

JOHN MUIR TRUST: TRUSTEES' MEETING**Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 16th June 2017 at Atholl Centre, Pitlochry****Present:**

Peter Pearson (Chair), Alan Dobie, Peter Foulkes, John Fox-Davies, Steve Green, Derek Johnston, Duncan Macniven, Hugh Salvesen, Chris Townsend, Andrew Whitfield, Deirdre Wilson and Douglas Wynn.

Apologies: David Broom, Patricia Jordan and Jo Moulin.

In attendance:

Andrew Bachell (Chief Executive), Fiona Kindness (Director of Resources), Kerry Ross (Director of Finance and Resources elect), Mike Daniels (Head of Land Management), Kevin Lelland (Head of Communications and Membership – items 12-14) and Jim Gibson (Financial Adviser – from item 15).

Items 1 and 2 – Introductory items

Peter Pearson welcomed all to the meeting. Andrew Bachell and Kerry Ross had just started work with the Trust, as Chief Executive and Director of Finance and Resources respectively. New Trustees Alan Dobie, Derek Johnston and Andrew Whitfield were attending their first Trust meeting. The apologies were noted. Peter Pearson requested declaration of any conflicts of interests, noting his own residence in the Lake District which might be considered relevant to item 15; no other conflict was reported.

Item 3 – Minutes of last meeting

The draft minutes of the meeting on 20th March 2017, which had been circulated with an amendment previously proposed, were **approved**, with a correction to the title of the Glenridding parish council.

Item 4 – Matters Arising

It was **agreed** that the Topical Forum on 28th July would discuss the Wild Land Policy and the Trust's role in Wales [**Action Point 1**].

Item 5 – Action Points from Previous Meetings (Paper A)

Progress on the Action Points from previous meetings was **noted**. On Action Point 2 from the meeting on 17th June 2016, Andrew Bachell would consider in due course the priority of the recruitment of the Communities and Wild Land Officer. On Action Point 2 from the meeting on 5th December 2016, Trustees confirmed that it would be useful for the annual reports on the key indicators of progress on the vision, mission, targets etc to include more objective measures of the condition of Trust properties and of policy work, to guard against the risk that urgent work drove out achievement of longer-term objectives.

Item 6 – Change of bank mandates

Trustees **confirmed their agreement**, in their responses to Fiona Kindness's email of 30th May, to the mandate for the Royal Bank of Scotland and CAF Bank accounts being changed to remove Stuart Brooks and to add Kevin Lelland as authorised signatories, in line with the authority form attached to the email.

Item 7 – Proposed Elgol land sale

Trustees **confirmed their decision**, taken in their responses to Mike Daniels's email of 24th May, not to sell an apportionment of land next to Elgol pier, on which it was proposed to site a chip van. Trustees noted that, although they were in principle in favour of facilitating development which did not diminish the wild

character of Trust properties, in this case the community was divided on the matter and refusal to sell would not prevent the proposed purchaser proceeding, since he had already been granted the apportionment and had obtained planning permission.

Item 8 – Further change to bank mandates (Paper B)

Trustees noted that a further change in bank mandates was required, for both bank accounts, to reflect the appointment of Andrew Bachell and Kerry Ross. It was **resolved** that the authorised signatories in the current mandate for both accounts be amended in accordance with the Add/Remove Signatories section of the Royal Bank of Scotland form attached to the paper, and that the current mandates should continue as amended [**Action Point 2**].

Item 9 – Appointment to Boards and Committees (Paper C)

Trustees considered the composition of the Finance and Human Resources Policy Committees, reviewed the appointments to other groups and bodies, and **agreed** the following:

- Hugh Salvesen was appointed to the Finance Committee, which would nominate a chair at its next meeting;
- David Broom would continue as the Trustee representative on the Health and Safety Committee, subject to his agreement;
- Alan Dobie was appointed to the Human Resources Policy Committee, which Duncan Macniven would continue to chair;
- Hugh Salvesen would continue as a member of the Bill Wallace and Des Rubens Grant committee;
- Andrew Whitfield was appointed to the Wales Working Group and Andrew Bachell would consider how best to be involved in the work of the Group;
- No changes were made to the composition of the Glenridding Working Group, which was likely to be wound up during the coming year;
- Alan Dobie and Derek Johnston were appointed to the Governance Working Group, and Deirdre Wilson was appointed as chair;
- John Thomas and Rob Bushby would continue as Trust representatives on the John Muir Birthplace Trust, with Steve Green and Duncan Macniven continuing as alternates;
- Andrew Bachell would consider how best to continue involvement with the North Harris Trust (and the two neighbouring trusts), the Knoydart Foundation and the Nevis Partnership;
- The chair of the Finance Committee, once identified, would be appointed as a director of the JMT Trading Company;
- Kerry Ross was appointed as Company Secretary of both Trust and Trading Company;
- Duncan Macniven was appointed as Returning Officer for Trustee elections.

