



Cormonachan Woodlands

Cormonachan Community Woodlands Ltd.
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Minutes

A Board Meeting held on Tuesday 16th February 2021 at 2 pm
by Zoom online

- 1) **Welcome to our Board Members & any apologies.**
Those in attendance: Alastair Moodie (AM), Douglas Locke (DL), Jimmy Sim (JS), Don Kamsley (DK), Frances Walker (FW), Scott Black (SB) & guest Richard Hall (RH).
- 2) **Approval of the Minutes of the last Committee Meeting held on 19th January 2021.**
The Board Minutes of 19th January 2021 were approved, proposed by JS, seconded by DK and will eventually be signed by AM.
- 3) **Chair's Report including an update on application made to OSCR for charity status. A welcome to our new Volunteers Leader, Frances Walker and to our future replacement Treasurer, Scott Black taking over from Jimmy Sim in the new financial year after 1st April 2021.**
AM welcomed FW taking over from DL as Volunteers Leader & SB to be taking over from JS after 1st April as Treasurer. AM said that the CCW charity application with OSCR had been lodged on 27th January 2021 and that this had been acknowledged by them. He has since chased them to be told that the average waiting time for new applications to be passed to a designated case worker is approximately 100 days. *(This would mean our case would not be looked at*

until the end of April). DL pointed out that without approval of the Articles of Association, the lease for the woodlands could not be signed and without the lease we could not satisfy the funding criteria and applications for funding. AM said that he had offered to prepare the Expression of Interest application with National Lottery Heritage Fund (*it would appear we are well qualified meet their funding requirements between £250,000 & £5 million requiring £307,309 - £323,484 of construction costs less £16,175 as 5% CCW contribution*). However, AM said having looked at previous correspondence with the HF people, he felt that we needed to apply for much more than the capital costs of constructing the Upper Cormonachan paths. The funders want the construction phase to be followed by a delivery phase with specific outcomes and benefits. The project could include the employment of a development officer to plan and coordinate a programme of activities over a period of three years. The funders seem to want us to be more ambitious, more creative, perhaps applying for as much as £500,000. They want to be satisfied that the project is sustainable with budgeting for running costs. We must show how we can maximise the use of woodlands, make links with local tourism and open the woodlands to a wider range of people. DK agreed that we must do something different. JS recalled an earlier Scottish Heritage plan linking Loch Eck and Loch Goil and how a development officer made a huge difference to the presentation of the project. SB A development officer would stimulate use of the woodlands and could pull together resources of other local trusts to fulfil the common aims of the neighbourhood plan. FW recalled Woodland Trust courses as an example of what could be offered. DL pointed out that he had already obtained a quotation of £200 from Fiona Baker, our archaeologist, to train our members to provide guided tours of the Medieval Settlement via the waterfalls and that ACT (Argyll & Countryside Trust) had been contacted with regard to their 'Branching Out' courses that could be undertaken in the woodlands. DK pointed out that the extension to the paths network will involve more maintenance and may require a quad bike. AM suggested that we continue to develop our thinking about the Heritage Fund application by way of exchanging emails. If we wish to succeed with an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund, we should understand that they want a whole package – not only the construction of the paths but also a sustained programme to deliver

outcomes and benefits to a wide range of people. Therefore there is a lot of work to be done in preparing our application. Ardroy had prepared a three year plan for their special courses for disadvantaged adults and children to use the woodlands. JS said that at the present time and for the unknown future because of Covid-19, Ardroy was unlikely to reopen until maybe the autumn of 2021 (*funding for the construction of the paths and actual construction was unlikely before September 2021 at the earliest*). DL said there were other funding sources for employment that could be looked into. He also said that there was the Forest Grant Scheme that we could apply for. From an earlier CWA meeting, it had been decided to wait to apply for this funding until the paths project had been constructed as this was a 5-year funding package that we were able to apply for as we had a Scottish Government approved funding number (*BRN 250873*) for the woodlands that was approved by Scottish Forestry. The payments are based per hectare and length of paths, fixed per year for five years. Applying for this before the new paths were in place would mean a loss of thousands of pounds for four of the five years. AM said he felt the CCW should put together a stronger case before applying to NLHF.

DL said that this fund opens four times a year and has closing dates so that the current one that opened on 8th February will close after a few weeks and decisions usually take about three months. He said that he would find out the dates for the next fund opening and advise the board members. DL suggested that perhaps he could ask Forestry and Land Scotland if we could lodge with them for the 20-year lease, the board approved Articles of Association in order to get the lease signed as that would mean the CCW could apply for the funding meeting the basic funding requirements. If, OSCR required any changes this could be arranged later on. DL also suggested we should contact our woodlands umbrella organisation, Community Woodlands Association for any advice they could give us as members. DL also pointed out that there is another fund opening on 1st March 2021 for Improving Public Access through SRDP and we, having a BRN 250873 registered number are entitled to apply for that AECS funding which may be easier.

DL asked the Chair to see if anyone would be willing to take on the minutes of the meetings as he was so busy with CCW work, it would be helpful. There were no offers at the meeting. The members should therefore be asked.

