



Cormonachan Woodlands

Cormonachan Woodlands Association
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Minutes

A Committee Meeting was held on Tuesday, 12th November 2019
at 4.30 pm at Cruach House, Carrick Castle

1) Welcome & Apologies.

The Chair (DK) welcomed everyone to the meeting. The committee members in attendance were Don Kamsley (DK), Douglas Locke (DL), Jimmy Sim (JS), Cecilia Ferguson (CF); Dennis Bolt (DB) and David Thorpe (DT). Apologies were received from Frances Walker (FW).

2) Approval of the Minutes of the last Committee Meeting held on 10th September 2019.

The Minutes of the last meeting on 10th September 2019 were approved - proposed by CF & seconded by JS and signed by DK.

3) Chairman's Report, including meeting with Fiona Baker, Firat Archaeological Services.

DK said that he and DB had surveyed both the private water supplies water extraction points and holding tank positions and the replacement deciduous trees areas for the replacement of the trees to be felled. DL confirmed that these had been passed on to both Forestry & Land Scotland (FLS) and National Park Authority (NPA) and that both had agreed that the planting could go ahead away from the proposed paths on 22nd November. The NPA confirmed that Condition 6 - Compensatory Tree Planting had been met. The replacement trees & protection had arrived today. Awaiting FLS

written permission. DL said that the Condition 5 - Private Water Supplies had also been met by the NPA agreed with the Environmental Health Officer. DK & CF had met Fiona Baker (FB) of Firat Archaeological Services on site at the settlement and the path through the settlement had been agreed. FB then produced an interim report on her findings saying one further day will be required on site before the next report is provided by February 2020. DL advised that the interim report had been sent to the FLS, NPA and McGowan's, the hill contractors. DK said that he and DL had spend 4.5 hours finalising the Lottery Heritage Fund (LHF) initial enquiry form that had to be completed prior to the main application in order to get approval to move forward to the main application. The LHF responded quickly, impressed with the support received for the Upper Cormonachan Path Project, with their comments. The CWA being required to produce an outcome plan month by month for 3 years. DL took this up with LHF saying that the outcomes had been addressed in the 800 words allowed and that it was not possible to put such a plan into the form with the restriction of words allowed. The LHF responded that this plan would have to be included with the main application. The request for £250,000 of funding could be applied for providing the CWA could present such an outcomes plan with all the other requirements requested. The main application has an allowance for 6,000 words. This funding round closes on 19th November 2019 and the committee felt that we could not provide such a detailed plan within such a short time and that we should apply for the funding in the next round in 3 months time. This was unanimously agreed. DT said he, through Ardroy, could provide the three year, month by month outcome plan to meet the fund's criteria. Without the outcomes plan, we would not be in a position to compete for this funding. DL said that if other large funds open in the meantime, we could apply for other funding.

4) Treasurer's Report.

JS advised the bank balance was currently £13,322.03 with an outstanding liability of £78.34 leaving £13,243.69. The total will increase by £450.00 once the Scottish Forestry grant for the first, First Aid course is received. DL advised the 'Upper Cormonachan Paths Project Fund' now totalled £12,666.69 that included two large donations, one from a member for £4,000 and another £4,000 promised by the Lochgoil Community Trust once we have the main funding arranged. The trust had provided a letter to show funders of this offer and the funds were being held by the trust in the meantime. DL also advised that the NPA Heritage Fund had lodged into the CWA's bank £5,425 for the CWA to pay for the archaeological survey and signage when invoiced. DL explained that the Lottery Heritage Fund required local donations of 5% (£12,500)

of the £250,000 fund request in order for this amount to be applied for and this total had been reached.

- 5) Secretary's Report including an update on a Forestry and Land Scotland Lease for the Cormonachan Woodlands Association with current Agreement between CWA & Ardroy remaining the same as at present. Chainsaw operations work to be explained as in discussion with FLS. Also, donations received to date for the "Upper Cormonachan Paths Project Fund" and donations received in the Red Squirrel Hide.

DL said the UCPP Fund had reached £12,666.69, the Red Squirrel Hide's donation box now totalled £261.42 since March 2018 and that £186.79 had been spent on 137.5 kg of peanuts to date leaving a balance in hand of £74.63 plus one spare 12.5 kg bag in stock.

