

Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust

Minutes of Meeting of Trustees held on Monday the 31st July, 2006, at The Weem Hotel, Aberfeldy, at 7.15 p.m.

Present: Philip Campbell (Minutes Secretary), Gordon Evans, Tim Fison, Bill Hoare, Robin Hull, Julie Gardiner, Paul Jarvis (Chairman), Margaret Jarvis, Clare Thomas, Ann Partridge

Ann Partridge was welcomed as a new co-opted Trustee.

1. Apologies: Innes Smith, Andrew Pointer.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting of the 16th of May 2006: approved.

3. Matters arising: The AGM in 2007, not on the Agenda, to be discussed as Any Other Business (see below).

4. Reports from Groups and matters arising:

a) Woodlands and WGS. JG reported that all the recently planted trees were doing well. The broadleaves had already established themselves and even the Scots pine had taken satisfactorily despite the drought. **A vote of thanks was given to JG and Alan Ross.** JG further reported that the bracken spraying for the next phase had been completed and was showing some beneficial effects. The invoice came to £5,700; the Treasurer is to keep back 10%, in keeping with normal practice.

PJ reported that he had received a letter from Mike Strachan (Forest Authority, FC Perth), with regard to our recent WGS claim for the planting so far done and had spoken to him by phone to obtain clarification. MS had visited the site and been well pleased with the planting. To make the remaining payment on the scheme so far, he required: *i.* separate numbers of the broadleaves and conifers planted, *ii* ‘certificates’ of provenance of the planting stock, and *iii* a sketch map showing the areas that had not been planted, for example because of steep or wet ground. **Action JG, PJ.** The Treasurer noted that the cost of mounding, trees and planting for the project so far was £73,500. She reminded that we have a loan of £65,000 interest-free for five years from the Volant Trust, and reported that we have drawn down £57,000. JG noted that we have received £23,500 from the Forestry Commission so far with the balance to come. To make the position fully clear, the Treasurer agreed to provide a balance sheet for the WGS to date. **Action: the Treasurer.**

Finally, looking to the future, JG noted that we shall be seeking tenders for mounding for the second and final main phase of the WGS this autumn. Additionally, JG said we needed manually to plant 1000 broadleaf trees each year for three years on ground inaccessible for mounding and she hoped that Trustees could commit to doing this individually to save planting costs. However, this was something that we ought to think about seriously before committing. **Action: all Trustees to ponder.**

b) Visitor access, including car park. PJ updated the substantial financial advances for the car park fund: namely a £10,000 anonymous donation -- very gratefully received by all Trustees -- to be added to the £7,500 Perth and Kinross Community Trust (PKCT) money, allowing a total of some £17,500 to enable work to get started. Five invitations to tender had been sent out to local contractors and PJ had received two responses (BH reported that Sandy McAdam apologised for not being able to tender due to pressure of work; and JG also reported that Bill Stewart had similarly responded).

The invitation to tender had been divided into two distinct phases;

- i) entry off the road and attendant costs to satisfy P and K planning requirements, and
- ii) the hard-standing area for cars.

The tender by W.B. Grieve Ground Works, at £14,054 plus VAT was c. £7000 lower than the other tender. The quotation from W.B. Grieve involved using crushed, recycled hardcore material from a local source (Grieve's Kenmore quarry) for item ii). PJ had been assured by both Robbie Gordon of PKCT and by Jimmy Stewart (see previous Minutes), that the recycled material was both ergonomically friendly, and looked and lasted well, provided that it was well-rolled in. The quotation from W.B. Grieve also took into account that this is a local community project. PJ had therefore accepted the quotation from W.B. Grieve. Additional plans and a copy of the planning consent document had been passed to W.B. Grieve and the work would start within two weeks. A note of caution was added that W.B. Grieve should not use the existing wall as hardcore.

PJ was formally given a vote of thanks for all his work on the car park.

Access Continued.....

