

# Glengarry Community Woodlands Open Meeting

20th April 2016

Glengarry Community Hall @ 19.30hrs

## **Directors Attendees & Apologies:**

Bruce Kocjan-Briggs, George Cross, Catriona Menzies, Lindsay Rogers, Colin Grant, June Mathers, Grace Grant. There were no apologies.

**In Attendance:** There were approximately 10 members present.

## **Chairman's Report:**

Grace talked to her previously circulated report and covered the following:

### **The Woodland**

The Forest Plan from Chris Piper - the Forester writing our Forest Plan, and who prepared our Feasibility Study of our application of money to buy the woodland - is immanent (we hope), after which we can start a more detailed approach to developing the woodland.

Points to mention meantime are that the intention remains to progress towards a return to a more natural habitat, although there will be some potential commercial activity as we go.

Chris Piper has also been tasked with developing and producing a longer term Strategic and Development Plan to consolidate our longer term aims - in other words, "Our Future Vision and How We get There"!

At this point I want to stress the need for ongoing community involvement, and the requirement we have, to ensure we "do no harm" to the integrity of the woodland.

We want to get to the point where there is some modest business opportunities, like a wood fuel business, enhanced tourism, and the development of a Forest School. In November last year we were initially approached by Joyce Gilbert from Trees for Life to see if we were interested in partnering them in an application for a Re-wilding the Highlands" project.

Note, Wild Boar and Wolves are specifically excluded - although she was speaking of a project they have which involves teenage 'wolves' in the woods!

To clear up any misunderstandings around this, we have spoken to her and been reassured that this project has to do with landscape, heritage, and education. Like us, they feel that it is important not to lose sight of our history. The Board felt this was a good idea and the partnership would be of benefit. This should lead into our Forest School ideas to introduce the woodlands and what happens in them as an integral part of the learning experience for the children in our school.

This is developing well and Bruce, Gary and Colin are all involved in liaising with the headmistress in the School and Trees for Life. So some projects are being planned and will be publicised when complete.

Trees for Life will also contribute 500 trees for planting in the Glengarry area - these can be plantings in private gardens, as well as in the forest and other public spaces.

In early March we had a walk round the forest with Steve Morris from Woodland Trust on 2nd March, He is the Ancient Woodland Restoration Project Officer for the Woodland Trust, or PAWS, which was very interesting. That's what we have here - 50% of our woodland is a Plantation on an Ancient Woodland Site. So we walked around the site and he was felt that we have a great opportunity here and had a lot of ideas which we will need time to process but hopefully some can be used in the future.

There was, later that day, a visit to Trees for Life at Dundreggan in Invermoriston. Unfortunately, only two people were able to go, so it is hoped to repeat this - so let us know if you are interested in this.

At the February Board meeting Gary confirmed that an application to LCF (Landfill Community Fund ) had been made, and that has been successful - more details from Gary.

And in new news, we may have a possible link to Kew Gardens, so watch this space. Moving on to discuss the Depot area.

### **Depot Area**

We have been in touch with our SLF advisor and now have permission to use the remaining SLF funds to make safe the depot and surrounding area. There is a lot of work to be done here. We have commissioned an Architect's report to make sure we get this right. The work will not involve any change of use - it will focus on making safe the building and the surrounding area.

That will include such things as fencing along the roadside, and sorting plumbing, wiring, and drainage within the building itself.

The plan is that it will remain as office space, storage, and workshop units. We hope that when the work is complete we will be able to rent out some parts.

Any profit made will be used initially to offset service costs and maintenance.

Volunteers are needed to help, and Gary will be expanding on this later. In the meantime I would like to extend an invitation to everyone to visit, especially Friday, to see what's going on, and for coffee and a chat.

Finally, community:

### **Community**

At the end of January we had a very successful family event to celebrate the transfer of the woodland from FCS into community ownership, and to introduce our new CDO. Press coverage via HIE was handled by MuckleMedia, and the children present enjoyed being involved in everything. I think they had a ball, being in on the photographs, plenty to eat, playing games and having the run of the hall - it was a real family evening and hopefully we will repeat it.

A special thanks has to go to all who helped with catering. (Lindsay, and Catriona, June and Elizabeth.)

There were articles in Lochaber news, P&J, complete with photos, and more recently we have been covered in Lochaber Life - this month's edition. So our press coverage is ongoing as well as our newsletters and regular updates on our web page.

On Easter Monday, 28 March, a car treasure hunt and Easter Egg hunt was held at the depot, followed by a barbecue which was enjoyed by all present.