4) **Treasurer's Report including bank account update.**

JS advised that the current bank balance was £13,418.32 and that £70.00 had yet to be credited and £42.99 still to be debited leaving a balance of £13,445.33.

JS said that he would meet up with SB to show him the accounts system before SB took over after 1st April 2021. DL advised that two new signatories (AM & SB) had been applied for to the Co-operative Bank.

5) **Secretary's Report including an update on a Forestry and Land Scotland agreed Lease for Cormonachan Community Woodlands Ltd.**

Donations received to date for the "Upper Cormonachan Paths Project Fund"; donations received in the Red Squirrel Hide; donations received in the Donations Post and from 'easyfundraising' and the 'People Counter' January visitors numbers.

An update on progress on the local contract to clear the CCW Rhododendron ponticum.

Lease - Ready to sign as soon as Articles of Association approved by OSCR and sent to FLS solicitors.

Upper Cormonachan Paths Project Fund £17,220.55 that includes £4,000 held by Lochgoil Community Trust.

Red Squirrel Hide Donations £92.99 less 25 kg purchase by FW of peanuts at £42.99 = £50.00 in hand.

Donations Post £8.60.

easyfundraising £99.75 with 14 supporters, an increase of 7 since the last Board Meeting.

People Counter for January 185 (average 6 pd). Previous months - December 2020, 272 (9 pd); November 2020, 519 (17 pd) & October 2020 1,225 (40 pd).

Rhododendron ponticum local paid contract - 310 hours completed, 23 hrs reserved for spraying & plugging pesticide.

New funding to apply for Phase 2; Gordon Fletcher and Tom Ducat have submitted tenders to clear whole area, compartments 1 -13 for £10,500 over 4 months in autumn 2021. One more quote will be required by National Park. This fund is likely to open in April 2021 for autumn 2021 work if approved.

Website up to date and Facebook as well with 249 people liking the page and 268 people following.

- 6) **Report provided by the Membership Secretary on current membership to date will be given.**
DL received a membership report from Dennis Bolt, CCW Membership Secretary:-
Full Individual - 61 (4)
Associates - 17 (2)
Corporate 2 (0)
Associate Corporate - 2 (0)
Life 7 (0)
Total members 89 plus (8) supporters not formally completed their membership documentation.
Volunteers 19
Income 1st April 2020 to date £1,465.00.
- 7) **Approval of any new member applications.**
New applications for membership since the last board meeting were Megan Hudson Prentice, Ben Dowling, Dr Annette McCulloch & Dr John McCulloch. Their applications were approved.
- 8) **Vacancies on the Board of Directors - Richard Hall has been invited to attend this meeting to see if he would like to be co-opted on to the Board of Directors. There are currently two available positions.**
AM said that RH had been invited to attend this board meeting to see if he would be interested in being co-opted to join the Board. There is still a further opportunity for another member to join the Board if they felt they could actively be involved?
- 9) **Update on the 'Upper Cormonachan Paths Project', including contractor's update. Update on National Park's planning approval of conditions and current position on availability of grant applications.**
Contractors - McGowan's agreed to hold their quotation for 2021, originally agreed in December 2018.
LL&TTNPA planning department - no updates. There is little else to agree with them until prior to construction. Path junction signage could be worked out in advance.
Grants applications - NL Heritage Fund opened on 8th February 2021 - EoI required - see Chair's report.
Agri-Environmental Climate Scheme (SRDP) opens 1st March 2021. FLS have signed Landlord's Declaration of Approval for AECS and letter following for NLHF.
AM & DL proposed that the CCW Ltd should have a Business Plan as it was felt that this would improve the company's chances of obtaining funding for the Upper Cormonachan

Paths Project and other future projects.

Scottish Forestry have agreed to update our SF Management Plan from CWA to CCW Ltd created in July 2016 for 10 years. The existing one can be found on CCW website/Reports

- 10) **Volunteers Days and priority tasks, including the erection of the Settlement interpretation sign. National Park's advice concerning volunteering during the Covid-19 pandemic.**
Transfer of duties of Volunteers Leader from DL to FW underway. National Park 'Cervis' booking system now directed to FW.

NPA say that our Volunteers Days can go ahead providing local volunteers observe 2 metre Covid-19 rules on 26th/27th February and no car sharing. Tasks discussed and are on the Volunteering website page and will be sent out to our volunteers.

- 11) **Update on applying to the Scottish Forestry for a felling licence to clear the Sitka spruce in the area from the top junction on the Squirrel Trail south to where new tree planting has been taking place.**

Scottish Forestry want CCW to apply for felling licence direct rather than through FLS once the lease has been signed.

- 12) **Any other Business?**

Megan Hudson Prentice and Ben Dowling had offered to take a drone aerial video of the Cormonachan Falls from the C6 road bridge to the Forest Road bridge to help illustrate the extent of the waterfalls to potential funders. They also offered to do a further video of the whole of the Cormonachan Paths network once the new paths had been constructed. This was greatly appreciated by the Board.

AM asked if RH would now like to join the Board of Directors having seen how the Board operates. RH agreed and DL proposed, DK seconded and the other board members voted for him to be co-opted unanimously.

- 13) **Date of next committee meeting?**

16th March 2021 at 2 pm by Zoom

Meeting closed at 3 45 pm