



River Findhorn District Salmon Fishery Board

Clerk: Will Cowie Administrator: Valerie Wardlaw
 Fisheries Office, Logie Steading, Dunphail, Forres, IV36 2QN
 01309 611220 admin@fnlft.org.uk www.fnlft.org.uk/river-findhorn

Minute of the Annual General Meeting (Annual Public Meeting)

Held on Monday 20th August 2018 at the Long Room, Logie Steading, at 12.30pm

Present:

Alasdair Laing – Chairman
 Mark Laing
 Graham Bell
 Robert Hoskin

Graham Griffith
 Tony Watts
 Edward Osborne
 Richard Benyon

In attendance:

Sean McLean (Head Bailiff)
 Donald Mackenzie (Bailiff)

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

A	Item	Action
1.	Apologies: Julie Balgonie, Anthony Laing, Andrew Howard, Colin Cawdor, Ewen Brodie, Andrew Fleming, Edward Greenwell, Tim Boles	
2.	Minutes of Meeting held on 21st August 2017 Minutes were approved.	
3.	Matters arising none	
4.	<p>River Reports Chairman- Alasdair Laing The 2017 Annual Report has been published and is available from the River Findhorn section of the www.fnlft.org.uk website. Alasdair reiterated that during the 2017 season when there was water in the river anglers caught fish. This season the water levels have been even lower, and although there are fresh fish in the river, few are being caught.</p> <p>River Director- Robert Laughton Presentation here. The 2017 catch was average despite losses in the spring due to disease caused by high water temperatures. Spring fish appear to be more susceptible to high water temperatures than summer fish, so we are not seeing similar diseased fish at the moment. However fish are stressed at water temperatures higher than 18°C and may not survive catch and release. The Findhorn DSFB is considering adding recommendations to the Conservation Policy for periods when water temperatures are above 18°C.</p> <p>The Scottish Government reviews the Conservation status of rivers annually, and takes into consideration low water flows in their modelling. Therefore RL felt the Findhorn is likely to remain a Grade 1 river next year, despite poor catches due to exceptionally low water levels this season.</p> <p>RL is undertaking 12 sites on the River Findhorn for the National Electrofishing Survey, which is mapping juvenile numbers across Scottish rivers. This data will be incorporated into the Conservation Limits model</p>	ALL

which is used to grade rivers. Fish counter data is also going to be included and RL is following trials of new portable fish counter which does not need a weir to operate. River Directors and FMS are discussing with the Scottish Government scientists the option to regrade rivers every three years, rather than every year. They are also lobbying that the Conservation Limits model should be based on a wider data set, rather than being dominated by catch data, which is very subjective and subject to “non-conservation” influences.

A new acoustic tagging project, supervised by Marine Scotland Science, is tracking salmon tagged at Rosemarkie as they return to rivers to spawn. Acoustic receivers have been installed in the Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie for this project. This project will also help quantify losses due to dolphin predation in the Moray Firth. The Atlantic Salmon Trust is organising a smolt tagging project in Moray Firth rivers in 2019 to track smolt losses in river and the inshore waters along the Moray Firth coast. AST project manager, Matt Newton, is developing plans for tagging smolts and it is likely that rivers with smolt trapping facilities will be involved. Funding is in place to allow the project to commence but further funds are being sought to support the project.

The routine EF surveys of the River Findhorn will be undertaken in 2019.

Predator Control- regular counts of sawbill ducks continue and help would be welcomed, especially reporting of any ad hoc sightings to complete the picture provided by regular counts. The data is used to apply for a control licence for all the Moray Firth rivers. SNH is recognising that control of predators is an important way to protect salmon, which RL hopes will be reflected in their attitude to future control licences.

Seal Counts continue- both visual and using photographs taken by a drone. The numbers at the mouth of the Findhorn doubled earlier in the year, but have since reduced. The decline in salmon stocks is being highlighted when the control licence is applied for. The licence applies only to seals found in the river, as they are most likely to be preying on salmon and sea trout.

