

MARYCULTER WOODLANDS TRUST

Minutes of Annual General Meeting at Maryculter Church Hall at 19.30 on Tuesday 7 May 2013

1. Chairman's report

Ed Thorogood (Chair) opened the meeting at 19.30 and welcomed those attending (36 people). He expressed the hope that by the time of the next AGM Maryculter Woodlands Trust will be fully constituted as a company limited by guarantee or a registered charity and that formal elections will take place at that point. Meanwhile the Steering Group formed at the last meeting will act for the Community to progress the application to acquire the woodland. Mr Thorogood drew attention to the new website which will be used to inform the Community of developments and to the most recent edition of South Deeside View which contained a short article on the proposed acquisition and a flyer with further information.

The Chairman advised the meeting that Articles of Association were being redrafted with the aim of complying with the Companies Act and the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR). The Community boundary has been defined as Polling District SW1701 which approximates to the old Parish of Maryculter. The purposes of the organisation will be charitable, for example to preserve the woodland and restore natural habitat for native flora and fauna. Directors will have limited powers and will not benefit personally from their positions. Residents within the Polling District who are entitled to vote will be eligible to become full members with voting rights; there will be junior membership and persons living out with the Polling District may apply for associate membership without voting rights. If the organisation ceases to exist its assets will transfer to an equivalent Scottish charity or to Scottish Ministers.

2. Community ballot

The Chairman informed the meeting that ballot papers have been despatched by post to everyone on the polling register for Polling District SW1701. Ballot papers have been marked with alphanumeric codes for security purposes but these are not traceable to individuals or postcode areas. The ballot is confidential and Aberdeenshire Council will act as Returning Officer. During the period of the ballot volunteers will make doorstep visits to ensure voters have received relevant information and answer any queries.

There was discussion regarding the name of the wood referred to in the ballot paper - Oldman Wood. Mr John Skinner was of the opinion that the name of the wood was incorrect and that this technicality could render the ballot null and void. The Chairman explained that Maryculter Woodlands Trust were using the name and description which had been advertised by Forestry Commission Scotland but he had forwarded Mr Skinner's concerns to Forestry Commission Scotland. If the Community acquired the wood the members could, if they chose, decide to give it a new name.

3. Accounts

The Chairman informed the meeting that until now Maryculter Woodlands Trust has been managed on a budget of approximately £300 per annum gifted to the Trust. However, short-to-medium term running costs were going to increase to cover for example, the costs of running the ballot, legal fees and the Trust's contribution to costs of valuation. These costs are currently being met through loans from members of the Steering Group. If the application is successful the Trust will be seeking funding for the capital cost of purchase of the wood. Some 20 communities have done this already so this should not be an insurmountable obstacle.

4. Treasurer

The Chairman advised that the previous Treasurer had emigrated and with increasing expenditure in the short to medium term it is important to have a new interim Treasurer. Mrs Sue Dunlop volunteered to take on this role and the meeting gratefully accepted her offer.

5. Any other business

The Chairman answered several questions from the floor:

- a) Will the wood be sold to the highest bidder? The Trust will get first option to purchase at market valuation. If the Trust's application does not meet the criteria or is unable to raise the necessary funds for the purchase, the wood will be put on the open market.
- b) What is the valuation? Not known yet.
- c) How important is the ballot? It is important to show that the Community supports the acquisition. The Trust is hoping for at least a 50% turnout with a majority supporting the acquisition. Support from relevant local organisations is also important and the Trust has already received indications of support from a number of them.
- d) Will the Trust improve access to the wood? This could be done but will be a decision for the members.
- e) Will the Trust need to raise money for general maintenance e.g. fencing? Probably, but it is hoped that voluntary work parties will help to keep costs down. Work parties may also be able to repair some of the old dry stone walls.
- f) When will application be submitted? Deadline is 18 June. May not know if successful until September.
- g) Will new owner be liable to replace clear felled areas? Yes. The valuation should take this into account.
- h) Will the Steering Group need assistance to make doorstep visits to ensure voters have received relevant information and answer any queries? The Chairman informed the meeting that the Steering Group would endeavour to visit every doorstep in the Polling District during the period of the ballot. [Several offers of assistance were received from the floor].
- i) Can people who have recently moved into the area but are not yet on electoral roll vote in the ballot? No.

The Chairman drew attention to a fund raising Wine Tasting evening on Saturday 11 May in the Church Hall.

The Chairman thanked those attending the meeting for their support, and there was a vote of thanks to the Steering Group from the floor. The Chairman closed the meeting at 20.40.