

Report on Trustees' Activities during the year 2006

This report is structured around the work of the Sub-committees.

Access: Paul Jarvis, Andy Pointer, Clare Thomas. The major advance over the past year has been the construction of the *Car Park* off the B846 approximately 800 metres above the entrance to the Glengoulandie Deer Park. This was made possible by a grant of £7,500 from the Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust (PKCT) and a donation of £10,000. The work was carried out by W.B. Grieve Groundworks. The car park has provided invaluable safe access onto Dùn Coilich from the east side, in the vicinity of the RSS south area and ponds. We are very pleased to see that the car park is already being used by local people and tourists, as well as by Members. During the coming year there will be some landscaping around the car park and a path to the planned Observation and Education Facility (OEF, see below).

Access onto the Dùn through the Forestry Commission (FC) plantations via the gate in the northern boundary fence has been impeded by dramatic wind throw resulting from the recent gales. The stile in the Schiehallion boundary fence will be useable shortly. As a result of a recent meeting, the PKCT are facilitating joint discussions between HPCLT, JMT and FC with a view to developing an access partnership for the wider area.

The Rural Stewardship Scheme: William Hoare, Innes Smith, Julie Gardiner, Tim Fison. Our management of the two RSS areas continues to develop. Most activity has been in the south area. The three wetland scrapes created last year have been re-excavated and appropriate levels achieved to create four ponds with about 700 sq metres of water surface area. Some invertebrates were translocated locally as digging progressed. The ponds are now of sufficient depth and adequately connected to the burn to remain water filled through dry periods such as occurred last summer. The area previously designated a sacrificial crop zone was allowed to reseed naturally. Results were disappointing and the area will be replanted this year. A silage crop was taken off 40% of the area in September. Although this was effective for maintaining the vegetation, the silage was not of best quality because of the presence of many mole hills, and this will probably not be repeated. Grazing by up to ten highland cattle continued from late September to February, with good results, and will be repeated in 2007. Some bracken was controlled by cutting in both the north and south areas. The main species-rich areas were very floriferous with species of *Scabious* particularly prolific. Several species of birds and invertebrates were seen on and around the scrapes.

Observation and Education Facility [OEF]: Robin Hull, William Hoare with members Malcolm Appleby, Russell Coope, and Wendy Mattingley. Planning has continued and, with completion of the car park (see above) and further donations, action is now in the offing. Implementation details depend on finance. So far the appeal has raised over £7000 from Members and friends (some from far south); the James Thin Trust has given a further £1000 and the Perth & Kinross Quality of Life Fund has made a conditional promise up to £10,000. The estimated initial cost is £30,000. Further applications for funds are in the pipeline and contributions from Members are extremely welcome. We have found a suitable prefabricated, sturdy wooden building which will be erected below the car park on a site dug into the hillside (subject to planning permission applied for). From this position, there will be a good overview of the ponds and surrounding areas. Of the building's three rooms one will be a store, one the observation area and the largest will display information on geology, archaeology, history & natural history of the Dùn. It is hoped that the OEF project will be available to the public by autumn 2007.

Woodlands and the WGS: Julie Gardiner, Philip Campbell, Tim Fison, Paul Jarvis. After a year to settle, the 70 hectares of mounds on the west side were planted with native species through the late autumn of 2005 and spring of 2006. The very dry summer has not helped establishment and we are currently in the process of filling gaps. In preparation for mounding on the south and east sides approximately 40 hectares of bracken areas were sprayed by a contractor during the late summer

and mounding by a contractor of about 60 hectares took place in late December–early January. Some of the bracken areas will be planted shortly, the remainder, largely on the heather, after the mounds have settled next spring. The species mix will be similar to before, predominantly birch and Scots pine, but also a diverse array of other native species, including oak, ash, elm, juniper, holly, willow, alder in mixtures, appropriate to the ground. Natural regeneration, particularly of aspen, willow and birch, is becoming more evident below the bridle path parallel with the Allt Mor, and broom is apparent on the south RSS area.

Maintenance and Fencing: William Hoare, Innes Smith, Julie Gardiner, Tim Fison. No major fence failures have occurred. Monitoring, repair, and improvement continues along all parts of the perimeter, but some fencing is old and continues to be vulnerable to penetration by deer. Agreement has been reached with our neighbour Mr. S. McAdam over replacement of the mutual fence between his property and ours. To protect the young trees, control of intruding deer has continued with shooting of roe deer, and also of red deer when it does not prove possible to drive them off Dùn Coillich.

Keltneyburn Hydro Scheme(KBS): Paul Jarvis, Andy Pointer, William Hoare. There has been no further progress. We understand from the promoters of the scheme that the development has been held up by delays in the offices of SNH and SEPA.

Public relations and Website: Phillip Campbell, Andy Pointer. Phillip has been away in Thailand for much of the year and public relations have suffered accordingly. There have been few articles in Comment, and the annual Newsletter for Members is overdue. With the car park now in use as the primary point of access, we shall be improving our signage during the coming year. We have continued to publish the Minutes of meetings of the Trustees on our web-site.

Natural and cultural heritage: Clare Thomas, Hamish Nicholson. The archive of surveys, reports, minutes of Trustees Meetings, AGMs, historical records etc., and documents relating to the Woodlands Grant Scheme, Rural Stewardship Scheme and the Keltneyburn Hydro Scheme continues to grow. We have investigated possibilities for a database in which to store historical as well as active ongoing records and data of change, for example following removal of the deer and goats, tree planting, wetland creation and car park construction. As a result, we expect to be able to initiate a programme of data conservation during the coming year.

Education activities: Tim Fison, Clare Thomas. Contacts with the local schools has resulted in two visits by school children to plant trees during the year (from Kenmore Primary School and Breadalbane Academy), but the time available for a visit was very short and access to the west side time-consuming. We hope that there will be more take-up of the opportunities provided by Dùn Coillich for outdoor education now that the car park provides safe, quick access on the east side, where there is a wider range of opportunities, including tree-planting. The demise of the land-based studies group at Breadalbane Academy is a particular disappointment. Several students had been on at least two tree-planting visits and prospects looked promising for a longer-term relationship with a range of activities.