PJ further reported that treated timber for the replacement stile over the deer fence on the Western boundary (south of the second gate onto Schiehallion) had been bought from Polney Saw Mill, Dunkeld, for £54. The stile would be test-built in a local workshop and then assembled on-site. The precise location of the site needs to be marked in advance.

Action BH, TF. Transport of the heavy main timbers to the site could be a problem. It was felt a quad bike might be able to transport them in from the Schiehallion car park.

Volunteers would be notified. It was further felt consideration should be given to a "dog gate" as the new stile would be too high to lift dogs over. PJ was in discussion with Andrew Campbell (JMT) and indicated JMT might make a contribution to the costs of the stile and might be able to help with transporting the materials to the site.

c) **Wildlife Observation Facility and Information Centre**

RH first reported a change in the name for the above to "Observation and Education Facility" (OEF).

Secondly, on finance RH reported that there is £6,200 currently in the 'OEF' kitty but that construction could cost some £15,000 +, especially as consideration for water and sanitation will become essential. However he had gained a commitment from the Perth and Kinross Quality of Life Trust for a grant of £10,000, -- in that they would contribute £1 for every £2 we raise ourselves, up to a total of £30,000 raised. This therefore makes our fundraising extremely important and PC suggested a serious publicity campaign about 'OEF' to spread the word to potential donors. **Action: RH** to write article(s) which **PC** will place. Also **All Trustees**, to identify further fundraising opportunities.

RH further notified that the siting of the 'OEF' had been changed from the original drawings. The old site was considered too close to the Goulandie burn, which would drown out birdsong. The new site proposed would be closer to the new car park, with higher elevation allowing better visibility. It would also benefit from a much shorter approach path and wheelchair access.

BH noted that as it would be so close to the car park works that there could be a possibility that W.B. Grieve could dig out the foundations for the hide at little extra cost while machinery was on-site. **Action: PJ and RH** to follow up with WBG.

d) **Maintenance, Fencing and RSS:**

At Glengoulandie RSS. 1. BH reported that the Scrapes had been 're-scraped' with the largest one now forming three ponds; the middle one extending further west than before; and the most southerly one unchanged. The new total area is 700 square metres of potential surface water. (The height on the east side where the 'OEF' was to have been sited has also been reduced somewhat -- although this no longer applies.) After the connecting overflows and streams have settled, there will be a further requirement to 'feather' edges. (During the

work beetles, newts, and dragonfly larvae amongst other residents were carefully removed to safer ground.)

2. The grass in the RSS area was sufficient for a silage crop to be taken, excluding the areas of trees and the sacrificial crop, where there is an abundance of butterflies. Grass on the west side of the river is too verdant for silage, so there will be grazing by 10 Highland Cattle from Sandy McAdam this year in an area to be marked out by and electric fenced by JG and PC.

Action: **JG** to buy an 'electric energiser'; **BH** to provide electric posts and wire; **PC** to assist with erecting the fence.

3. BH reported that the 'sacrificial crop' was not replanted this year as it was too cold in May and we need clover to spread.

4. PJ said he had 10 or more trees (mainly alder) to plant in the area closest to the burn, -- most trees there now are aspen.

At Whitebridge RSS. BH reported that grazing sheep there last year had not been a great success in controlling the heather. Also it was too late now for spraying or cutting the bracken there. Alan had further reported water voles in the burn. So it was decided that 'topping' the heather would be most sensible this year. Action: **BH** to organise, possibly with Donald Campbell (?) from Weem.

Fences. 1. BH reported that access for roe deer on the northern boundaries was now effectively closed and that there were no other areas of fence defects, except the main water gate on the Allt Mor, which still requires attention.

2. BH said that Sandy McAdam was concerned about the area by the lime kiln and the fences on the head-dyke above the deer park. Sandy thinks that we, as a charity, could get a grant to repair /replace that fence and the job could be done co-operatively, if we provide the materials and he the labour.

3. The McAdams are also likely to be repairing the fences by the old sawmill, - land which it is now thought they will acquire within a few months.

