

Minutes for Maryculter Woodlands Trust Board Meeting, Monday 23rd July, Eds House

Members Present: David Brainwood, Ed Thorogood, Inga Milne, Bill Caffyn, Aileen Roberts

Apologies: Susan Astell, Nigel Astell

Minutes: The minutes from the June Board meeting were approved.

David welcomed Aileen Roberts who has agreed to become a co-opted Director of MWT.

Finance: The current bank balance is £5,705

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

1. £214.35 to Inga for quiz night expenses
2. £439.20 to Eastland Foresters for orchard fruit trees

The following payments were received (credited to bank account since last meeting):

1. £300 from Portlethen CC for Xmas tree (invoice MWT 014)
2. £195.26 from SSE for wayleave
3. £100 donation from S Westwood in return for receiving a printer from Eastland Foresters

Known Liabilities:

1. £700 to complete pond (geotextile, sand, digger time, plants) + liner
2. ~£100 website hosting fees (paid by David)
3. £25.48 for keysafe (paid by Ed)
4. £30 CWA membership
5. £50 VAT to HMRC
6. ~£30 dog signs (paid by Ed)

Following a complaint via Facebook about the amount of dog mess in the wood, Ed ordered some signs and posters to remind dog owners to clear up after their dogs. The stickers have been placed on the council bin at the burnside entrance to make it clearer that the bin is also suitable for dog mess.

Action: Bill to set up payment of expenses incurred by Ed, David & set up payment of CWA membership fee.

Action: Bill to submit Q2 VAT return

Known Income:

1. Gift aid still to claim (£500).
2. ~£250 SDV Plant sale proceeds
3. £1,140 donated by Hannah Deen following her sponsored half-marathon in Edinburgh

Action: Ed to investigate the timing of Hannah's donation & check if we can gift-aid the donation from S Westwood

Projects

Second wooden bridge. Completed! Massive thanks to Kevin, assisted by Fraser, Nigel, Ed & Will. The Board estimated the cost of materials (timber, nails, bolts) for the bridge to be about £1,000. Kevin has offered to supply these for free. The Board thought this was an overly generous offer.

Action: Inga to agree with Kevin what would be a suitable reimbursement to him to cover cost of materials.

Pond (by Ian's garden). Nigel has had further advice from the Shire Council that we will need planning after all. Nigel is still hoping that the Council will reconsider, particularly after previous verbal communication with them had indicated that we shouldn't need planning. The cost of a planning application is about £200, via the Community Council. This would add about 30% to our external costs committed to the pond project (digger, sand, plants, geotextile). The Board was extremely disappointed by the decision of the council. Nigel will write the planning application and hope that the planning fee might still be waived.

Action: Nigel to submit planning application to NKRCC for them to lodge with the Shire Council.

In the June meeting the Board agreed to spend up to £2000 (+VAT) to hire a digger to work on: 1) the second bridge, 2) the burnside road extension and 3) the pond near Ian. Since this decision events have conspired to weaken the case for a digger. We have already managed to complete the second bridge without the digger. In addition, rather than excavate a notch in the slope in which to build the road it may be more effective to build the road level up using sub-base – hence less need for a digger and less damage to tree roots. The pond will be delayed until planning is obtained so this might have to be a separate machine hire. Growth in the wood is prolific at the moment and the Board thought the next machine hire should include mulching scope (ie hire a machine that can use both a bucket and mulching head).

Action: Nigel to stop efforts to hire a digger and check prices for a mulcher hire for consideration by the Board.

Spruce Thinning. Work continues by hand, at a slow but steady pace.

Nest boxes, Recycled Deer Fencing: Applications are now open for the Meikle Carewe Wind Farm Community Fund. After some discussion, the Board agreed that we should submit an application to cover the costs of installing a second barnowl box + trailcam. Estimated cost £500. Deadline is end Sept.

Action: Bill to co-ordinate the application.

A (free) moth survey is underway in the wood, organised by Nigel & Theresa

Events

Working Week. The working week 1st-5th July was well supported and we achieved a huge amount: brashing spruce on the cliff path, installing a barnowl box, checking the planted trees, clearing the area around the second bridge, raking the ditch on the burnside road, planting the pond. Inga kept us all fed afterwards and, along with Nicola, gave all the workers a fantastic chilli-meal on Fri evening. Wonderful.

Lairhillock Visit. Lairhillock visited the wood for a picnic lunch on 2nd July. The whole school visited (4 buses). All seemed to enjoy themselves and they left no evidence of their visit (perfect!).

Next event: August workparty, Sun 4th Aug. We could use the event to install the dog & horse signs.

AOB

Gate & road.

On 19th June contractors operating under instruction of the Church were discovered attempting to move our metal gate from the end of Polston Road to the other side of Kirkton Cottage. The Church thought they had the approval of MWT but no-one on the MWT Board had any knowledge of this request. It seems that the work was initiated with the approval of a local councillor who has no role on our Board and on the belief that MWT does not own this bit of forest road. Ed took the Board through the title deeds and report on title from the MWT lawyers. The lawyers from FCS, Church of Scotland and our own lawyers ALL agree that MWT owns the road outside Kirkton Cottage as shown in the Land Register of Scotland. The title deeds show that in 1936 FCS bought the plot from the Duff-Gordon Estate and the sale unambiguously included the road outside Kirkton Cottage. FCS sold the same plot to MWT in 2016 minus the bit used for the water treatment plant below Red Roofs i.e. our community paid FCS for this bit of forest road (along with the rest of the wood). The Board acknowledged that other community members think that MWT does not own the road and hence the Church should not have to pay to move our gate or pay our lawyers to create an access agreement. We have yet to see any evidence that would indicate that our title deeds are incomplete.

The contractors only had instruction to move the gate - no consideration was given to the pedestrian entrance or extending the perimeter fence. Unauthorised vehicles could simply have driven around the gate at its new location. Ed sent a letter to the church lawyers (copied to Mel) stating our conditions if the Church wants to move our gate. We await their reply. Meanwhile, the contractors have reinstalled the gate back at the entrance until a way forward can be agreed with our Board.

Stan Brooks has invited all Board members to his Masters graduation show on 23rd Aug. Action: Ed to forward invite

We have been approached by Alice McAra who wants to run a RebelPT event in the woods on 4th Aug & use the firepit afterwards. The Board agreed. **Action:** David to reply

We have been approached by Julia Mackay, a colleague of Dawn's, who wants to run a Campfire & Food safety course in the Mucky Boots Forest School location on 26 or 27th October. The Board agreed. **Action:** Ed to reply to Julia

Bill was concerned that the metal strainer posts pulled out by the church contractor could get stolen from the woods. **Action:** Ed to ask Nigel if we can move them to a safer location.

Action: Ed to send maps to Nigel for printing

Action: Nigel to suggest a date to bring in his tractor/trailer into the wood to collect birch logs

Action: Ed to write email about new office-bearers and pass it on to Alice for mail-chimping out

Action: Ed & Susan to finish the draft AGM minutes

Next Meeting: Tues 1st Sept, 8pm, David's place