

Minutes for Maryculter Woodlands Trust Board Meeting, Wednesday 9th January 2019, Eastland

Members Present: Bill Caffyn, David Brainwood, Susan Astell, Ed Thorogood, Inga Milne, Nigel Astell

Apologies: Alice McAra

Minutes: The directors asked more time to review the previous minutes (from 1.11.18) so approval will be sought at the next meeting

Office-Bearers: This is the first meeting of the new Board since the AGM and the following office-bearers were agreed:

David Brainwood: Chair

Ed Thorogood: Vice-chair

Bill Caffyn: Treasurer

Sue Astell: Secretary

Finance: The current bank balance is £5,025

The following payments were made (debited from bank account since the last meeting):

1. £120.86 to Eastland Foresters for signs
2. £55.24 to Inga for expenses
3. £38 to TCV to pay for annual membership
4. £25 to Trinity Church, Maryculter, for use of their hall for our AGM
5. £302.54 to Zurich Insurance for annual insurance
6. £353.55 to Inga for expenses for the Maryculter Beerfest
7. £2,164.80 to Eastland Foresters to cover the cost of the expansion of the orchard/tree nursery

The following payments were received (already in bank account):

1. £620 donations from residents in Kirkton of Maryculter
2. £100 donation from Maryculter Carriage Driving for the Disabled
3. £11.18 donation from AmazonSmile
4. £664 award from Meikle Carewe Community Wind Farm for a pond liner
5. £708 proceeds from the Maryculter BeerFest

Known Liabilities:

1. £400 to cut up trees which have fallen across the paths during the storms over the holiday period
2. ~£1,000 for fruit trees and shrubs to stock the orchard.
3. ~£700 to complete pond (geotextile, sand, digger time, plants) + £664 for liner
4. ~£150 website hosting fees

5. Chap Quarries. Delivery of 'dirty' sand. Hopefully a charitable donation

Known Income:

1. Gift aid still to be claimed
2. Supply of a Christmas tree to Portlethen Community Council

Projects

Orchard. Ordering of trees has started. Planting will be in the Feb or March work party.

Nest boxes. Nothing to report

Recycled Deer fencing. Nothing to report. **Action:** Ed, Nigel & Bill to agree a location.

Pond Application to Meikle Carewe Wind Farm Community Fund was successful. The award of £664 will be used to purchase a suitable pond liner. **Action:** Nigel to order pond liner. **Action:** Nigel to get planning advice in writing from shire council.

Insect hotel. Pupils at Lairhillock School will assemble stick bundles to insert in the Nest during their school trip to the wood on 21st Feb. Stan Brooks is assembling the materials with Nigel's help. Stan has taken on the bulk of the co-ordination work with local schools – great effort.

Spruce Thinning. During the thinning operations last year we had hoped to thin all the remaining spruce stands south of the main E-W drainage ditch. Unfortunately, parts of these stands still have a lot of small trees and it was not worthwhile to complete the thinning in these areas using the harvester. The thinning licence remains operational until Dec 2019 so over the holiday period, Nigel & Ed investigated the extent of the thinning that could be completed by hand focused on those areas where there are still some surviving birch trees in amongst the spruce. It became obvious that we would not be able to thin out the spruce from around the birch using our regular volunteers as there is far too much to do and not much time to do it before the birch die off. Ed proposed that we hire in a chainsaw crew for a week to tackle these areas. The crew would work only where there are birch that are worth saving ie they would not tackle matrix thinning in areas of only spruce. To maximise what they can fell using our available funds, we would not ask them to process the spruce once felled. The Board agreed to allocate £3,000 to this project. As this would use up all the unallocated funds, it will be important that work stops once the £3,000 (+VAT) has been reached. **Action:** Nigel to arrange chainsaw crew.

Events

Dec/Jan Work-Party Over both events we planted 130 trees near the nursery/orchard. The total number of trees planted since acquisition is now over 2500.

Winter Wonderland Walk. Held Sun 9th Dec. A very successful event, well-attended by the community. Nigel & Ed led a tour each. Inga arranged the drinks and mince pies. Big thanks to all.

AOB

Vattenfall Offshore Wind Farm has a large pot of money for community projects. Applications are open until 15th April. **Action:** Ed to investigate

Ed requested approval to buy a keysafe for the main entrance – this will help with emergency access and also help those directors who forget their keys. Ed predicted a cost of £30. This was approved. **Action:** Ed to purchase and install a keysafe.

Publicity. We have had a lot of publicity recently. We had an article in the SWT local newsletter, we had an article in the KDP annual report and an article in autumn issue of South Deeside View. Stan Brooks has written a pamphlet to use in the local schools that wish to help transform the Nest into an insect hotel. Local author Ian Macilwain was interviewed by the Press and Journal and his article was published on 5th Jan. It is a nice article in which he describes the wood as his favourite walk in the area. It strongly encourages people to visit the wood, which is not a bad thing, but we would probably not have advertised the wood in the same way. Ed expressed his concern that some of the paths can't take a lot of visitor traffic and wildlife could be affected if there are always a lot of dogs in the wood. Extra visitors also create extra work for our volunteers and put pressure on our limited funding. Our policy remains to welcome visitors but limit what we do to advertise ourselves. Red Moss Nature Reserve has the same policy and for the same reasons.

Ed has updated the information for the noticeboards. **Action:** Ed to send draft to the Board

Margaret Brown has made a painting depicting the transformation of Scottish woods over the centuries. She has offered us the image should we wish to use it for, say, Christmas cards sent by MWT. The Board thought the picture was fabulous but didn't see it as an obvious Christmas scene.

Nigel has spoken to Dawn who mentioned that she would like to expand the forest school to a new location and install a log cabin. The Board will need to hear the proposals from Dawn when she is ready. There was a general sense that we would do what we could to help the forest school but that there are also some constraints on how the forest school use the wood.

Mavis was nearly run over on the burnside forest road by a dark coloured jeep that had somehow got past the locked gate. The gate has been damaged but is still on its hinges. The chain was also damaged. The incident was at night so perhaps they were poachers? **Action:** Nigel to get a split pin to make it harder to force the gate off its hinges. Ed will staple the chain in more places

Next Meeting Tues 5th Feb at David's house.