



Minutes from ACF Board Meeting held at the Club House on 24th March at 19.30

Present:

David Garvie (DG) - Chair
John Graham (JG) - Treasurer
Alasdair Martin (AM) – Forest Manager
Neil Valentine (NV)
Phil Masheter (PM)
Jo Young (JY)
Bob Bull (BB)
Fin Denerley (FD)
Russell Ross (RR)
Mark Hedderwick (MH)
Ron McLaughlin (RM) - Visitor
Nataša Kenda (NK) - Minutes Secretary

1. Apologies:

Graeme Scott (GS)
Stephen Cotterill (SC)

2. Minutes of Previous Board Meeting 3rd February 2025

Adoption proposed by JG. Seconded by NV. Approved.

3. Agenda Amendments

None.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

None.

5. Safeguarding

As we don't have children or vulnerable adults in our objects, we don't need to be in the scheme. Family friendly events and non-regular group visits are acceptable. Anyone dealing with children or vulnerable adults (including volunteers) can get a PVG check but it's not required for ACF members. FD agreed to a position of Safeguarding Officer and will review in the future.

6. Forest Manager Report

Circulated pre meeting, well received by the board. This stage of fencing is now complete.

The planting day on 22nd March was successful, several areas were planted with oak, willow, hazel, Scots pine and small-leaf lime. Next planting day is on 12th April. NV has been in contact with a builder to quote for work on the Victorian bridge.

7. Sub-group reports

- **Paths and Access:** AM and SC met. A meeting with other future group members will be arranged.
- **Deer Management:** Minutes circulated. Fence is complete, deer management continues. AM reminded about hind shooting season ending in April.

- **Wood Fuel:** Met with Equipment group, report circulated. Canvas shed won't happen due to unsafe area. We're looking into mobile wood processing unit and mobile saw milling unit. AM will check for grants. JG requested billing for fencing. JG to thank NV and PM for the new wood store which will improve drying, storing and selling; all dry timber was sold. If regulations change, we may need to use white diesel instead of red, in which case we could use the tractor for occasional deliveries.
- **Wildlife & Ecology:** FD, AM and NV met. FD reported sightings of golden eagle, peregrine and goshawk above the forest; unsure about nesting at the moment.
- **Equipment Group:** See Wood Fuel.
- **10th Anniversary:** A gazebo will be used instead of a stretch tent. A chemical toilet is to be hired for the Music event on 15th June and requested by JY; JG approved. Biggest expenses are approx. £500 for music and £500 to Wooden Tom. Heritage walk was excellent, 28 pax attended. Next events are Whittling workshop on 5th April and Pond Dipping Family day on 17th May.

8. SSEN Overhead Line Project

Discussions between ACF and SSEN continue. There was a recent meeting between ACF and SSEN's project managers (along with land agents) which was more constructive than previous meeting, but where information was still inconsistent and incomplete. Recent press coverage has raised awareness of the damage SSEN access through the Forest will cause. ACF Board agreed that we can still see no reason why access through the Forest is necessary at all, except for emergency and maintenance access, when there is another access route planned from the north. SSEN's land agent has appointed a surveyor to visit the forest to determine whether any new paths could be built to allow walkers and mountain bikers to bypass the main forest road, but the Board remains sceptical that this will be possible, let alone make up for the damage caused by the access arrangements being proposed. JG suggested requesting for providing a liaison officer.

9. SSEN Biodiversity Net Gain Planting

DG and AM have continued discussions with ACF's solicitor but SSEN's solicitor has been very slow to progress anything. Most points in the contract have now been agreed with just 2 items to be agreed. DG will circulate the final contract copy prior to signature. It was made clear to the Board that ACF will have a commitment to plant the area at sufficient density and there will be penalties if the planting is not successful. Plantation will be inspected after 6 years and again after 4 years if the 6-year inspection is not satisfactory.

10. Financial Report

JG reported current account balance of £77,705.81 and the deposit account of £361,200.00 (matures in October 2025). Most payment of £8,900 was received. Ongoing expenses are fencing bill and £14,000 for tree replanting scheme.

11. Items of Expenditure

AM requested around £200 - £300 for 100 tubes for trees. JG approved.

12. Agenda Amendments

None.

The meeting closed at 21.00. The next Board meeting will be held on Monday 26th May 2025 at 19.30 at the Forest Cabin.