The replacement of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with a Lease for Cormonachan Woodlands agreed to be pursued in agreement with FLS on 30th August 2019 is underway with the FLS solicitors, however we have had no draft lease to review up to date. The important part of this lease will be that the liability of any trees falling on to the public road will remain the responsibility of FLS as will the agreements for the private water supplies to the Cormonachan properties. A lease will give more freedom to the Association to do work within the woodlands not so constrained by bureaucracy as at present.

DL reported that the Association is still at an impasse with the FLS over the use of our volunteer chainsaw operators in the woodlands. DL has a meeting on 15th November with the FLS Delivery Manager and Stewardship Forester/Forest Works Manager at the Glenbranter office to try and resolve this.

The Committee decided unanimously that if the FLS will not grant our 'competent chainsaw operators' to be allowed to fell the agreed Sitka spruce trees within Cormonachan Woodlands then a formal complaint will be made to the FLS complaints procedure and also, we may have to take this matter up with the Minister and our MP & MSP.

Finally, we have been clearing the conditions placed on the Upper

Cormonachan Path Project planning permission with the NPA planning officer as follows:-

Condition 1- Archaeological Investigation - underway; interim report provided to NPA, FLS, WoSAS & McGowan's.

Condition 2 - Construction Method Statement - a), b), & d) satisfied; c), e) & f) awaiting completion by McGowan's. NPA gave permission for felling to proceed.

Condition 3 - Road Opening & Condition 4 - Signage; not required by NPA until prior to commencement of paths construction.

Condition 5 - Private Water Supplies - Satisfied.

Condition 6 - Compensatory Tree Planting - Satisfied.

Condition 7 - General protected species - Not applicable unless construction is started after October 2020.

Condition 8 - Breeding Birds - Only applicable if any vegetation clearance works is to be carried out between March and August.

6) Membership Secretary's Report. Update on membership.

DB said the CWA now had 141 members: 97 Full; 29 Associates; 4 Corporate; 2 Associate Corporate; 6 Life & 3 Child (free). DB also advised that the CWA had been using the Doodle system to ask volunteers to let us know if members could volunteer on specific Volunteers Days or not. Whilst some have used the system, that is extremely helpful to the CWA, members who have not been able to help have not been using the 'unable to help' button which is disappointing as it is so easy to do.

7) Ardroy Report on use of Cormonachan Woodlands for the year ahead and tasks for 2019/2020.

DT advised that Ardroy had donated £500 to the paths project fund which was welcomed by the committee. 21 schools with 1,000 children have already visited the woodlands since September 2019 and it is expected the total will reach 2,000 by the end of March 2020 where they continue to cut down Rhododendron ponticum. DK asked that Ardroy instructors be reminded to pile the cuttings in windrow piles away from the paths and ditches and on top of bracken ready for burning but not on top of the rhododendron re-growth that has to be sprayed later on. DK said he hoped to provide more help in the woodlands this coming year.

8) Update on the 'Upper Cormonachan Paths Project' and on grant applications.

DL said this was an update on progress of the grant applications made and to be made as follows:-

a) National Park Heritage Grant Scheme for the Archaeology Survey (£4,165.20) and Interpretation panel & lectern (£1,260.00) was well underway with the first interim report sent out to the organisations concerned (FLS, NPA, WoSAS & McGowan's).

b) The Lottery Heritage Fund position already covered in 3) above.

c) DL attended the 'A Wood of Our Own' (AWOO) meeting run by the Community Woodlands Association at Colintrave, held on 29th October with a woodland visit on Bute discussing funding opportunities particularly a shared forester. Travelling expenses were refunded to DL by the organisers.

d) EB Scotland Ltd - Funding request for £25,000 - Grant application submitted and decision expected by end of February 2020.

e) LandTrust - £20,000 - Expression of Interest completed - awaiting response.

f) Visit Scotland - Funding up to £323,484 - Application to be made via LL&TNPA when next open.

g) SRDP now the Agri Environment Climate Scheme run by the Scottish Government - Funding up to £323,484 - advised 2019 Fund to be re- opened for 2019/2020 and will be applied for when open. This scheme is normally open to registered woodland operators and the CWA is registered (BRN 250873).

h) Tesco Bags of Help - Eligible to apply for funding up to £25,000 but not yet open.

i) The CWA has been approved for the Coop Local Community Fund to raise £250 worth of signage - This is open to Coop members who can request funds be paid to the CWA until 24th October 2020.

j) It was decided that the CWA should look into crowd funding for the path project through MyPark Scotland as a fall back crowd

funding scheme open to community woodlands to try to top up or raise full funding.

