

Trustees' Activities 2002 -2003

Meetings. The Trustees have met to discuss the business of the Trust on 9 (12) occasions between the date of their election, 27th March 2002, and 30th November 2002 (29th March 2003).

Purchase. We formally took possession of Dun Coillich on 10th May 2002.

Access and Car Park. We have provided Members with a map showing access points onto the land, but access onto Dun Coillich at present can be hazardous for visitors. Gates off the B846 road are marked on the map but the B846 is narrow and not suitable to park on. A top priority has been to organise off-road parking with safe access from the road. Discussions were held with the Perth & Kinross Roads Department, a design study was commissioned and application for Planning Consent submitted. Planning Consent was received on 25th February 2003. We are now seeking finance to build the car park and hope to have off-road parking by the autumn.

We obtained *Public Liability Insurance* with the Norwich Union via AON at the time of purchase to provide adequate cover with respect to any mishaps on Dun Coillich and finally received the written policy in August.

Survey. A major initial goal has been to establish at the outset what is present on the land. A 1 x 1 km grid has been superimposed on the OS map of the land to facilitate recording and several GPS instruments have been acquired by Trustees to enable items of interest to be pinpointed.

- *Wildlife:* Over the year, with the help of some Members, seasonal changes in wildlife, particularly birds and mammals, have been recorded along repeated walks. There has been a systematic survey of beetle populations. Twenty vegetation sample plots have been established for assessing long-term change of the vegetation and permanent markers are being installed to ensure that the plots can be re-found in the future. Some of the sample plots have been assessed in detail, but a number remain to be assessed. Several botanical excursions during the summer and autumn have shown up some areas of high plant species diversity and several uncommon plant species have been noted, particularly on the areas of limestone and will be followed up more closely this year. A fungal foray on Dun Coillich was organised in the autumn.
- *Woodland regeneration.* There is evidence of former woodland on several parts of the land and we surmise that had it not been for intensive grazing and browsing by sheep and deer in the past, there would be substantial areas of native woodland. Even after one summer largely without sheep and deer, we have seen natural regeneration of birch, willow and rowan coming through the heather in the vicinity of the seed sources in the Alt Mor and Goulandie burn, and ash, aspen, juniper and other woodland species are present in the gorges of the two burns. A full survey of the burn-side woodlands is planned.
- *Archaeology:* So far no systematic survey has been carried out. However, an area of shielings with six hut circles has been noted that is likely to repay more detailed examination.

History. To put the land as we find it today in context, we have been gathering as much information as possible about the natural and cultural history of Dun Coillich and the surrounding lands through interviews, historical accounts, old maps and books.

Maintenance. It was a condition of purchase that all deer, sheep and goats were removed from Dun Coillich prior to our takeover. However, some dozen deer and a group of goats have reappeared on the land. We have surveyed the condition of the boundary fence and shall be organising working parties to make repairs; and we have made arrangements for removal of the animals.

Policy Development. Work has begun on formulating a *Management Plan* for Dun Coillich to consolidate the information being gathered and to plot the way ahead. A programme of discussion meetings with Members took place over the winter and recently walks have been organised on Dun Coillich to familiarise Members with the land. We have assessed potential areas for natural regeneration and for tree planting of native broadleaves and Caledonian pine and have held several discussions with Forestry Commission staff in Perth regarding the Woodland Grant Scheme and the new Scottish Forestry Grant Scheme that will come into being later in the year.

Publicity. To maintain contacts with the communities of Highland Perthshire, regular monthly articles have appeared in *Comment* and longer articles in the Scots Magazine and other journals. Copies of the Minutes of the Trustees' meetings have been sent to the ten Community Councils in Highland Perthshire and to the Highland Perthshire Communities Partnership, of which HPCLT is a member organisation.

We have been drawn into the national *Biodiversity Forum* and the *Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan*. For the launch of the latter we prepared a poster about Dun Coillich that we have displayed at several subsequent events.

Relationships. On our western border we march with East Schiehallion, owned by the John Muir Trust, an organisation dedicated to the conservation and maintenance of wild land. We have developed a good working relationship with them through their Director, Conservation Officer and mutual contacts within the local Schiehallion Group. To the north, we march with the Forestry Commission which has also shown strong supporting interest. We are developing a collaborative approach to visitors with both of these organisations.

Education. We have put out feelers to local schools with the aim of encouraging the use of Dun Coillich as an ecological teaching resource but timetabling seems to be a major problem. We have concluded that working with organisations outwith the school structure may be more practical and we shall be pursuing this once the car park is completed.

The Membership. There are currently (5th March 03) 71 Ordinary Members, 9 Associate Members and 2 Honorary Members. A computerised database of Members has been compiled and a web site created on which Members may access the Minutes of the meetings of the Trustees together with other information.