



Minutes from ACF Board Meeting held at the Magnus House on 13th November 2023 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)
Nataša Kenda (NK) - Minutes Secretary

Apologies:

Bob Bull (BB)
Graeme Scott (GS)

Minutes of Previous Board Meeting of 27th September 2023

Adoption proposed by JG. Seconded SC. Approved.

Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

- Nataša Kenda (NK) was introduced as the new Minutes Secretary. NK will be reimbursed for her time.
- The Annual Budget will be deferred to the next meeting – awaiting budgets from subgroups.
- New forest manager replacement sub-group was formed. DG, NV, MH, BH, JY and JG volunteered and plan to meet soon to review job description and salary.

Agenda Amendments

No changes were made to the agenda.

Forest Manager Report

Previously circulated pre board meeting.

The hole in the fence needs to be dealt with. PM and volunteers will do it when weather permits. The nursery trees need to be carefully planted. GJ and FD offered help on Wednesdays by AFC placement students.

SSEN Biodiversity Net Gain Restoration Planting

This would be approx. 7-10ha East of the Crask. A challenging area to plant, possibly need to employ seasonal planters. JG explained the process of a 25 years commitment attached to funding through SSEN to assist with planting as opposed to self-funding. An amount would only be given out after that.

NV had been noticing that regen in that area is already happening (birch, willow, broom, raspberries). We will carry on with native regen; no commercial planting. We need to be assured by SSEN that it's our own decision how to plant and manage the area.

Group discussion regarding morality and what SSEN is gaining – they might be planning the pylon route over ACF land. Also, ACF accepting the funds could deprive other projects which might need them more; the community might disagree.

NV to have further negotiations with the SSEN representative and will report at the next meeting. All board members are asked to send any questions for SSEN to NV.

Sub-group reports

- **Paths and Access:** Circulated pre meeting. There was extensive discussion regarding the new map currently being designed by Helen Stirling and the routes identified. All agreed that the four waymarked paths and information were clear and acceptable but some members opposed the Explorer paths on the Eastern side above Crask. Concerns were raised about the increase of visitors and parking inappropriately. As a Community forest and due to the “right to roam”, we can't close them to the public but it was agreed not to highlight these paths. Some paths in the Eastern side are already shown on the OS Maps so it was agreed to mirror the detail given on the OS Maps, with perhaps some minor changes where the existing path routing has changed because of the recent fencing.
A vote was taken for the map showing only the tracks as per on OS maps, removing Explorer path numbers and the viewpoint sign. 9 board members were in favour, 1 against. The new Information sign will be in A1 format, funding was approved up to £500 for new path and finger signs and printing of the Forest map.
- **Wildlife & Ecology:** Circulated pre meeting. Pleasing results from recent analysis of dipping ponds.
- **Deer Management:** Nick Richards (ACF) reported 2 roe and around 12 red deer; 4 stags.
- **Equipment Groups:** A generator was recently purchased and a portable cabin acquired.
- **Forest Vision:** Circulated pre meeting. Hope to meet on 27th November at 7pm at the Clubhouse.
- **Wood Fuel:** Not met recently. There are some orders for wood. Still considering options for wood processing.

Financial Report

JG reported that the current balance is £350,000; £170,000 includes the previous biodiversity grant. Traffic management payment is £14,590 (Highland Council). Approx £20,000 assigned for fencing; £192,000 biodiversity grant received.

Items of Expenditure

None

The meeting closed at 21.25. The next Board meeting will be held on Monday the 22nd January 2024 at 19.30 at the Magnus House.