

Minutes

of the Board Meeting held in The Magnus House, Aigas Field Centre on Monday
1900hrs 5th Feb 2018

Present		Apologies	In Attendance
Greg Jackson GJ David Garvie DG Russell Ross RR John Graham JG Helge Hansen HH Andrew Leaver AL	Graeme Scott GS Peter Smith PS Philip Masheter PM Mark Hedderwick MH Neil Valentine NV	Simon Longman	John Ireland JI Sir John Lister Kaye JLK (briefly in attendance)

Item		Action
1	<p>GS welcomed everyone to the meeting</p> <p>Apologies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Received from Simon Longman PM took meeting notes. 	
2	<p>Declarations of Conflict of Interest</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> None noted 	
3	<p>Minutes from previous board meeting of 4th December 2017</p> <p>No matters arising</p> <p>Proposed by DG; Seconded by PS</p>	

Agenda items

Advice from John Ireland on mountain bike issues and how to address them

GS welcomed **JI** to the meeting (*John had been invited as he is an expert on mountain biking issues within forests throughout the UK*)

JI gave a brief summary of his career path which led to his role as a leading Health and Safety officer with the Forestry Commission. He regularly deals with problems/court cases associated with the formation of wild trail tracks created by mountain bikers in forests. The Forestry Commission have had policies in place for dealing with these illegal tracks since the mid 80s and their policies have evolved since then.

JI understands that ACF board like many other community forests have a desire to meet its responsibility towards liability for any accidents that may occur in the forest.

The Forestry Commission deal with huge areas throughout the UK and there are millions of pounds worth of claims as a result of mountain biking accidents in their forests. Some of these cases are robustly defended, others if possible are settled out of court. Prosecutors will try to sue land owners rather than trail designers.

The law requires forest owners to do things reasonably practically and to provide a duty of care for all forest users.

Standards for safety are generally similar throughout the UK .

Aigas forest has had mountain bike activity for about 15years. Around 50 mountain bikers currently use the forest on 3 known wild trail tracks. **JI** stressed that all wild trail tracks that are built without consultation are illegal and procedures/documentation need to be put in place to mitigate the risks to forest users and workers. The following general points highlighted by **JI** will provide good guidance for ACF

- Where the line of a wild mountain bike (MTB) trail follows a desired line, that is permissible but it is illegal to brash, fell trees, cut branches, create structures for jumping etc
It is extremely important to ensure that where MTB trails and footpaths cross, there is a good visibility splay for the non MTB user. This is preferable to warning signs.
- The MTB trails (currently aware of 3) must be regularly inspected and risk assessed (every 6 or 12 months). The records for these must be filed once any actions have been completed. Plans showing the locations and any pictures should be attached to the risk assessment if necessary for extra clarification. Persons carrying out risk assessments must be but risk aware. **JI** also suggested that if appropriate, state the benefit of a certain risk eg people like doing cycle jumps.

- **Do not** advertise the routes or attempt to grade the level of difficulty or erect any signage for the wild trail MTB routes as this will compromise the ACF insurance cover.
- The forest road should be used for ascending rather than descending.
- Structures deemed to be dangerous must be removed. If there is any doubt best policy is to remove at an arranged time preferably with the assistance of the MTB fraternity.
- Monitor any new trails and decide whether they can be tolerated. **CJ** - If there is a special area of conservational interest, it must be avoided with the aid of appropriate signage and other means of communication website/social media.
- Make reference to any site rules/Graham MacLean guidance/ Scotland access guidance on website and social media. An A4 guidance sheet was drafted by **JG** at the previous meeting
- Establish an accident book/record for near misses
- It is ACF that are likely to be held to account rather than individuals carrying out inspections/risk assessments on MTB trails.
- A decision on whether to use the services of Paul Masson (inspection work) is to be made by the paths sub group

GS thanked John for all his valuable input and **JI** mentioned that he will forward a standard risk assessment for MTB wild trails and offered to return in the future if required. **JI** left the meeting at 2020.

HH mentioned that previously inspected unsafe structures still require to be dismantled. After some lengthy deliberation it was decided to arrange a work party at a suitable time to dismantle as previously agreed, hopefully with the assistance of MTB volunteers.

