

**FINDHORN BAY LOCAL NATURE RESERVE (FBLNR)
MINUTES OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MEETING
HELD IN THE JAMES MILNE INSTITUTE AT 1930HRS ON
THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2019**

Committee members present:

Roy Dennis (RHD) - Chair
Mike Crutch (MC) - Secretary
Bill Barber (WB), Findhorn Angling Club
Colin Bell (CB), The Moray Council
Glenn Buchanan (GB), Royal Findhorn Yacht Club
Claire Feaver (CF), The Moray Council
Pete Finch (PF), Findhorn Foundation
Manja Hannon (MaH), Friends of Findhorn Bay
Bob MacKay (RM), FNDWA
Dr Colin Shedden (CS), BASC
Richard Somers-Cocks (RSC), nature conservation/ornithology
Carl Wright (CW), Dyke Community Council

Apologies: Ian Suttie, Alan Tissiman, RSPB

1. Welcome & recent news

RHD welcomed everyone present, and started off by recording the committee's sadness and condolences to the family of former chair and member Pat Carroll who passed away recently.

MC reported that following the departure of Karen Cunningham (to whom our thanks go to for her support in recent years), RSPB membership of the committee now sits with Jenny Weston and Hywell Maggs at the East Scotland regional office in Aberdeen. The ability of their attendance will be determined by the agenda, meeting by meeting.

Secretary's note: recent bird highlights have included a pair of Little Egrets earlier in the summer, both being juveniles but does indicate a potential widening of the breeding range for such. A Black Stork visited briefly in June. The first Pink-footed Geese of the autumn were apparent at the turn of August into September, with over 2,000 on passage at one point that week. There are still good numbers of Ospreys present (MC recorded seven on the 9th).

2. Minutes of meeting held on 18 April 2019

The minutes were accepted.

Previous actions:

a. Kinloss Barracks tern breeding habitat

RSC and MC will be holding a meeting with the Barracks Staff Officer later this month to discuss improving relations with 39 Regiment, Royal Engineers as well as explore any conservation activities that can occur within the wired fence. **ITEM CARRIER FORWARD**

b. Updates to the FBLNR MC Constitution

MC had circulated a draft to all committee members of proposed updates to the document, with some feedback received. CB had also staffed it within The Moray Council, with comments from the legal department of such received just last week.

MC has already started to progress those, mostly in relation to continued membership by the likes of Highlands & Islands Enterprise as well as the Ministry of Defence. Until such is ratified, with widespread agreement already indicating such MC proposes that for 2020 the committee moves to two meetings each calendar year in April (to include the AGM) and October. The committee agreed to this proposal.

MC hopes to bring the final draft before the committee at the next meeting. **ITEM CARRIED FORWARD**

c. Press release covering breeding bird disturbance around the FBLNR

MC reported that this was actioned immediately post the April meeting, as well as discussions had with commercial dog walkers. MC also discussed the wider issue of seal disturbance at the haul out area on the mouth of the bay with Simon Paterson. **CLOSED**

3. Chairman's report

RHD reported on the wildfowling developments and frustrations in recent months. Despite mediation from Autumn 2018 through early Spring 2019 (convened by The Moray Council - TMC - using a consultant) and move to explore a community engagement phase using TMC experts in this area, TMC called a meeting on 4 June to announce it was withdrawing its support and staff from the process.

RHD stated that by this point, three options for a future wildfowling framework (covering day/time restrictions as well as area restrictions) were nearing release to the public for consultation and voting upon. TMC community engagements experts were already working on appropriate weighting of responses to ensure the various interested parties were adequately represented.

As a result of the TMC's actions to halt the process, RHD informally met in July with RM and MC to discuss what options existed locally. RM, having applied rules to the members of his Forres, Nairn & District Wildfowling Association for the past three seasons, would take these forward as an interim framework for adoption by as many club, organisation and non-affiliated wildfowlingers as possible. As many will be aware, these were agreed upon by BASC and SACS and made available via their online facilities as well as via the wildfowling page of the FBLNR website at www.fblnr.org

RHD personally still wishes to see a pursuit of the three options that existed following the mediation process as so much time and effort had been invested in such, though without TMC support and wary that online vitriol can and still occurs on this issue, is disappointed that this matter has not been brought to a successful conclusion. RHD also raised the ongoing concerns of behaviours by users of the bay, both within and outwith the wildfowling community and hoped the 2019/2020 season proved trouble-free.

Lastly, RHD once again raised the issue of the potential for a trust-type organisation to exist to develop the FBLNR without the funding constraints of the council.

RHD opened the floor up for comments - RM gave a brief outline of his FNDWA rules being widened, as well as that actions by individuals will never totally be changed without byelaws. CS added his comments regarding the mediation and draft community engagement activity. CF, picking up on the trust organisation element stated that, more than ever, nature and its related benefits feature highly in recent surveys of the Scottish population by the Scottish Environment Link.

4. Treasurer's update on finances

No update.

5. New matters arising

a. Treasurer and Secretary re-appointments for 2019/2020

Following the appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair at the AGM, the constitution requires that these two officers be re-elected or contested. RHD proposed MC and Simon Paterson continue, which were both unanimously accepted by the meeting.

b. Vegetation around the bird hide

RSC undertook recent clearing of gorse, as well as fence repairs and RHD thanked him for his efforts. RSC also commented that the Findhorn & Kinloss Community Council were engaging with 39 Regt/RE to clear gorse in the area of the old aircraft viewing area, adjacent to the bird hide car park. RHD and others raised concerns that, although a slight increase in visitors may occur for a few months when RAF Lossiemouth 'bolthole' some aircraft during forthcoming runway resurfacing, the clearing of the area should not lead to any widened public use such as the camper van park proposed last year due to the proximity of the saltmarsh flora and fauna.

RSC also raised issues regarding visibility of the cycle path and other traffic when exiting the bird hide car park; CB will raise this within TMC for action. **ACTION CB**

c. Giant hogweed control

MC stated that TMC's ranger had conducted some clearance in the area, and continued to make the Findhorn, Nairn & Lossie Fisheries Trust aware of any other issues around the bay as part of their invasive plant species control work.

6. Any other business

a. Eco-friendly wadding for wildfowling

MC stated that a member of the public had recently e-mailed regarding developments in this area. CS replied that current availability is for cartridges suitable only for duck species, however a heavier (36/38g) version for goose species should come to market ahead of next season. RHD asked the shooting groups to encourage members to plan ahead for purchases to allow a swift transfer to using such. RM stated that the FNDWA wildfowling guidelines include the obligation that wildfowlers recover any cartridges/wads fired by them, or seen by them having been expended by others.

7. Date of next meeting

The final meeting of 2019 takes place of Thursday 5 December, as usual in the JMI at 1930hrs.

prepared by Mike Crutch, Secretary FBLNR