Very many thanks to Jon and Joan Fleming for organising the route of the treasure hunt.

Further community events are planned and Lindsay will update us on that later.

Funding from Glengarry Trust allowed the purchase of a large Public Notice Board.

Its here, we've got it, and now we are liaising with the Hall Committee to get it in place at the hall. The intention is that this will be used by all groups in the village, and Catriona will keep a check on it.

In March the board decided to ask Neal Reid from Beinneun Wind Farm to come along and speak to us about the funding implications for the community from the new wind farm. we have to arrange a date for this but it's likely to be our next Open meeting in July.

To finish, we are almost at the stage of finalising a logo, with the help of Lisa Bell, a professional Graphic Designer from Fort William. This will we hope appear on our website soon, when comments will be invited.

So that's the end of the Chairmans Report.

We are inviting questions at the end of the evening - so hope you have some - and we can answer them!

**Spotlight Talk:** Grace explained that we hope to have a guest speaker at future open meetings. Some possibilities include Wind Farms, VAL, HIE. If anybody has ideas for this please write it down and/or discuss it with a Director.

**Community Development Officer Report:** Gary Servant spoke to his previously circulated report and Appendix:

## 1. Fundraising and business development

**Landfill Communities Fund** grant accepted - for £2800 for rhododendron control and removal of conifers from Upland Birchwood BAP Priority habitats alongside the river path. Spending on handtools and materials for volunteer conservation work parties has begun, and additional insurance to cover volunteer conservation activity and chainsaw use by named and trained operators has been agreed. We hope to begin to running volunteer work parties from May onwards, removing rhododendron and non-native conifer regeneration.

**Paths for All Community Paths Grant** - our 'expression of interest' for this funding stream was accepted. This funding is aimed at existing footpaths, and the aim of the funding application will be to improve the standard and the value of our stretch of the core path along the river by implementing some of the following measures:

- improved drainage and/or surface of wet and muddy areas
- create and maintain a rest area (or areas) beside the path with benches and seating
- produce a map of footpaths and walking routes in the vicinity of the community woodland
- improve signage and access onto the riverside footpath to and from the community woodland
- install a short hand-rail on a steep section of the path

A more detailed full application is under development and must be submitted by 29th April.

## 2. Forest management

Chris Piper has been drafting the forest plan for the site (although beset by various IT challenges), and he hopes to run a number of 'scoping walks' during May - as part of the forest planning process. We hope to start this off with one as part of a Tuesday morning

'health walk' from the community hall at 10am on Tuesday 10th May. Steve Morris from the Woodland Trust will hopefully also be able to join us for this.

The following forestry meetings and events at the site are also under development by Steve Morris and his team:

- a meeting/site visit by the UK wide team of the Woodland Trust Ancient Woodland Restoration Project managers (Thursday 28th April)
- a small-scale forest management and harvesting machinery demonstration for Autumn 2016

### **3. Health and safety**

Risk assessment for chainsaw use under development.  
Volunteer Policy, Fire Safety Policy and Data Protection Policy under development.  
Overall Hazard Map and Tree Hazard survey/strategy for the site under development.

### **4. Volunteering**

We have now recorded nearly 100 hours of volunteer work on the site since January, with the main emphasis being on depot renovation and the recent focus being on dismantling the deer larder and refrigeration unit, and trying to get the electricity supply reconnected.

With insurance and handtools now in place, we can begin to arrange volunteer work parties for rhoddie removal and restoration of native woodland habitats under the LCF project.

We have also been invited to work in partnership with the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew on their 'UK National Tree Seed Project'. This would involve organising volunteer events to collect seed from specific tree species in the area. In return they would provide some training and some funding towards materials and transport and administration costs. Further discussion and board approval required before we go ahead with this.

### **5. Building management and maintenance**

Continued tidying up entrance to site and the surroundings - cutting back hedges, collecting litter, clearing scrub (gorse, broom, cotoneaster), and clearing back the vegetation from the car parking area. Cleared gutter on back of the depot, collected and piled up rolls of wire and fencing ready for a skip.

Continuing to chase FCS about the promised uplift of 3 drums of unknown fluids which were lying around the site. Received assurances again (mid April) that they would look into it.

### **6. Reporting**

Monthly CDO report.

### **7. Renovation of existing depot building**

Quotes have been received for various aspects of the renovation of the depot to make the building and site safe for staff, volunteers and visitors. These include quotes for new stock fencing along the main road, for skip hire and for digger/JCB hire. A site meeting was also held with architect David Mee, and he has now prepared his draft report on the building condition, and has supplied us with detailed floorplans of the existing building.

