



Minutes from ACF Board Meeting held at the Magnus House on 15th April 2024 at 19.30

Present:

David Garvie (DG) - Chair
John Graham (JG) - Treasurer
Jo Young (JY)
Neil Valentine (NV)
Stephen Cotterill (SC)
Bob Hemingway (BH)
Mark Hedderwick (MH)
Phil Masheter (PM)
Fin Denerley (FD)
Greg Jackson (GJ)
Russell Ross (RR)
Bob Bull (BB)
Nataša Kenda (NK) - Minutes Secretary

Apologies:

Graeme Scott (GS)

Minutes of Previous Board Meeting of 26th February 2024

Adoption proposed by JG. Seconded by JY. Approved.

Agenda Amendments

No changes were made to the agenda.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

There are currently 4 applicants for the Forest manager position. Neil will informally meet them in the forest before the official interviews.

Forest Manager Report

Previously circulated pre board meeting. A small digger and a driver will need to be hired for draining and other excavation work (at the gate, blue path, at the confluence of the streams etc). NV suggested a 5-day hire, a budget of around £2500 has been approved by the board. NV will present a written plan of priorities.

Sub-group reports

- **Paths and Access:** The new clearance is dangerous and closed to access. NV guaranteed that the work on it will continue. RR expressed concerns about naming of the Explorer paths. As it's already been presented and the maps are printed, the board and RR agreed to close this for future discussion. RR offered to plan for sheltered areas and benches on sections of paths.
- **Wildlife & Ecology:** Meeting planned for the 29th April. FD reported new sightings of larvae on the pond. The group is open to new members.
- **Deer Management:** Not met.
- **Equipment Groups:** A meeting will be held before the end of April.
- **Wood Fuel:** The sales are satisfactory. JG mentioned the inconvenience of cash payments but they will continue.

- **Forest Vision:** The group has been closed after the successful vision update.

SSEN Compensatory / Biodiversity Net Gain Planting

There are two separate points for discussion and decision, the first about SSEN proposing a pylon line through ACF land and the second being the offer of compensation planting for SSEN net gain. There is no direct connection between these two topics.

1. Spittal – Beaully OHL Pylon

The current proposed route for this line goes over ACF land and it's likely that SSEN will need to negotiate land access and possible compensation with ACF. DG proposed hiring a land agent (Bidwells) to represent ACF in negotiations. We will only be required to pay Bidwells 5% commission of the potential SSEN compensation and the land agent's fees will be paid by SSEN. The main point is that only 10ha of the 15ha will be suitable for planting because the new pylon line could occupy up to 5ha; a professional land agent will provide distanced negotiations between ACF and SSEN. JG stated a possible conflict of interest as he already employed Bidwells as land agent for his own land. The proposition was approved by RR, SC seconded.

2. SSEN's Current Proposal for Compensatory/BNG Planting

Heads of Terms were circulated pre meeting and explained by DG. SSEN have a duty for any project that if they fell trees they have to replant at least an equivalent number and they have identified ACF as a possible site for planting. They would pay us £10,000 per hectare to plant 10 hectares. So the total payment to us would be £100,000 (80% up front and 20% in year 6). This is not directly connected the current Spittal – Beaully OHL and Fanellan Substation, but the local community may not make the distinction. We are required to plant the area either way but the main issue is the point of ethical principle. The community may find it controversial and ACF might experience strong disapproval; we need to plan for it and be honest. JG expressed concerns about confidentiality clause if we sign the contract. Concerns about the suitability were raised – unfinished deer fence, managing to plant by April 2025, not knowing the route of pylon line, community backlash, ethical and moral issues.

DG proposed two separate indicative (non-binding) votes: is ACF willing to accept compensation money from anyone / from SSEN. In both votes 6 were in favour, 1 against, 5 undecided.

After the discussion, DG proposed to continue negotiating, giving us more time to consider the pros and cons, potentially sign the Heads of Terms but procrastinate (advised by NV). The subject will be updated and discussed at the next meeting. All board members were in favour.

Financial Report

JG reported current account balance: £144,877.62; deposit of £350,000 will mature on 25th May; decisions are to be made.

Items of Expenditure

JG proposed a purchase of rubbing plaques with wildlife motives to get the community and children involved. Providing paper and pencils or crayons needs to be considered. The board approved of 8 plaques and a budget of £200. New beanie hats were also presented (to be sold for £12).

JG presented new leaflets which are being made by Cathryn Cotterill. A budget of £67 for printing of 1000 waterproof copies was approved. The leaflet to be circulated with the board prior to printing.

The meeting closed at 21.14. The next Board meeting will be held on Monday the 3rd June 2024 at 19.30 at the Aigas Community Forest.