



Cormonachan Woodlands

Cormonachan Woodlands Association
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Minutes

A Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, 20th November 2018 at 4.30 pm at Cruach House, Carrick Castle, Argyll, PA24 8AF

1) Welcome & Apologies.

The Chair (DK) welcomed everyone to the meeting. The committee members in attendance were Don Kamsley (DK), Douglas Locke (DL), David Thorpe (DT), Frances Walker (FW), Cecilia Ferguson (CF) & Sue Morris (SM) - Forest Enterprise Scotland ex officio member. Apologies were received from Jimmy Sim (JS).

2) Approval of the Minutes of the last Committee Meeting held on 5th September 2018 & any follow up reports (see italic notations in the last Minutes).

The Minutes of the last meeting on 5th September 2018 were approved - proposed by CF & seconded by DK and signed by DK.

3) Chairman's Report.

DK said that considerable progress had been made on the last Volunteers Days with *Rhododendron ponticum* clearance by the Cormonachan Burn and this will continue there on Friday 23rd November. The Fife Conservation Group who attend the last volunteers weekend in October cleared the last of the under planted Sitka spruce trees in our felling licence for 44 large trees to be felled and the FES have been advised.

4) Report on bank account position.

JS was unwell to attend the meeting but advised that the bank balance was £388.83.

5) Secretary's report including update on current membership, an update on the website, Facebook update, latest 'Members Update'. Update on Argyll Holidays video of Squirrel Trail Walk.

DL advised that the membership had now reached 101 members including two free children. He said that the website was up to date with a new heading link to 'Volunteering' which was more accessible to visitors. Facebook was kept up to date with 176 liking the page. There was still no permission to use the Argyll Holidays video of the Squirrel Trail walk that was filmed in October 2017 which was very disappointing. LGH Primary School with Ardroy OEC will be surveying the Upper Cormonachan old village on 21st & 22nd January 2019 with a view to researching the archaeology of the site and will draw up plans of the buildings. The CWA have supplied references to all its findings with historical information and more. The Red Squirrel Hide donation box has now received £94.10 since March 2018 and has purchased 62.5 kg of peanuts at a cost of £74.87 leaving a current credit of £19.30 for further squirrel feed. The CWA applied to Lochgoil Community Trust on 9th October 2018 for a grant of £352.00 for the cost of the planning permission for the proposed new paths to Upper Cormonachan but no response has been received to date. GoRaise has raised £134.78 in donations via six members who have purchased 94 items online since 2017. It is hoped that other members will join this scheme that costs members nothing but the CWA benefits as a result. The Carrick Castle Community Trust is going to have the Carrick Fayre again in 2019 on Sunday 21st July. The committee agreed that the CWA would be agreeable to having our marquee there to promote the community's woodlands to locals and visitors alike. The LGH primary school HT had been contacted with regard to offering the pupils the chance to make outdoor sculptures for the woodlands but has not receive a reply. The LL&T National Park Volunteering Service system called Cervis is an excellent system where its volunteers book future Volunteers Days with the CWA and others. The system helps the CWA plan ahead as to how many volunteers it can expect on each day. Currently despite the CWA advising members about these volunteers days in advance, we rarely know in advance who is likely to come locally. We are therefore looking for a similar system to that of the NPA to help our local members book in advance.

- 6) Ardroy Report on use of Cormonachan Woodlands over the autumn months including Rhododendron removal and plans for maintenance around Jan's Hideaway and checking for cleanliness of the compost toilet by the instructors.

DT apologised to the committee for the lack of support towards the woodlands this year. This was due to other Ardroy commitments that were a priority. DT said however he did expect to be able to send two of his staff later this week to start work on tidying up the outside area of Jan's Hideaway, the outside fire area, the compost toilet and put up the rope between the trees for the red squirrels. He also said that the matting that was a hazard on the path by the fire area would be attended to. He also said that on 10th December, he intended to send up a few more staff to work in that area and knew that the Ardroy buildings did require painting. He said that the primary school children were still cutting down Rhododendron in Area 6. DL said that he would advise a new area in Area 6 as the present area they had been working on was to be pesticide sprayed on Saturday 24th November. DL also said that the CWA committee were grateful to Ardroy for accommodating the nine Fife Conservation Volunteers who worked in the woodlands at the end of October and who have booked to come back again at the end of February 2019.

- 7) Update on FES MoU Programme of Works.

DL gave an update on the Annual Work Programme from 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019. He said that the programme was well on track to be completed in the year with the FES Felling Licence for Area 1 now completed and Rhododendron ponticum clearance well under way in the CWA's 5 year programme with the first of the pesticide spraying of re-growth taking place on 24th November 2018. Ardroy OEC will be advised of a new area in Area 6 to be cut down by the primary school children after the spraying has taken place. A detailed Maintenance Tasks List has been prepared and is well underway. This list will be shown updated on the Volunteering page of the CWA website. SM said that a survey of high risk trees had been undertaken by FES in Cormonachan Woodlands and that a contract had been put out to their contractors for work on any trees identified. DL asked for a report on the survey undertaken and SM agreed to have this sent to the CWA. DL also asked about the reporting of fallen trees across the public road and was told that FES at Aberfoyle were responsible for acting in clearing such trees. DL said that the CWA chainsaw volunteers had had to clear fallen trees off the road as otherwise the access to and from the village of Carrick Castle would have been blocked completely as in the case of

Storm Ali when the CWA opened the road within 5 hours.

8) **Report on the Community Woodlands Association's Annual Conference on 13th & 14th October 2018.**

DL had already sent a report to the committee on his attendance at the Community Woodlands Association's Annual Conference in Strathpeffer on 13th/14th October which was useful to attend on behalf of our CWA which paid the attendance fee of £50, the other CWA paid travelling expenses, £80 and DL paid for the hotel £200.

