

Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust

Minutes of Meeting of Trustees held on Monday, 13th September 2004, at Duireaskin, Aberfeldy at 7.15 p.m.

Present: Ruth Atkinson, Gordon Evans, Julie Gardiner, Marjorie Keddie, Robin Hull, Paul Jarvis (Chairman), Hamish Nicholson, Andy Pointer, Margaret Jarvis (Minutes Secretary).

1. **Apologies:** Lynnette Borradaile, Marjorie Finlayson, Bill Hoare, Innes Smith.
2. **Minutes of previous meeting on 10th August:** approved after slight amendment. Copies of the amended version will be sent to all. **ACTION MJ**
3. **Matters arising:** All Trustees' subscriptions had now been paid or are about to be paid and GE has received up-to-date information about this from the treasurer.
4. **'Ravens over the Hill'** : RH reported that 'Ravens over the Hill' should be on the bookshelves by November; after some hiccups he now anticipated a good-quality product, to be printed in Tayport. There should be a review in 'Comment' in mid-October. The cover, with a painting by his 13-year-old grand-daughter on the front and a photo of DC in winter, by AP, on the back, was circulated, and admired. RH proposed a party to launch the book, to be held in Fortingall hall (an appropriate venue because Dun Coillich was owned by the Garth Estate between 1895 and 1941 and the estate figures significantly in the book). The idea was acclaimed. The publisher has agreed with this choice of venue, despite initial doubts about the distance for the press to travel. All members of HPCLT (68) would be invited, together with the considerable number of contributors to the book. PJ made the point that neighbours such as JMT and the FC should be included, together with representatives of similar community organisations. RH asked for help in compiling a list of invitees **ACTION ALL**. PJ voiced everyone's congratulations to RH for his hard work on bringing the project to fruition.

There can be no decision on a date yet; but early November, if the book is ready then, would be good for the Christmas market. Malcolm Appleby had offered to mount an exhibition of silver at the launch party and also to design an appropriate commemorative piece (not too expensive!). Gillian Hull was willing to mastermind the party; MJ offered to help with this; HN offered to help fund the drinks cost. Others also offered such help. The point was made that invitations should require an RSVP to assist catering.

RH emphasised that the party has two objects: firstly book sales; secondly publicity for HPCLT. He anticipated a cover price of £9.95; HPCLT members would be able to buy at a reduced price. Discussion about the details of this was deferred to a later date.

5. **Loan; Woodland Project:** PJ was very pleased to be able to inform the meeting that the Volant Trust had agreed to give us a bridging loan for the WGS. This was welcome news after two months of tedious, unproductive negotiations with RBS. He read out a letter from Turcan Connell, the solicitors who act for the Volant Trust.

Documents were being exchanged between J & H Mitchell and Turcan Connell. Colin Liddell had reported no problems with this. This was acclaimed as good news since it avoids the problems which had arisen in seeking a loan from RBS.

PJ reported on a site visit on Thursday 9th September with Hamish Murray and the contractor, David Shanks Snr., who would be available to start work on about the 4th October. PJ circulated a note about this meeting as a basis for discussion. Hamish Murray had repeated his offer to manage the woodland project, and to visit the site twice a week while the contractor was operating there. The options for site preparation had been discussed. The heather has grown considerably in the three years since grazing and browsing ceased. It was now knee high and rank, and this will make it much more difficult for mounds to settle. HM therefore strongly advised burning off the heather first. David Shanks was prepared to consider an alternative; to spend more time on each mound by first scraping the surface then taking out a bucket-full and turning it over. This might enable planting after about 15 months. He is prepared to try to scrape and mound without increasing the estimated cost. If the mounding is done the normal way with the heather as it is, the mounds may take two years to settle and this would seriously extend the period of cash-flow deficit. Burning the heather and mounding would enable planting soon after and would give the best chance of successful establishment of the trees. Hamish Murray was adamant about the necessity for good preparation, to avoid subsequent death of trees and the need for 'beating up'.

There was considerable discussion about the alternatives and particularly the pros and cons of burning. Those Trustees who had been on the ground recently had found walking through the heather difficult and particularly appreciated the problem. Burning has disadvantages for bird and invertebrate life and might generate adverse publicity, but the burnt area would soon recover thus increasing the range of habitat. The conclusion was reached that burning of localised areas was acceptable and there was a consensus for taking such a sensitive approach. RH suggested using both types of preparation and this was generally agreed. PJ suggested that he and JG should meet David Shanks on site again before making a final decision. **ACTION JG, PJ.**

JG made the point that plants should be ordered now for any planting in the spring. HM favoured container-grown seedlings in the absence of browsing, but preferred the larger, bare-rooted planting stock if browsing is likely. It was agreed that both bare-rooted and container-grown stock would be used.

JG said the contractors had asked about whether they should leave a route between the mounds, or not. They will not mound on the current tracks and can obliterate or leave the tracks they make. It was decided to wait and see. In answer to concern expressed by PJ, HN was happy to leave this project in the hands of JG and PJ: he thought communication with the rest of the Trustees had been good.

PJ raised another concern: bracken had grown very vigorously on the regeneration area and elsewhere and would have to be controlled to allow natural regeneration. Hamish Murray had mentioned that a misting device is now available for use underneath the bracken canopy, and that this is more effective than aerial spraying from above. Bracken control will be essential next year.

PJ also reported that a survey of regeneration had recently been carried out by a group of Edinburgh University students in the natural regeneration area along the Allt Mor. They had assessed a total of 24 10 x 10 m plots, each in the centre of one of the survey map grid squares, and had counted an average of 24 tree seedlings over 25 cm in height on plots within 100 m of the Allt Mor. Birch made up about 90% of the species, with some willow and rowan. Tree seedling density decreased with distance

from the Allt Mor; an average of only 4 between 100 and 200 m and there were very few seedlings more than 200 m away. There were also very few seedlings in areas of dense bracken. Heights have to be 50 cm to qualify for the grant; however JG thought that if we send these data to FC we may be eligible for some payment now. She will check this. **ACTION JG**

6. **Keltneyburn Hydro Scheme** PJ said there was very little to report here. Things were moving slowly forward. A further document from Bell and Scott had been received in which they agreed with most of the points made to them by Colin Liddell after the previous meeting of landlords, e.g., helicopters would not be used at all in the bird-nesting season. The document was being looked at by AP who would pass it to BH.
7. **Work parties:** an e-mail from BH, sent to most Trustees, about the timing of grazing by Alex Murray's cattle was read out. BH, IS and PJ, using a quad bike, had repaired all the gaps in fences around the field where the cattle will go. A tape electric fence has been installed to protect the trees already planted. Some steel components had been purchased by BH; wood had been obtained from Sandy McAdam.
8. **Any other business:** RH asked for more reports on sightings; a new bird record was a pheasant! A pamphlet about Glengoulandie farm was circulated; this is now publicly available in TICs etc. PJ passed around for approval a copy of the letter he had been asked to write on behalf of HPCLT Trustees to Lynnette Borradaile as Chair of the Schiehallion group, addressing her concern about publicising the access gates between Dun Coillich and Schiehallion in the HPCLT Newsletter. There was general approval.

Date of Next Meeting: 12th October 2005.