

## **Trustees' Activities 1<sup>st</sup> December 2003 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2004**

*Meetings.* The Trustees have met to discuss the business of the Trust on ten occasions since the last AGM on the 29<sup>th</sup> March 2003. The Minutes of these meetings have been made available on the Trust's web site ([www.hpclt.org](http://www.hpclt.org).)

*Woodland Grant Scheme.* Work has begun in earnest on the Woodland Grant Scheme. During the summer we negotiated a bridging loan, and between mid-October and mid-December, 2004, 90 hectares of ground on the west side of Dun Coillich have been mounded. We received advice with respect to the contractor from Hamish Murray (FC, Inver, Dunkeld), who took an ongoing interest in specification and progress of the mounding. The contractor has taken a sensitive approach to the local topography and vegetation, so that the resulting distribution of the mounds meets our requirements. The mounds are being left to settle until late autumn 2005, when tree planting will begin.

*Rural Stewardship Scheme.* During the year the Environmentally Sensitive Area designation (ESA) came to its end and was replaced by the rather more ambitious Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS), managed by the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD). Our application for designation under this scheme was approved and we now have a 10-year agreement with SEERAD, with a break after 5 years for reassessment. Under this agreement, we have two major projects to enhance biodiversity, for which we are receiving payment. We are committed to managing 8 ha of species-rich grassland at White Bridge, and 2.5 ha of wetland and 0.5 ha of unharvested crop in the vicinity of the Goulandie burn, near the present entrance above Glengoulandie. We were previously managing the grassland at White Bridge under the ESA with a grazing regime and that will continue. The exciting, innovative scheme now proposed for the former ESA areas of grassland near the Goulandie burn involves removing the old sheep fank and creating 700 m<sup>2</sup> of shallow ponds and scrapes in roughly the same area, to encourage aquatic wildlife of all kinds. Secondly, unharvested seed crops are to be planted between the road and the wetland area to encourage seed-eating birds in autumn and winter. Somewhat further ahead, we aim to install a 'hide' in the vicinity to observe both the wetland and seed-crop areas, and link it to the car park with a good path. We expect that work on the ponds, scrapes and removal of the sheep fank will start this spring.

*Publication.* Robin Hull's book 'Ravens over the Hill' on the natural and cultural history of Dun Coillich and the surrounding lands was published by Perth & Kinross Libraries in November and a very successful launch party was held in the Molteno Hall, Fortingall. The book is for sale at £9.95 in local bookstores but is also available for Members to purchase through the Trust, the profits then going to the Trust. Malcolm Appleby has commemorated the launch of the book with a Raven brooch, which is also available for purchase by Members, the profits going to the Trust

*Wildlife surveys.* After three years of wildlife recording on Dun Coillich by Members and Trustees, Robin Hull has produced a substantial 54-page, baseline report - "*Report on*

*Natural History of Dun Coillich*". This report is a summary of wildlife observed and is particularly comprehensive with respect to the birds.

*Archaeological survey.* We commissioned a comprehensive archaeological survey of Dun Coillich by Clare Thomas, and received an interim report in the autumn. Clare has found evidence of extensive field systems, hut circles and a house, almost all on ground on the east side.

*The Keltneyburn Hydro-Power Scheme.* Last year we reported that we were in ongoing discussions with Keltneyburn Hydro Ltd. (KBH), to explore the possibility of a small-scale, 2 MW, "run of-river" hydro-electric scheme, with intake on the Allt Mor on our ground. During the year Trustees have met on three occasions with the four other potential landlords in the offices of J. & H. Mitchell W.S., Pitlochry, under the chairmanship of Colin Liddell, to consider draft 'Offer' and 'Contract' documents from the KBH solicitors. We have also taken independent advice on appropriate rental from CKD Galbraith, Inverness. In the meantime KBH has produced a fully illustrated, inch-thick, Environmental Statement and is awaiting final responses to its 'Scoping Study'. We are now satisfied with details of the scheme, and with details of the Offer and Contract documents. The Trustees have previously agreed support for the project, in principle. We shall shortly be calling an Extraordinary General Meeting of Members to consider a proposal that the Trust should give a lease to KBH for the inlet.

*Browser management.* There have been a number of incursions of deer through the fence particularly on the south-west side of the Allt Mor. The response by the stalker has been rapid with the aim of keeping the density of deer on the area as low as possible. The fence is particularly vulnerable to penetration because of the very uneven nature of the ground along the south-west boundary. Whilst we have maintained the fence repeatedly during the year, it is clear that substantial work on it will be needed regularly, particularly when trees have been planted, and we are approaching a fencing contractor to take on responsibility.

*Car Park.* Despite a visit to the site by a staff member from the "Fresh Futures" programme "Transforming your Space", and further encouragement to apply again, our second attempt to obtain funding for the car park was again unsuccessful. We now have an application in and are in discussion with the Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust.

*Access.* To enable the mounding contractor to access the site easily with his machines, the forest road through the FC plantations to the north has been extended up to the boundary between the properties. By arrangement with Hamish Murray (FC), a 12 ft wide deer-proof gate, as well as the previously arranged kissing gate, is in the process of installation. This will provide a new access point for visitors from the north side and enable vehicle access for tree-planters, and for the stalkers removing intrusive deer.

*Guided Walks.* Bill Hoare has continued with a programme of guided walks to familiarise visitors with access, to show them the land and to hear their views. This programme will

continue and dates and details will continue be announced in *Comment* and on the notice board in the Aberfeldy Square.

*Publicity.* To maintain contacts with the communities of Highland Perthshire, Robin Hull has contributed regular monthly articles in *Comment*. 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. Paul Jarvis has continued to represent the Trust at the Scottish Biodiversity Forum, the Scottish Forestry Forum and the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan Committee.

*Relationships with our neighbours.* We have maintained good working relationships with JMT to the west, particularly through Lynnette Borradaile, Chair of the local Schiehallion Group, and Andrew Campbell, their Conservation Manager. Our relationship with FC to the north, is also flourishing through Charlie Taylor, Tayside Forest District Manager, at Inver, and forester, Hamish Murray, who has been very helpful with respect to the mounding and access to the site, as noted above. The joint approach to access, incorporating paths and kissing-gates inter-linking the three properties is slowly taking shape.

*The Membership.* There are currently (7<sup>th</sup> March 05) 78 Ordinary/Associate, 3 Junior, and 3 Honorary Members. Gordon Evans is managing the computerised database of Members and Andy Pointer has been keeping the web site up-to-date with Minutes of Meetings of the Trustees, and other relevant information (see [www.hpclt.org](http://www.hpclt.org)).

*Treasurer's report for the year December 1<sup>st</sup> 2003 to November 30<sup>th</sup> 2004.*

- Membership fees, Donations and Gift Aid repayments during this period have amounted to £1557, which more than covers the management and administration costs of running the trust for the year.
- Eligibility for agricultural grants on parts of the land has been updated so that Environmentally Sensitive Area payments for this and the previous year have been received, and payments under the new Rural Stewardship Scheme have commenced.
- A professional archaeological survey was commissioned and the report, added to the extensive botanical and biological survey reports already undertaken, now provides an educational archive, which will be further increased as the Trust's activities continue.
- The local historical research necessary for the publication of 'Raven's Over the Hill' also adds to the records available for future Members or researchers; the Trustees approved a donation toward the cost of publication.
- As the Statement of Financial Activities shows, this year has ended with a surplus of £1169.

The Trustees are again grateful to Tim Ambrose for his preparation and presentation of the accounts this year.

Signed: .....