

Minutes of the Cormonachan Woodlands Association Steering Group Meeting held on Friday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2014 at Ardroy OEC, Lochgoilhead at 18.00 hrs.

In Attendance: Sandra Bark, Liz Evans, Ewan Hardy, Douglas Locke, Marion McCune, Tom Murray, Ian Prescott & Jimmy Sim.

- 1) A Welcome and Introduction was given by Jimmy Sim saying this meeting was an inaugural meeting of the Cormonachan Woodlands Association Steering Group. He said there had been a couple of meetings of the initial founding committee of Liz Evans, who originally started the project in 1999 when she was Head of Centre at Ardroy OEC and Jimmy Sim, who was a local supporter of the Cormonachan Woodlands and Douglas Locke who set up the original Cormonachan Woodlands website for Ardroy and who had agreed to be the Secretary.  
Those present were introduced – Ewan Hardy, Loch Goil Community Council; Tom Murray, Loch Goil Community Trust; Sandra Bark, Lochgoilhead Primary School Head Teacher; Marion McCune, ecology interests; Ian Prescott, environment interests and the three founding members of the steering group.  
It was noted that Irene Campbell wanted to be kept informed regarding Argyll Holidays as was David Robinson of the Forestry Commission.
- 2) Apologies announced by Jimmy Sim were from Dennis Bolt, The Wee Goil and Mike Masino, The Scout Centre's Head of Centre.
- 3) The Cormonachan Woodlands Project was then explained by Liz Evans, who is retired but still a Director of Ardroy, a social enterprise charity (AOEC Trust Ltd.) that has limited finance and is currently unable to support the Cormonachan Woodlands financially although it owns Jan's Hut and the toilet and shed in the woodlands but wishes to continue to use the woodlands. Ardroy have agreed to pass the website over to the new association for updating that hasn't been done since 2009.  
Liz said that she and Jimmy Sim had a meeting with the Forestry Commission to sound out their views on this new association taking over an agreement since the lease with Ardroy OEC/Fife Council had expired. This meeting had been positive and would be followed up once the group had been firmly established.  
Liz explained that there were paths and walks around the Cormonachan Woodlands with red squirrel signs and tables and benches which were in an Atlantic oak woodland. She said that considerable work had been done in the woodlands clearing the under planted Sitka spruce and replanting it with new trees that had been done with the help of volunteers and primary schools. She explained that the website [www.cormonachan-woodlands.co.uk](http://www.cormonachan-woodlands.co.uk) showed the history of the woodlands, maps of the area and photographs. Unfortunately the website was not updated by Ardroy from 2009 onwards and the site went down for awhile only recently being partly restored. Money is needed to update the CMS on the website as this was lost after the site went down. Douglas Locke has agreed to update the website once a new CMS system has been paid for and added.
- 4) An Agreement with the Forestry Commission for the use of the Cormonachan Woodlands will need to be discussed in detail with them and Jimmy Sim said once there is support from local organisations this matter can precede further.
- 5) Liz Evans said that support from external organisations had already been discussed with the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) and that

Cormonachan Woodlands are members of CWA and they would be in support in guiding the group forward. John Little of Tilhill Forestry/UPM has said they would possibly be willing to offer some practical help since they are currently working in the area around Carrick Castle. Fife Countryside Trust rangers have been helping over the years with volunteer visits and have cleared a lot of Sitka spruce and have planted numerous trees in the woodlands and they may in future offer a weekend once a year. The National Park Rangers will be contacted to see if they would be able to help as well.

- 6) Possible funding sources were talked about by Jimmy Sim who said that this particular meeting was for those who lived locally first prior to widening the availability of support to others. Funding once the association had been set up could come from organisations such as N Trust, Awards for All, some woodland organisations and from other sources.

There had been agreement with Drimsynie for a 21 year lease for the land by the TV mast to enlarge the car park at Cormonachan Woodlands and at the time this was agreed in 2008, the Forestry Commission would have helped establish a reasonable car park however due to financial restraints they had to back out of this. Now, the situation is unknown as to the offer of Drimsynie land and the Forestry Commission's position. This will be followed up as a few years have passed and situations change.

Tom Murray brought up the question of public liability. Liz Evans said that currently Ardroy covered the insurance for Jan's Hut and its outbuildings in the woodlands and she would find out what public liability cover is covered by Ardroy. She said that the Forestry Commission remain responsible for hanging branches and these are removed whenever there is a risk involved by them. She also said that the Rhododendrons are growing back and that grants can be obtained for their control. Volunteers are also needed to maintain the paths and general upkeep of the woodlands.

- 7) Liz said the next stage in development was to produce a draft project plan and send it to interested parties; to contact individuals and organisations and make visits to Kilfinnan and Ardfern to see what others are doing. An agreement with the Forestry Commission is essential and once established an open day would be arranged at the spring of 2015 prior to the midge season to show the woodlands to potential volunteers and primary school children, with some activities. One suggestion was that the children might like to collect oak seedlings and then replant them where they will flourish and let the children see how little acorns grow into big oak trees over the years.

Finally, those in attendance were asked how they may be able to help or support the new association. Ewan Hardy said he was sure the Community Council would back the project; Ian Prescott said he supports the project but couldn't offer time as he was too busy at present; Marion McCune said she would be willing to help on the committee and could offer IT help if needed; Sandra Bark said the school would support the project and use the woodlands; Tom Murray said the Community Trust would support the project. Douglas Locke said he would update the website once funding of £175 had been obtained to add a new CMS system to the website and Liz Evans and Jimmy Sim would continue to work to establish the Cormonachan Woodlands Association and obtain funding and an agreement with the Forestry Commission as soon as they could.

All those attending the meeting were thanked for attending and their support.

The meeting closed at 18.50.