9) **Report on Volunteers Days of 26th, 27th & 28th October 2018.**

DK lead the 26th October Volunteers Day and continued to cut down Rhododendron by Cormonachan Burn and one of our chainsaw volunteers cleared a fallen tree across the old path by the old village. Six CWA members volunteered that day. DL lead the next two days and had two CWA members for the morning of the 27th and nine Fife volunteers all day clearing the last of the Sitka spruce in Area 1. The nine continued all the next day on 28th completing cutting down all the large Sitka spruce in the felling licence. On 11th November one chainsaw volunteer and two committee members cut and cleared the last smaller spruce in Area 1. This leaves a few smaller spruce to be removed on 24th November.

10) **Next Volunteers Days are 23rd & 24th November 2018. Leaders & First Aiders required in advance for all future Volunteers Days. CWA member volunteers needed.**

DK is leading a group seven National Park volunteers to continue cutting down Rhododendron by Cormonachan Burn and the roadside on 23rd whilst DL and two CWA volunteers will be carrying out other maintenance tasks and setting up pesticide warning signs for the next day's work. On 24th, CF will be leading 2 National Park and 3 CWA volunteers cutting down the remaining small Sitka spruce in Area 1, 3a, 5 & 6 whilst DL will lead 2 National Park sprayers in spraying the re-growth in other areas of 3a, 5, 6, 12a & 13.

11) **Dates required for Volunteers Days from February to May 2019.**

Spring 2019 Volunteers Days are 22nd, 23rd & 24th February which the Fife volunteers will spend the weekend of 23rd/24th cutting down under planted Sitka spruce in Area 9. The next dates are 22nd

& 23rd March, 26th, 27th & 28th April and 17th & 18th May 2019.

12) **Volunteers Booking System online and costs.**

DL advised that the National Park uses a very good system for their volunteers to book Volunteers Days with us and other organisations. This lets us know in advance who will be attending on our volunteers days in advance which is extremely helpful in being able to plan ahead. Whilst we do get cancellations on the system, their volunteers can book up to 24 hours before a volunteers day. We have asked our web designer to see if there is a simple system that may be suitable for our CWA volunteer members to use and we will report when we have such information.

13) **Risk Assessments - Ratify and arrange for signatures to complete the outstanding Quad Bike & Trailer RA.**

The Quad Bike & Trailer RA was finally ratified and signed off and all RAs can be viewed on the CWA website by going to History and Risk Assessments. DK has one further one to complete for Pesticide Spraying. We are using the LL&TNPA RA for this in the meantime as we are using NPA volunteer sprayers.

14) **Future Training**

DL has secured £3,944.80 of grant funding for Pesticide Spraying training, assessments, equipment and PPE from the Forestry Commission Scotland's Community Fund for training six of our CWA volunteer members. The training will take place in Lochgoilhead on 22nd & 23rd January with assessments on 4th & 5th February 2019. We will be applying for Emergency First Aid Training and Refreshers after April 2019 and will ask CWA members who would like free training. The certificates last for three years so we will have a few members requiring refresher courses later in 2019.

15) **Update on future funding projects (design of & new path to Upper Cormonachan & the waterfalls from the Contemplation Shelter in four stages).**

DL advised that the committee members had been circulated with the Design & Build Quotation Report for the proposed Upper Cormonachan 2 km of Paths from McGowan Ltd. of Aviemore. This 20 page detailed report has split the project up into six sections plus another car park. The overall cost is £309,408.00 + VAT. Five companies were contacted for quotations but only one specialist hill contractor was prepared to offer a design and build quotation as the area land to the south of the Contemplation Shelter is totally

different to the land to its north where a different method of path construction was able to be used without importing materials. In the case of the proposed paths 2,700 tonnes of material would have to be imported via the forest road to the west of Upper Cormonachan and there would be 7 bridges and 4 view points with spur paths to the old village and another to the waterfalls. Further, because of the gradient of the land to the west of the new proposed car park by Cormonachan Burn, a helicopter would have to be used to import the material for that area up to the waterfalls spur. The project will almost certainly have to be split up into stages in order to obtain the necessary funding for the project unless someone wins the Lottery and would be willing to fund the project to go ahead in one stage. With the design now to hand, we have applied to FES for project permission. We have been seeking Letters of Support and to date the Argyll & Bute's MP & MSP have given their wholehearted support for the project. LL&TNPA Access says they will support our application for planning permission as this project meets with the Park's plans. Other organisations have said they will support the project and we are awaiting the letters of those who have agreed so far from the Lochgoil Community Council, Cowal Ward Councillor and LL&TNP Communities Partnership. Once we have the FES agreement, Letters of Support and funds for planning permission, we will put in our planning permission application. Once we have planning permission, and the other documentation mentioned, we can then apply for the funding for the project that will have to come either from a number of funders together or in stages over three or four years. The project however is now well under way and members will be kept up to date with progress through future Members Updates, website News and Facebook posts.

- 16) **At the request of a CWA Member - Add an additional Corporate Membership Category that would have to be 'Associate Corporate Membership without voting rights'? Discussion and possible introduction.**

A new membership category had been suggested by one of our members to allow non-local businesses to become members as at present only local businesses can be Corporate Members. The committee agreed to introduce this new membership category as 'Associate Corporate Membership' that would not have voting rights, the same as Associate Members. The rate will be £50.00 per annum.

- 17) **Any other business & date for next committee meeting?**

The date for the next committee meeting will be Tuesday 8th January 2019 at 4.30 pm at Cruach House, Carrick Castle.
(The meeting closed at 6.30 pm.)