4. BH finally reported that the fence by the RSS north of Whitebridge, by the large lay-by, was in poor condition, but there was an inner fence to safeguard DC so there was no immediate need for concern.

e) **Natural and Cultural Heritage.**

CT reported that, although no longer a Trustee, Hamish Nicholson would be happy to continue on this group. CT further made a plea for all outstanding surveys to be made available for archiving. She reported that the Perth Society for Natural Sciences might be interested in helping with surveys. They had also suggested contacting the Environmental Departments of the Universities of Stirling and Aberdeen. CT will also contact Perth College. She further mentioned a possible "geophysical archaeological survey", to be done on Schiehallion for JMT which could be extended to DC. It was mentioned that fixed point photography had already been undertaken by HN and AP.

f) **Keltneyburn Hydro-Scheme:**

PJ reported that Jimmy Stewart was rather despondent -- that all progress had been held up by Scottish National Heritage who were concerned about the effects on salmon and lamprey in the river Tay. A second delay was negotiating the leases. Whilst we at DC had been ready for such negotiations, it was felt all other likely landlords were waiting until the scheme was more advanced. [Note added in proof: individual 'final' contracts for each of the landlords have now reached J&H Mitchell and we have received ours from CL to consider. Action **PJ, AP, BH.**]

g) **Education Activities:**

TF reported the collapse of the Breadalbane Academy Land-Based Studies group. Although they had already participated significantly, and were primed to contribute even more, the

whole course now seems in abeyance and we have to await progress in the school. However, it is hoped Kenmore Primary School will stage some activity on Dun Coillich in the new term.

TF reported that he had written to the Scouts to test interest but had had no reply.

BH reported that his walks of the hill during July had only had one significant taker – Iona Lecorre from the Tourist Information Centre, a useful, friendly contact, it was felt.

h) Public Relations and Web Site:

PJ again noted how difficult AP was finding it to find time to update the web site because of his business.

PC again expressed regret that he was about to disappear for two years to Thailand and requested that new blood be found for this group. **Action: all Trustees.**

However PC did report a recent article and photograph in the PA of the Land-Based Studies Group preparing to plant trees. It was further agreed that articles for next month should be about the scrapes (**Action BH/RH**), and subsequently, about the car park, once it is substantially underway. **Action PJ.**

5) Treasurer's Report:

MJ reported that currently we had £8000 in the bank of which about £1500 was not clearly earmarked; some of this might be used for the 'OEF' since this would attract an additional 50% (see above).

In view of the cash coming in, from the WGS in particular, MJ reported that she had enquired about an account with a useful rate of interest from RBS, but without much success. She was therefore looking at alternatives elsewhere.

As MJ has only just taken over the accounts from BC, it was agreed that she and GE would work together to rationalise them, so as to be able to produce an explicit report, particularly with respect to the assets of WGS, RSS, OER ..., as soon as possible. **Action MS,GE.**

PJ noted that fewer than half the members had paid their subscriptions this year so far and suggested a mailing with a Newsletter. It was agreed that this should wait until the work on the car park had largely been completed .

6) AOB

The AGM 2007: In view of the poor attendance at the 2006 AGM, PJ requested **all Trustees should think NOW** about the format, speaker, location, displays and time of day for this event, and communicate ideas and proposals as soon as possible, for exploration now by e-mail and discussion at the next meeting.

BH reported an alteration in the route of the proposed large electricity pylon line which may entail the footing no longer being made on DC land. Whilst this would cheer us up psychologically, there would still be a heavy duty cable crossing our land, and we would lose the rental currently on offer. However the whole project is subject to substantial planning inquiries. The Trustees agreed that there was nothing to be gained by signing a Wayleave Agreement at the present time.

JG requested all Trustees think about staging a Biodiversity Training Course. It would be our contribution as an 'educational facility' spreading our experience and knowledge. Plans must be submitted by March 2007.

JG finally reminded us that Alan's discovery of water voles was now our responsibility and we should check out and conserve the population.

The next meeting: 7:15 p.m on Monday November 6th at BH's house, Tomnacroich, near Fortingall.