Chairman's Business

GS stated that he had nothing to report on this occasion.

Vice chairman's business

PS reported that new dates for meetings to be conducted every two months will be released soon (date for next meeting 9th April)
A social get together - likely in Brockies lodge to be planned for the near future.

Forest Manager's report

The movement of more timber out of the forest is going to happen imminently, though there have been a few issues between the contractors and Scottish Woodlands. Bad weather has also hampered progress.

10-15Ha are still to be thinned. The 'deer lawn' is to be cleared as well as the previously the mentioned windblow area. Hopefully this will be completed by the end of April as the deadline is the 15th May. Thinnings should yield £45000 plus or minus £5000 (£30000 estimated initially). Wind blow estimated at £10000-£15000.

There will be a light health and safety audit carried out by Scottish Woodlands Certification (£1000 annual registration).

Costs from David Reid for fencing etc had been circulated a day or two prior to the meeting and these were higher than expected. **GS** would like progress to be made on the decision for a fence. More time will be required for this however as trial plots have not yet been planted, work with dung counts are to commence. There is also some doubt as to whether the cost of a fence will be affordable **JG**. Major planting is not planned for approximately 1 year, so there is time to make a sound decision.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere

Training

NV Power saw training for group A has been completed and certificates received and copies filed in the office. Training and assessment for group B has stalled due to poor weather during January and availability of students. More progress is expected soon.

Volunteer work in the forest

Work on lorry turning area/car park has progressed and the area is now on two levels. **JLK** has liaised with **JG** and **MH** to arrange for further material to be brought down to complete the project

Some work has been done on brashing the roadside **HH & NV**

The school of forestry visits have also been hampered by the poor weather recently.

The mast road has had low level branches removed to allow mast technicians easy access **PM**

HH has made up a 'Aigas community forest work planner 2018' which was circulated at the meeting and highlights a list of work for volunteers for 2018.

Buildings

HH & NV will make a list of timber for Neil Armstrong to mill for the new tractor shed.

RR strongly recommended that the ACF board approve the purchase of a suitable nail gun to make building/cladding work more efficient. The purchase of this piece of equipment was approved by the board. Cost approx £400. (**RR** leaves at 9.23pm).

It has been approved to purchase of the previously mentioned hand washing facility for the forest office (cost approx £500). Alternative funding to purchase this failed.

Post meeting note: **JG** now ordered and to be delivered next week to Aigas GC

Sub Group Reports

Paths and Access Group

PS mentioned that the group had not met since the last board meeting, but will be meeting again soon. There is volunteer work to be done for the erection of signs.

Further progress on managing the risks for the wild mountain bike trails also to be made.

Deer Management

PS reported that minutes for meeting in December were not available but gave an outline of what was discussed in relation to the reduction of deer numbers, dung counts, fencing of plots, deer observations, improved access for deer stalking.

Nick Richards was present and he has been giving regular updates through **HH** along with Mains of Aigas and Aigas field centre on the control of deer numbers. Between the beginning Oct 2017 and the end of Jan 2108, 36 deer had been dispatched.

Estimates for fencing have been submitted to **HH**

Wood Fuel

JG reported that there had been no further meetings for the group, but there will be another meeting arranged in the future.

Financial Report

GS reported that now we have reached the VAT threshold, a decision will be made on at what stage in the year we should be VAT registered and start claiming/paying VAT.

A financial report will be available for the next meeting.

There is currently £82000.00+ in the bank account

	<p>The new insurance company is Zurich and it will take time to check the small print (250 pages) JG.</p> <p>AOCB</p> <p>MH confirmed more material for lorry turning area/car park will be made available.</p> <p>JG mentioned that a PNO notice would suffice for the tractor shed, cabin and any other proposed structure in the forest.</p> <p>NV mentioned that the large rowan tree observed near the tree with the osprey structure is very old and should be protected.</p> <p>GS has a contact at Farr community forest and suggested a visit to see their community building to gain ideas for anyone who may be interested.</p> <p>HH wanted to know who is responsible for the netting on the rock faces and the vegetation that is growing through it. Confirmation is required, but it is likely to be the council.</p> <p>Meeting closed at 2155Hrs</p> <p>Next meeting planned for 9th April</p>	