Progress has been made on the supply of services, with the water mains now reconnected (and not leaking) and the prospect of the electricity supply being reconnected in the next few weeks.

## **8. Forest classroom**

Grace and I met with Joyce Gilbert from Trees for Life (TfL) on 15th April to discuss outdoor learning and the potential for a joint events/talks/activities programme under the TfL EOCA funding. Notes of this meeting attached in Appendix 1.

Invergarry Primary School - the school grounds committee will be visiting the woodland on Friday 22nd April. They will be helping us to plant the fruit trees (provided by VAL) and will be getting to know the woodland and giving us some ideas on what they would like to see on the site.

## **9. Communication**

Article in Lochaber Life (May 2016).

Posted flyers for the health walks and circulated online via the websites [www.glengarry.org.uk](http://www.glengarry.org.uk) and [www.glengarrylife.com](http://www.glengarrylife.com).

A 'Spring Newsletter' for GCW is under development and should be available in early May.

It is worth noting that the Forestry Commission are currently consulting on their 'Land Management Plan / Forest Plan' for **Ardochy Forest** to the west of Invergarry. This is the main opportunity for community members to have some input into how this land is managed by FCS for the next decade or so, and to encourage FCS to ensure that the site is delivering multiple benefits to the local community in terms of recreation, access, biodiversity, employment and rural development. Further details are (or should soon be) on the FCS website ([www.forestry.gov.uk/scotlandconsultations](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/scotlandconsultations)) and the consultation period runs until 31st May 2015.

## **11. Development of path network**

Organised the first 'health walk taster session' on 12th April with Vicky Dodman of Step It Up Highland, with five community members attending. We walked along to the depot from the hall, down to the riverside path and back into the village, before enjoying a coffee and a chat at the community hall. We crossed paths with a large walking group from Fort William (around 20 people) who were also visiting Invergarry for a walk followed by their annual lunch and AGM in the hall!

We are planning to make these 'health walks' a regular Tuesday morning fixture, exploring the wide variety of footpaths around Invergarry, and we also hope that we can recruit a number of 'volunteer walk leaders' to attend the (free) **walk leader training course** in Fort William on May 4th. Please get in touch with Vicky to book a place asap.

In the longer term we hope to build on this and to improve the network and variety of footpaths within Invergarry Wood itself, to suit a variety of walkers of all abilities.

## **Appendix 1: Notes of meeting with Joyce Gilbert - Trees for Life - 15th April 2016**

Present: Joyce Gilbert, Grace Grant and Gary Servant

Background: Trees for Life have offered to collaborate with GCW on education/awareness raising, volunteering and tree-planting/tree-nurseries. Recently TfL included GCW as named partners in a funding bid to the European Outdoor Conservation Association (EOCA) - specifically the funding application noted that "support will be given to a local community project at Invergarry, to enhance biodiversity at its Glengarry Community Woodland". For more details see [www.treesforlife.org.uk/voteTFL](http://www.treesforlife.org.uk/voteTFL).

Joyce has also been liaising closely with Invergarry Primary School and has been working directly with pupils to engage them in outdoor learning activities. The school have agreed to run with a 'woodland' theme for activities in their autumn term, and Joyce and colleagues are hoping to use a 'Storyline' approach to develop these activities (see [www.storyline-scotland.com/what-is-storyline-2/](http://www.storyline-scotland.com/what-is-storyline-2/) for more details of this approach). She is keen to help us to deliver outdoor learning for the primary school at the community woodland, and also in developing the school's own grounds for these activities.

Other projects under development by Joyce include a 'Re-wilding Journey' in the autumn - potentially carrying Scots Pine trees on horseback via old drove roads and footpaths from the nursery at Dundreggan in Glen Moriston for planting at a variety of sites on route to Fort William - such as Invergarry, Loch Arkaig and Glen Nevis. Joyce is also hoping to engage with poets and artists on the themes of 'Re-wilding', gaelic placenames and cultural heritage - such as Alec Finlay, Hanna Tuuliki, the Puppet State Theatre Company and Sheila Ryan. Projects might include an outdoor theatre event, a gaelic alphabet trail (each letter in the gaelic alphabet is associated with the gaelic name for a tree), a project on placenames and maps and their meanings and connections with landscape, wildlife and ecology.....

Joyce is also keen to work with the older age group (secondary school age) if possible, and has recently been in touch with the 'YoungScot' project and the Highland Youth Art Hub (part of the Room 13 project based in Caol) to begin developing suitable projects.

