

Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust

Minutes of Meeting of Trustees held on Wednesday, 9th June 2004, at Duireaskin, Aberfeldy at 7.15 p.m.

Present: Ruth Atkinson, Lynette Borradaile, Gordon Evans, Marjorie Finlayson, Julie Gardiner, Robin Hull, Paul Jarvis (Chairman), Marjorie Keddie, Hamish Nicholson, Innes Smith, Margaret Jarvis (Minutes Secretary).

1. **Apologies:** Bill Hoare, Andy Pointer.
2. **Minutes of previous meeting:** approved and signed.
3. **Matters arising:** IS reported that the RSS had been submitted with the addition of the scrapes suggested by RH, and with a cultivated crop area of half a hectare to be sown with species yielding bird seed (oats, mustard, rape, clover), not to be cut. The scrapes must be done before the winter; the bird seed area would be sown next May. Maps were circulated. IS will bring precise details to the next meeting after approval by SERAD. The application cost was £400 paid to FWAG; this would be refunded by SERAD. JG suggested that everyone should go and look at the proposals on the ground, after approval of the RSS had been received. An archaeological survey done by P and K Heritage Trust for the RSS, at a cost of £28, was circulated.
RA brought a copy of a 1: 10,000 map of DC, as previously requested.
There had been no further reports of poisoned bait being found. However, RH reported that he had seen no trout in the Glengoulandie burn this year although there had been a lot last year. MK had asked the local vet if he had had any reports of poisoned animals, but he had heard nothing
PJ had written letters of thanks to Malcolm Appleby and to Beryl Coope
PJ had submitted the application for funding for the car park immediately after the previous meeting, but did not expect to hear anything for three months. He had been able to include the scrapes and hide.
4. **Newsletter:** JG was congratulated by all for producing this. The cost was £370 for 250 copies. This included 300 copies of the map. RH emphasised the excellent publicity value and thought we should have more copies to distribute to inform the local community about developments on DC. GE reported that there had been 95 members last year, with 49 renewals so far. There had been many late payments last year. MJ will send out the newsletters to paid-up members immediately. GE will check payment with Beryl Coope. Those who have not yet paid will be sent a membership form with their copy. **ACTION GE, MJ**
Trustees will distribute copies to appropriate places in their area. **ACTION ALL**
JG suggested purchasing an A3 coloured printer at about £400 to £500. RH thought that this would pay for itself fairly quickly but the quality and speed were very important. JG will investigate further. **ACTION JG.**
5. **Gates and Access:** LB expressed her concern about the implicit promotion of the gates and the potentially unsafe stile on the map in the newsletter, since agreement had been reached at a site meeting with the Schiehallion group of JMT not to advertise these access points. She emphasised that this meeting had been very positive; she passed the minutes of it to PJ. JG responded to LB by pointing out that the map was to be read in conjunction with the article in the newsletter, which had been circulated for approval before printing. The point was also made that putting in the kissing gates had been deferred out of concern regarding breeding birds, although they are shown on the map to be installed in Spring 2004. PJ said that Hamish Murray would put the gates in at an agreed time if a

decision was made to ask him to do so. It was agreed to delay action to minimise disturbance to breeding birds. RH pointed out that the pressure of people was actually depressingly low and IS added that the rough terrain could be a reason for this. It was agreed to ask HM to do the kissing gates in the FC boundary as soon as he can, and to put in the kissing gate in the revised position, ca 150 metres to the south, in the Schiehallion boundary in July. We should also replace the unsafe stile with a kissing gate in July ourselves. **ACTION PJ**

HN suggested sending a letter to the Schiehallion group explaining why the access gates had been indicated on the map in the members Newsletter and that the matter had been thoroughly discussed by Trustees. LB accepted this. **ACTION PJ**

6. Summer Event: Since no progress had been made on this the idea was postponed. RH had spoken to Russell Coope but had not heard back yet.

7. Archaeological Survey: Clare Thomas had prepared a quotation for an archaeological survey, total £1020 (this is at the reasonable rate of £15 per hour and includes 53 hours to walk over the ground because of the difficult terrain). It was agreed that this quote should be accepted and that we should ask CT to start the work as soon as possible, beginning with the areas to be mounded for planting. The question of Public Liability Insurance will need to be checked with CT, and also the timescale of artefacts to be included in the survey (RH has information about relatively recent artefacts within living memory). Several suggestions were made regarding areas to focus on. **ACTION PJ**

8. Keltneyburn Hydro scheme: PJ read a short letter from Colin Liddell enclosing a letter from Bell and Scott, lawyers for the Scheme. Nothing had yet resulted from the comments made about the draft contracts by all landowners concerned, but a detailed reply was expected soon. That would be copied to members of the sub-group in the first instance and they would report to the Trustees.

