

Annual General Meeting of the Maryculter Woodlands Trust: Minutes

The annual general meeting was held in the Church Hall, Kirkton of Maryculter on 20th November 2019. 23 full members were in attendance (quorum 18) as well as 8 other members (not resident in Maryculter).

1. **Introduction.** The Chair, David Brainwood, welcomed the members of Maryculter Woodlands Trust and thanked Ed, other members of the Board & community members for their work and support. He reminded members of the stated purposes of MWT.

2. **Minutes of Previous AGM (Nov 2018).**

Mr Skinner objected to a sentence in the 2018 AGM minutes (“Mr J Skinner accused the Board of taking actions that had damaged his farmland adjacent to the wood”). David asked Mr Skinner to send alternative wording to the Board that would still honour the factual account of the meeting otherwise the minutes would be finalised as they are.

3. **Matters arising:**

There was a concern that the existing pond in the church field adjacent to the wood might have been mistaken for the pond proposed (i.e. not yet built) on the adjacent MWT ground.

4. **Chairman’s Report of MWT Activities.**

The main activities in the year were:

- Planted 41 fruit trees in the new orchard and over 200 saplings in the tree nursery section of the orchard
- Relocated the Mucky Boots firepit further away from housing and also to allow the woodland plants to recover at the old location.
- Built a second bridge over the burn.
- Stan Brooks completed the Nest (Insect Hotel) and Lairhillock School helped populate the nest with stick bundles
- Thinned spruce, by hand, in the remaining areas (under the current thinning licence) which were not economic to thin using a harvester
- Installed the barn owl box built by the Eagle Scouts
- Moved the main gate at the end of Polston Road to the other side of Kirkton Cottage. The costs were covered by the Church as this helps them access their field behind Kirkton Cottage via the forest road (and also makes life a bit easier for Ann Massie). This seems to be a good solution for all parties
- The proposed pond on Oldman Hill is on hold. The pond is needed to offset the loss of Ian Anderson’s pond once development starts on the field behind Kirkton Cottage. The hold-up has been the cost of obtaining planning permission (£400), which would use up most of the grant that we have been awarded

- We planted 222 trees during the year (2,573 planted to date) excluding the 200+ saplings that we planted in the tree nursery
- We were very pleased to receive a donation from the SDV plant sale as well as continued donations from members in the community
- We planted over 2000 snowdrops (courtesy of Hazel & Kees Witte) and we also planted wetland/pond plants (marsh marigold, water avens, water mint)
- We hired a contractor (Allan Scott) to mulch all the roadside verges. This is required to prevent gorse and self-sown trees from breaking-up the road surface
- Monthly work parties continued throughout the year (over 40 events held since June 2016)
- We have started a collaboration with Common Weal Cider which will allow us to grow speciality cider apple trees in the orchard
- RebelPT held a fitness event in the wood
- The wood continues to be used by Masters students from Aberdeen University for their research
- Theresa Dockery & Dean Muir have conducted a moth survey in the woods. They have identified 56 species of moth so far, including 5 species (Garden Tiger, Grey Dagger, Knot Grass, Shaded Broad-Bar and Small Square-Spot) listed as rapidly declining in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan. Most noteworthy of all was the identification of the Northern Marble moth (*Phiaris palustrana*) which is nationally rare

Future Projects

Potential projects for next year include

- More tree planting
- Wetland restoration
- Caledonian Pinewood restoration
- 1st bridge repair/ replace
- Ford crossings?

No further thinning by machine is planned in the near future

| <u>Treasurer's Report</u> | <u>A/c 1.9.18 to 31.8.19</u> Accounts ratified by Dean Turner |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Receipts | £13,970 |
| Payments | £14,179 |
| Surplus | (negative £208) |

Cash & bank balance at YE £6,771

Receipts (total £13,970)

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Grants | £664 (Meikle Carewe Wind Farm Community Fund) |
| Donations | £6,751 |
| Fund Raising | £1,631 |
| Income -Forestry | £300 |
| Income - SSE Wayleave | £195 |
| VAT Refund | £4,429 |

Payments (total £14,179)

| | |
|------------------------------------|--------|
| Insurance and membership fees | £371 |
| Expenses for charitable activities | £795 |
| Road reinstatement after Felling | £4,206 |
| Spruce Thinning & windblow | £3,440 |
| Tree Nursery & Orchard | £3,194 |
| Wildflowers | £82 |
| Admin (website) | £90 |
| Miscellaneous | £98 |
| VAT on sales & purchases | £1,903 |

Since we purchased the wood in Jan 2016 we have spent over £85,000 on improving the wood (road & path creation and maintenance, planting, mulching, spruce thinning)

We are registered for VAT even though our income is well below the level needed for mandatory registration. A member queried whether it was worth the effort. VAT registration means we have to charge VAT on all timber sales but we can also reclaim VAT on all expenses related to woodland management. Bill stated that VAT submissions are not time consuming (on our scale) so we would probably continue with things as they are

Election of Directors

A Co-opted Director (Aileen Roberts) had put her name forward for election as a Full Director. In addition, two current Directors (Nigel Astell & Ed Thorogood) had put themselves forward for re-election at this AGM. The ballot of the members gave the following results from members in the room:

| | FOR | AGAINST |
|-----------------|-----|---------|
| Aileen Roberts: | 20 | 0 |
| Nigel Astell | 19 | 0 |
| Ed Thorogood | 20 | 0 |

In addition, each candidate had approval from 10 proxy votes delivered via email to the mwt email account.

AOB

David reminded the members that if they make any purchases through Amazon then they can nominate a charity to which Amazon will donate 0.5% of the net purchase price i.e. at no cost to the buyer. The service is called Smile.Amazon, all within the Amazon wrapper (e.g. it uses the same shopping basket, user details etc as the main Amazon site). Members can set up their chosen charity at “smile.amazon.co.uk”

David advised members that our annual Winter Wonderland Walk would be on 8th December.

Dawn Ewan gave members an update on the Forest School. Everything is going extremely well and they now have a long wait list. Dawn encouraged members to pay them a visit if they were in the wood at the same time as the forest school

Stan Brooks gave a short update on the Nest. A total of 348 children have been involved with the project so far.

Chris Grinyer expressed gratitude to the Board for all the hard work that they put in to make the wood better for everyone

Mr J Skinner repeated his claim that his farmland has been damaged by rising water levels which he blamed on the creation of “ponds” in the community wood near the boundary with Parkhead. He stated to members that he will seek compensation from MWT for loss of barley crop. He further stated that he will carry out some drainage operations in the spring and send the bill to the Maryculter Woodlands Trust. There was widespread disbelief among members that the poor drainage on Parkhead was caused by any activities within the

community wood. Henry Irvine-Fortescue informed the meeting that a surveyor from the Scottish Agricultural College would visit the wood in December to measure water levels and hopefully resolve the drainage dispute.

David thanked the members for their attendance and input, and the meeting came to an end, although discussions continued with the help of the refreshments provided by Inga, Aileen & Sue.