DL advised that there are many funds available and the CWA will pursue all that are available or try to group a number together to reach the required total funding required.

Woodland Trust Scotland who have supplied the replacement trees mentioned earlier have sent the CWA a very good letter of support for the paths project and Ramblers Scotland has also done the same.

9) Volunteers Leader's Report on Volunteers Days in September and October, including strimming update

There were 2 volunteers days in September when 10 CWA, 3 NPA & 1 Ardroy attended. There were 4 volunteers days in October when 14 CWA & 6 NPA attended - 34 volunteers in total, some for 2 or 3 days each.

10) Volunteers Leader position to be filled - A job share?

DK said the position of Volunteers Leader is still vacant. DL said that he would continue with the admin side of the work until 31st March 2020. The job description can be viewed on the 'Volunteering' page on the Association's website. DL said he would help anyone take over this position or job sharing between members may be a possibility. DL said he is no longer able to physically help or survey the woodlands with his osteoarthritis in his hip and that his admin work with the funding had doubled this year from 226 hours to over 500 hours for the same 7 month period from April to October. He needs to concentrate work on funding the paths project.

11) An update on Pesticide Spraying - work completed with results and work to be done..

Whilst the northern area of Rhododendron re-growth in Compartment 6 has been sprayed. More re-growth has yet to be sprayed over the coming months.

12) Update on future Volunteers Days for November (22nd-24th), including Fife Conservation Group commencing the felling of trees on the planned UCPP paths on 23rd & 24th November.

Friday 22nd November - tree planting and burning of brash near the Contemplation Shelter

Saturday 23rd November - rhododendron cutting

Sunday 24th November - ditching & new path work (17 NPA)

- 13) Priority tasks for Volunteers Days for the autumn, including painting, Rhododendron removal and CWA chainsaw operators felling trees along the planned UCPP paths.

The priority tasks for the Volunteers Days ahead will be Rhododendron ponticum (cutting & burning); the maintenance tasks on the linked lists shown on the Volunteering website page; painting the floor of the Contemplation Shelter and painting the Red Squirrel Hide and shed before winter under suitable conditions. Tree felling to commence when we can get FLS permission to use our competent chainsaw operators through the autumn/winter period assisted by other CWA volunteers to help burn the brash.

- 14) First Aid Training - An update on two courses, the first 16th & 20th September and the second 6th December 2019.

DL advised the next Emergency First Aid at Work +F course is to go ahead on 6th December and that six members have booked places. There are six free places left. There will not be another free course until September 2022. Seven members received their certificates following the last course in September 2019.

- 15) Members suggestion to be discussed regarding the 105 replacement trees to be planted on 22nd November in the Upper Cormonachan area:- 'May I suggest that these are offered to members and generally on the website/facebook page for either adoption or as a gift for family and friend at say £5 a tree. Any member who buys a tree could be encouraged to come along and plant it themselves . You could also offer groves of 10 trees for say £40 instead of £50. An example of this type of fund raising is attached below. I have a grove of over 200 trees gifted for my 40th birthday a long time ago!' <https://treesforlife.org.uk/support/plant-a-tree/>
<https://treesforlife.org.uk/groves/g5358/>

The suggestion was agreed by the committee and also by FW via e-mail. This will be announced in the next Members Update.

- 16) Any other business?

No other business at this time.

- 17) Date for next committee meeting?

The date for the next CWA Committee Meeting will be on Tuesday 14th January 2020 at 4.30 pm at Cruach House, Carrick Castle.

(The meeting closed at 18.40 hrs)