9. Woodland Project: Considerable background is given in the newsletter. A lengthy discussion followed on the present position.

- PJ had an on-site meeting with Hamish Murray of the FC and a contractor recommended by Hamish Murray (David Shanks and his son David) as being careful and sensitive operators. Subsequently DS indicated that the costs of mounding would be in the region of £30,000 to £40,000 per 100 ha for the ground we have. He will give a formal quote if asked. HM confirmed that this is the sort of rate that FC pays. PJ advised following this recommendation and suggested a second meeting on the ground in August to define the areas to be mounded. IS pointed out that this gave only 6 weeks to organise a contract and a loan so that we need to move forward quickly now. The FC has a standard contract that can be used and HM had offered to send us a copy.
- JG tabled a financial breakdown that she had prepared. This showed a significant margin for the Trust at the end of the five-year contract. The main expenses are the costs of mounding, purchase of the plants and the planting costs. She pointed out that the Forestry Commission laid down the time scale for the work in the contract. The cost of mounding was based on the verbal quote from the potential contractors; planting costs were based on JG's experience. Average spacing is 2.5 metres. She emphasised that tree seedlings must be ordered well in advance. Mounds need to be left some time, up to 12 months, to settle before planting on them, particularly on heather-covered ground, so that the vegetation allows the soil to settle. JG thought that next spring would be too soon for mass planting and suggested experimental planting of a few trees on different kinds of mounds. GE asked for clarification of the planting costs. JG replied that the basis was commercial rates. PJ pointed out that, we can only claim money from the FC *after* trees have been planted. Consequently we shall have

considerable outlay before we can claim cash back from FC. However, JG said that we might be able to claim for natural regeneration immediately since it was already happening and she would clarify this **ACTION JG**. This might reduce the loan necessary by about £15,000. JG suggested that the craggy areas inaccessible to machines could be scarified and planted by hand early on so as to qualify for payment, without incurring the cost of machine mounding, and thus reduce the early deficit

- IS asked for cash flow predictions with a time scale for optimum cash flow. Several scenarios would be desirable taking into account possible employment vs contracting for planting **ACTION JG**. PJ had contacted our local RBS bank and would arrange a meeting to discuss a possible loan or overdraft facility, bearing in mind the possible cash flow scenarios. We might need £40,000 for 8 months or so during the first year but that once we started to receive payments, this would rapidly drop away. **ACTION PJ**. GE suggested painting the worst scenario to the bank; £40,000 mounding cost in 2004 and £15,000 income. So we request a loan of up to £30,000. GE volunteered to go to discuss with the bank together with PJ. He wondered if the Royal Bank was conversant with this kind of scheme **ACTION GE**.
- PJ pointed out that planting by volunteers might reduce costs but would need to be organised, e.g., supply of seedlings, work on the ground, supervision. It might be worthwhile to employ a contract person to do this. JG disagreed that using volunteers would reduce costs significantly but thought that a good-quality employee could do a lot; collect seed locally, plant the bulk of the trees, etc, for a salary of say £10,000 a year part-time. However, RH thought that such a contract would be very complex and dependent on getting the right person. IS agreed that it could be a nightmare and advised employing a contractor. He warned that dealing with community volunteers requires a great deal of skill and experience and that the necessary organising would be extremely time-consuming. RA also had doubts. However, PG agreed with JG, on the basis of the experience of the Borders Forest Trust. He emphasised the importance of involving volunteers and thought the way forward was to advertise.
- RH wondered if we could raise money from the community- by encouraging donations to pay for an individual tree?
- **JG asked to be advised of any areas where planting was not desirable well before mounding started. ACTION ALL**

PJ thought this wide-ranging discussion had focussed thoughts and thanked participants. He would like maximum input from everyone to continue.

10. Any other business:

A. Survey: RH thought the survey should be closed at the end of this year, because major intervention in the form of tree planting is about to begin. He has about 1100 records, mainly of birds, and appealed for more **ACTION ALL**. RA reported that three permanent vegetation plots had been recorded and that she would like more to be done. LB volunteered to do some, with Ron Youngman and Lynne Farrell. **ACTION RA. LB**. PJ suggested starting with the areas to be mounded.

HN suggested asking Russell Coope if he would be willing to do another beetle survey. RH agreed to ask him. **ACTION RH**.

B. Path to the hide: RH thought this should be done at the same time as the scrapes. He wondered if grants might be available for a Loch of the Lowes type 'super-hide', which had cost about £30,000. He thought SNH might give a grant; LB agreed.

Next meeting: Tuesday 13th July 2004, Duireaskin, 7.15 pm. Dates for meetings over the next few months will be decided then. **ACTION ALL**