Hopefully GCW can work closely with Joyce to begin delivering 'forest school' and outdoor learning activities on site, and also to develop a series of talks and events based around native woodland restoration in Invergarry in the autumn - perhaps balancing the 're-wilding' aspect with talks and events on more 'conventional' themes such as forestry, crofting, deer management and local history. Joyce will be happy to attend a future board meeting to discuss further, and has offered to join us on site for the tree planting and 'school grounds committee' visit to the community woodland with Invergarry Primary School on Friday 22nd April.

**Note: Some of the topics raised in this report have yet to be discussed and agreed at Board level. (Section 2, Section 4, Appendix 1)**

Grace reinforced that volunteering was not rigid and any time/help offered is gratefully received.

In answer to a question from the public, it was agreed that we hoped that dogs on leads could be allowed on some walks. It would have to be clarified with Step-It -Up Highland if dogs would

be allowed on the existing health walks (every Tuesday at 10.00). These walks are for all ability levels and will be arranged flexibly on the basis of who arrives.

**Work plan:** Bruce gave a verbal update, explaining that there is an annual and quarterly plan and work is ongoing for a more detailed task list. The broad activities are:

- Establish Identity (newsletter, advertisers, local media)
- Safety Works (Depot development, trees)
- Community Involvement (Health Walks, volunteers, School work)
- Wider Forest Development (Forest Plan, Firewood processing)
- Administration

**Finance:** Grace explained that there is a monthly report to Directors and the minutes are online. There will be a formal audit for the AGM in the Autumn. Although the current balance is healthy, the funds are all allocated so fundraising is needed.

Grace confirmed a solvent situation at present.

**Upcoming Events:** Lindsay addressed the meeting and outlined the recent and currently planned events:

- Following the successful Easter Monday BBQ and Treasure Hunt, we now own a BBQ for future use. Thanks due to the White family for running the treasure Hunt and congratulations to the Rand family for winning.
- Saturday 4th June - Open Garden and plant Sale, with refreshments.
- Saturday 2nd July - we will have a table at the Highland Games to sell some things.
- Teddy Bears picnic - summer holiday time. Woodland activities and food. Bring your teddy and get in free... Hoping to attract all in the community and holiday makers.
- A repeat on the successful Mammoth Quiz. - October time.

Lindsay requested for any more ideas to be suggested and mentioned we have an idea for a suggestions box.

All events will be publicised by colourful posters and via the usual media routes.

**Publicity:** Colin briefly outlines how we are communicating, including Lochaber Life, Glengarry Life, our own web page, Facebook, newsletters and automatic email to subscribers. He warned that there may be more emails to keep spreading the word but that we are very conscious we don't want to 'spam'. Please let us know if it gets too much.

Colin also mentioned we put up posters in the 7 Heads, the filling station and Post Office. Also, we've recently purchased (with thanks to Glengarry Trust) a large notice board to be an 'events board' for all groups in Invergarry. Gary is liaising with the hall committee to arrange installation.

Also, we are just starting to display at the Fort Augustus supermarket/filling station and Tourist Information Office (TIC) for the relevant activities.

**Volunteering:** Gary had covered this in his earlier report but reiterated for people to sign the volunteers list. Tuesday and Friday tends to be the days but we will fit into any volunteers time frame as best as possible.

**Conclusion:** Grace concluded the meeting and asked for any questions.

**Questions from the floor:** A question asked if the Paths for All funding covered just our section or could it be expanded to cover the whole river walk. Gary responded that it would be good to cover the whole path network and it emerged that the river path is a 'core path'. It is a natural fit to the health walks and assists funding requests if all community groups are involved. **Grace suggested we could follow this up.**

It was suggested that we have a school section in our newsletter and all agreed this was a good idea and **Colin and Bruce will liaise with the school.**

A question asked if there were telephone lines/IT facilities at the depot and George explained we're aware that all the utilities need to be sorted out and the current priority is the electricity. Gary is aware there was a phone line so it should be possible to re-establish.

Colin reminded the group that there had been an early idea for an IT hub but this had gone to the back burner as we need to avoid a 'change of use' at the depot. Long term plans may change things.

Margaret Boyd (VAL) offered a contact from Fort Augustus school for possible 'wood activity' and she also suggested some signage at the depot/around the woods would be good.

**These will be followed up.**

Grace closed the meeting and invited all to partake of tea and biscuits.

### **Next Directors meeting:**

18th May 2016 (19.30hrs at the Community Hall)

Written by: George Cross 21/04/2016 and amended 15/05/16.

**These minutes are agreed and approved:**

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Role:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_