INNS control- a new four year project - the Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI) - started this year with a project officer, James Symonds, appointed to cover the FNL and Spey catchments. Giant Hogweed has been treated from the upstream source at Daltullich Bridge down to the A96. The aim of the project is to reduce infestations of GH and JK to manageable levels, so that continued control can be taken over by farmers and landowners. GH seed is viable for 5 to 10 years, and so treatment must be sustained over a long period. The only herbicide licenced for use near watercourses is Round-up, which is currently under scrutiny as a carcinogen. If the licence for Round-up is revoked, then some herbivores and omnivores such as sheep and pigs can be used to control GH. Himalayan Balsam is currently being targeted for control, with treatment of Japanese Knotweed by stem injection through to October. RL will be prioritising the treatment of GH along the Muckle Burn in 2019. RL plans to apply for further landfill tax funding to employ contractors to support the efforts of the SISI project.

Schools- RL is pursuing angling development opportunities to build on the Salmon go to Schools sessions already on offer.

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	<p>Head Bailiff- Sean McLean The Bailiffs have been very busy with anti-poaching patrols this season due to the very low water levels. There are numerous fish stuck in pools waiting for water levels to rise to enable them to swim upriver, especially in the lower river beats. Regular coastal patrols have also been undertaken checking for boats using nets. One angler has been charged. The bailiffs have a GoPro camera and plan to try to take some underwater video of the fish in the pools to show the numbers they are seeing.</p> <p>Mink- no mink have been caught so far this year, however this is the time of year they are start to disperse, so please report so any sightings to James Symonds on 07493 272898.</p> <p>Seals- the control licence continues to be implemented at appropriate times of the year.</p> <p>Sean reported that compliance with the Findhorn Conservation Code catch and release policy has been excellent this year.</p>	SMcL
5.	<p>Consideration of Accounts to 31st January 2018 The Accounts have been formally approved by the Board in May 2018, and are waiting for the independent examiner to co-sign. The accounts available here and will be updated once signed.</p>	
6.	<p>Proposals for 2018/19 The Findhorn and Lossie DSFBs have been awarded funding from the Scottish Government to investigate the potential of a merger. The funding comes in two tranches- the first part is for scoping the potential of a merger and forming a business case to Scottish Government. If both DSFBs decide to merge, and the Scottish Government agrees, the second tranche of funding would be used to facilitate the merger. An independent consultant will be appointed to scope the merger with a subcommittee formed from board members of the Findhorn and Lossie DSFBs. The deadline for the scoping stage for a possible merger is March 2019.</p> <p>Fish Counters- RL is following the trials of a portable fish counter on the Deveron to see if similar technology could be used on the Findhorn. The National EF Survey- uses randomly sampled fishing sites, which has been interesting for RL- taking him to sites he would not normally have sampled. This is causing him to rethink the choice of routine EF sites for the 2019 survey.</p> <p>Predator control will continue with regular counts and the data collected being used to inform licence applications.</p> <p>Scale Reading- RL does not have the time to read scales when they are collected, and so is looking to contract out scale reading, so anglers are given information on their fish in a timely manner.</p> <p>A new Fisheries Management Plan is a priority for 2019.</p>	RL
7.	<p>AOCB Richard Benyon reported that the peat restoration projects at Coignafearn, Farr and Glenmazeran have started with drainage ditches being blocked. He enquired how long it would take to see improvements. RL suggested the project managers would be comparing water levels and the speed the river rises and falls after rainfall events, with the historical data from the Shenachie Gauging station, which has been monitored</p>	

	<p>since the 1950s. RL said that the amount of particulate matter in the water is also being monitored. Strath Caulaidh Ltd is managing the project, and they use the analogy for the restoration as transforming the current 'corrugated iron roof' to a 'thatched roof'. The Peatland Restoration Fund does not include monitoring of changes in water chemistry. RL will contact Jimmy Irvine (Glenmazeran keeper) to discuss if scientific researchers would be interested in monitoring water chemistry before and after peatland drainage is blocked.</p> <p>Edward Usborne reported that the riverbank repairs at Dalarossie Church in Tomatin have commenced.</p>	RL/RB
8.	<p>Date of future meetings Dates for the 2019 Board meetings and AGM (APM) will be agreed and circulated shortly.</p>	