Board requested that Will Cowie should be contacted for an opinion on liability for any H&S prosecution- VW to draft an enquiry for AlaL to approve. • The Findhorn bailiffs undertook 85 hours of patrolling on the Lossie this year and are continuing joint patrols with the Nairn bailiff to cover holidays and to ensure bailiffs patrol in pairs at times when poaching is more likely. The Findhorn Board endorse bailiffs working in pairs whenever possible and agree they should be able to patrol the Nairn and the Lossie when appropriate. Moray Estates have been trialling GPS tracking on mobile phones- SMcL/RL to contact Ben for advice on further safety features for the bailiff phones. • Predation- I mink was caught on the Mosset and one further sighting this year. One seal was taken for the seal quota and SMcL intends to fulfil the quota if possible. 	<p>SMcL</p> <p>AlaL/AH</p> <p>SMcL</p> <p>RL/SMcL/VW</p> <p>VW/AlaL</p> <p>SMcL/RL</p> <p>SMcL</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>FNLFT Director</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Catch figures are near average this year with good spring and summer salmon catches but poor grilse numbers- grilse numbers have increased since the 1980s when netting ceased. Sea Trout catches are similar to last year- the Findhorn has low sea trout catches for the size of river. • RL has circulated a short report on the juvenile fish surveys undertaken on the Findhorn and a full report will follow. Distribution and numbers of salmon are good- showing full recovery from the 2014 spate. Sea trout numbers have not fully recovered- possibly due to trout requiring more bankside cover, which is still regenerating after the spate. The mainstem 	

	<p>was not surveyed; however RL plans to undertake some spot surveys next year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RL circulated a brief on installing a smolt trap in the Findhorn next year and the Board agreed to go ahead with RL's recommendations. The Board considers it is important to collect as much data on fish populations as possible to inform the MSS river grading model as it develops. Rivers will continue to be graded by MSS each year and juvenile fish and other data will begin to be incorporated into the modelling. The AST have loaned a 4' trap which will be installed in the Divie at Dunphail. Installing a 6' trap in the mainstem of the Findhorn was investigated, but decided against, due to the danger of spates washing equipment away, and the width of the river making daily access to the trap difficult. Smolt populations for the whole river should be able to be extrapolated from sampling tributaries over a few years. There will be some additional costs for ropes etc and the bailiffs will be managing the daily counting of smolts during the sampling. RL has also asked UHI if any students would be interested in helping with the trap. • Predators- the bailiffs continue to undertake seal counts four times a year and to try and fulfil the quota. RL has received a cost for drone survey of seals, (£1300 for four surveys a year), to be done in tandem with visual counts. The Board agreed to contract out the drone surveys this year, but will look into buying a drone for the board to use in future years. • Sawbills- have a quota of 3 birds this year- reduced from 12 as the regular counts are showing numbers of sawbills are declining. Ad hoc sightings are thus very useful, so please send details/ photos to RL. • INNS- funding gained by the FNLFT allowed contractors to treat areas of GH and JK this year from the upstream source to the A96. Further funding is being sought to continue next year. FNLFT have a good stock of equipment to lend out. There is a serious GH infestation on the cliffs near Broad Reeds pool – RL is obtaining a quote from a tree surgeon who is prepared to try and treat it next year to remove this seed source. • AntL will circulate a picture of a grass that is spreading along river banks for identification. • RH provided RL with a map of Himalayan Balsam infestations. • Wind Farms- Tom nan Clach river crossings are being monitored. Moy is now operational. • Schools- RL obtained funding from the Berry Burn Community Fund for school visits which include angling taster sessions- RL to liaise with GB for Forres AA help with these. • GB asked if red vent has been a problem across Scotland this year- RL to confirm. • GB asked if the board plans to try and eradicate the pike from Lochindorb. RL has met with the new owners and discussed the pike populations; however there are no practical ways of removing the pike. 	<p>RL</p> <p>RL</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>RL/AH</p> <p>AntL</p> <p>RL/GB</p> <p>RL</p>
7.	<p>Conservation Code 2017</p> <p>The board agreed to amend the code to allow one in four sea trout to be retained after the 14th of May, giving a 75% release rate rather than asking for a 100% release rate. However all fish should be released up to the 14th May, even if they are dead. VW to update and circulate the 2017 Conservation Code to all proprietors and tenants with a note asking them to update their angler information and websites.</p>	<p>VW</p>

8.	<p>Wild Fisheries Reform</p> <p>The WFR is not in this year's Scottish Government legislative programme and so changes will not be enacted until 2018 at the earliest. A funding gap of £4 million has been identified between the amount raised by the levy and what is required. New legislation cannot be proposed until a funding strategy has been devised.</p> <p>At the ASFB AGM last week the constitution was amended to change the name to Fisheries Management Scotland and allow Fisheries Trusts to become members. The new FMS board will still have a majority of members representing DSFBs. ASFB/RAFTS have reported on the make-up of FMO areas to the Scottish Government, who should clarify the areas shortly and start the process of setting up shadow FMOs. FMO areas for the NE of Scotland are still unclear.</p>	
9.	<p>Catchment Developments</p> <p>Hill Of Glaschyle WF will be operational late this year or early next. RL is monitoring A9/A96 and overhead power line upgrades. Keith Williams from Kyle of Sutherland FT is on the group monitoring the offshore WF development which is due to start construction soon.</p>	RL
10	<p>AOCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ewen Brodie's suggestions on co-optees to the Board. The board agreed the upper river is underrepresented. AlaL will approach Alan Bell and Kenneth Graham from Coignafearn to find out if they would join the board as co-optees representing upper river angling interests. • Supernumerary Bailiffs- the board agreed that volunteer bailiffs on the Findhorn would not be appropriate. AlaL will respond to Ewen Brodie. • 	AlaL AlaL
11	<p>Dates of 2017 meetings:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Meeting, Monday May 22nd 10.30am, venue t.b.c. • Board Meeting Monday August 21st 10.30am, venue t.b.c. • AGM (APM) Monday August 21st 12.30am, venue t.b.c. • Board Meeting Monday 20th November, 10.30am, venue t.b.c. 	