



VAT. No. 310378531

Minutes of the ACF Board Meeting held in the Magnus House at Aigas Field Centre on Monday 6th December 2021 at 1930.

Present

Peter Smith PS
John Graham JG
Madeleine Robinson MR
Graeme Scott GS
Chloe Denerley CD
Russell Ross RR
Andrew Leaver AL
Hermione Jackson HJ
Mark Hedderwick MH
Bob Hemingway BH
Jo Young JY
Neil Valentine NV

In Attendance

Helge Hansen HH

Apologies

Phil Masheter

Declaration of Conflict of Interest

None declared

Minutes of Previous Board Meeting of 11th October 2021

These minutes had been circulated to the Board in advance.

Proposed JY. Seconded RR. Approved.

Chairman's Business

PS reported that along with MR, BH and JY he had attended a useful online workshop on Effective Governance for Community Woodlands run by the CWA on 1st December. He feels that there are possible areas for improvement in our processes and will communicate with the Board about this by email.

Vice-Chairman's Business

Nothing raised.

Report from Helge Hansen, Forest Manager

HH said that the harvesters which had been diverted to deal with storm damage elsewhere would be returning soon. Some further road closures would be required. The majority of wood has been cleared from the western felled area.

Davy Reid continues to make good progress with the fencing and will move to the Crask area soon. HH will meet with him to finalise some details of the fence near the farmhouse.

NV suggested that HH should put some pressure on Scottish Woodlands to move down the remaining wood from higher up in the eastern area so that it does not get snowed in and also encourage them to complete the chipping in the western area.

Sub-Group Reports

Paths and Access Group

Met on 25th October and also for a forest walk on 20th November. NV reported that the group is proposing to construct a path in the area between the second hairpin on the forest track and the car park. This would allow easy access to the area of larch trees and bluebells. BH recommended that at least part of this path should be suitable for people with limited mobility and suggested that using an external contractor for this work might be appropriate.

NV mentioned the need for a turning area in order to access this part of the forest for maintenance.

It is planned that a ramp will be constructed at the entrance to the Ladies Walk from the track to improve access.

Deer Management

No meeting. Nick Richards has been in recently and shot several deer.

Wood Fuel No meeting.

Wildlife and Ecology

Met on 3rd November. HH reported that 5,000 mixed broadleaf trees with stakes and spirals have been delivered. Spiral guards will be used initially. Planting will start as soon as weather allows next year. HH noted that a restructuring plan is in place and agreed with Scottish Forestry. It will be refined further once the felling is complete.

The group had discussed and agreed that the area between the main road and the river would not be developed.

The Board agreed to a request from PS to purchase 2 or 3 trail cams. MH reminded him of the legal requirement for signage.

The Board approved purchasing squirrel and bird food.

The subgroup will discuss further the feasibility of increasing wetland areas by slowing the outflows.

Composting Toilet

A site which it is hoped will be suitable has been chosen behind and to the side of the tractor sheds near where the rainwater IBCs currently stand. Steve Cotterill has suggested using a contractor for the groundworks and this is being costed.

Articles of Association Working Group

Not met.

Financial Report

JG reported that the current bank balance was £260,000. He pointed out that total wood sales of £151,000 have been invoiced but only about half of this actually paid so far.

He has sent the mast lease invoice to EE.

JG thanked GS for the accounts for the year ended 28th August 2021 which were independently examined and submitted to Companies House prior to the filing deadline of 30 November 2021.

GS offered to email a summary of assets and also a cash flow summary up to the end of December. Although the bank balance is very healthy he advised caution bearing in mind the cash flow projections for the next 10 years.

Secretary's Report

The next meeting was fixed for Monday 7th February.

AOCB

NV and BH have delivered timber for picnic tables to the Men's Shed in Beaulieu. BH suggested that a people counter to measure forest use would be helpful. He thought the cost would be £400-500. He will research prices and email the Board members.

NV is having discussions with Neil McAdam about possible repairs to the Victorian Bridge.

HH has had 2 quotes for drone surveys. It was agreed that the quote of £280 for images compatible with mapping software would be accepted.

HH gave a summary of new legislation relating to biodiversity credits that is being introduced in England. A similar scheme is anticipated in Scotland. SSE want to be part of a pilot scheme and HH is in discussion with their ecology consultant. This potentially could provide income for ACF in the future.

HJ read out a letter to the Board from RR. This had been circulated by email a few hours prior to the meeting. RR appealed to the Board to erect a deer fence preventing access to the Aigas Gorge from the picnic lay-by car park and so prevent continuing disturbance to the wildlife. Davy Reid has given a provisional quote of £5,700 plus VAT for doing this. There was lengthy discussion of the merits of this suggestion and possible alternative approaches. Concern was expressed by several Board members about the legality of blocking access and it was agreed that

independent advice should be sought. HJ volunteered to have an informal conversation with an environmental lawyer and find out the cost of independent legal advice.

PS suggested taking some baseline photographs of the area concerned.

The meeting closed at 21.08

The next Board Meeting will be held on Monday 7th February 2022 at 19.30 in Kilmorack Hall.