Andrew Bachell would report to the September meeting on his conclusions about membership of the Wales Working Group, North Harris Trust, Knoydart Foundation and Nevis Partnership [**Action Point 3**].

The Governance Working Group would consider altering the requirement for the Human Resources Policy Committee to meet twice a year, which seemed unnecessarily frequent [**Action Point 4**].

Item 10 – Appointment of Financial Adviser (Paper D)

Trustees **agreed** the appointment of Jim Gibson, a qualified accountant and former Trustee, as financial adviser - who would be paid expenses and would attend Finance Committee and Trustees' meetings but would not have a vote.

Item 11 – Process for election of Chair (Paper E)

Following discussion, Trustees **agreed**:

- To follow the procedure set out in the paper, with a closing date for nominations of 1st September ready for consideration by Trustees at the meeting on 23rd September;
- To appoint Andrew Bachell to act as Returning Officer, consulting Jim Gibson to act as a sounding board for potential candidates if necessary.

Trustees were invited to express an informal interest to Andrew Bachell by 1st August [**Action Point 5**].

Item 12 – Deer Management Update and proposed cull for 2017-2018 (Paper F)

Introducing the paper, Mike Daniels noted that the SNH board had invited local landowners, including the Trust, to a meeting on 29th June to discuss deer management at Ardvar, as a prelude to possible regulatory action. It was important that the Trust gave a clear message at the meeting, where criticism was possible because the proposed cull, influenced by the views of other landowners, was relatively low. At national level, the welcome report from SNH and the follow-up report by the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament suggested that firmer government action was possible. The matter was with the Cabinet Secretary, and lobbying at the Royal Highland Show might be fruitful. Trustees congratulated Mike Daniels for his contribution to the Committee's work and welcomed the partnership with other interested parties including the Woodland Trust.

Trustees discussed the proposed deer culls. Mike Daniels explained that they were likely to keep deer numbers at, or slightly below, their present level. A larger cull could be achieved, particularly at Quinag, but he proposed restraint in deference to the views of neighbouring landowners. At Glen Nevis, where it was very difficult to extract carcasses, Trustees had agreed that more carcasses could be left on the hill in 2017 - but in the event the higher limit had not been required, and he recommended that it should be carried forward to next season. Kevin Lelland agreed to prepare guidance for Trustees on handling questions on this contentious subject [**Action Point 6**]. Trustees **agreed** the proposed culls.

Item 13 – AGM feedback and decision on future venue (Paper G)

Trustees congratulated all involved, particularly Emma Cessford, on the organisation of a very successful AGM at Fort William. They **agreed** that the 2018 AGM should be held in the Lake District and asked that members be given more advance warning of the date and location, to make it easier to book accommodation.

Item 14 – Membership and Communications

Kevin Lelland gave Trustees a presentation about membership trends. He updated Trustees on the use being made of the Membership Research Panel – which had improved his understanding of factors affecting recruitment and retention, had helped overcome potential criticism of the Trust's market research practice and had increased his knowledge of the views of members. A new member of staff allowed him to plan a programme of activities for the Panel, including focus groups, and to analyse and report on the results of the research to date.

He highlighted three interesting points: the strong influence on members of the Trust's management of its properties; a feeling among younger members that the Trust was appealing to an older audience; and a tension between members' concern with climate change and the Trust's opposition to certain windfarms.

Kevin Lelland pointed to ways in which Trustees could help the Trust's communications work – for example by attending a walk and talk at Schiehallion on 29 July and the winners' reception for the Scottish Landscape Photograph of the year at Pitlochry on 11 November. Ideas for articles, blogs and “wild moments” would also be helpful.

Trustees **welcomed** the report and the positive trends in membership.

Item 15 – Glenridding (Paper H)

Peter Pearson reported that the National Park Authority would decide at its meeting on 21st June whether to grant the Trust a 3 year lease of Glenridding Common. It was uncertain what publicity would be agreeable to the Authority. The start date of any lease was also uncertain but heads of terms had almost been agreed and it was likely to be a few weeks after the decision. Trustees **noted** the position and stressed that full publicity should be sought.

Item 16 – Transition/handover workload (Paper I)

Fiona Kindness explained that she had prepared the paper, in readiness for her handover to Kerry Ross, to make Trustees aware of the workload of the post and in particular the major tasks. She said that the full implementation of the ThankQ database was problematic because of the illness of the key member of staff. The IT upgrade, on the other hand, was now making good progress. Trustees **noted** the position and suggested that members with the right skills to help with ThankQ might volunteer their time for a short period.

Item 17 – Governance Issues – JMT policies (Paper J)

Introducing the paper which had been written by John Finney in his capacity as chair of the Governance Working Group, Fiona Kindness highlighted the work in hand to improve the Staff Handbook and to codify data protection policies, which should fill most of the policy gaps.

Trustees stressed the importance of prioritising work to improve policies, conscious of the need to avoid overloading staff. The Trust's policies were already well-codified and there seemed a low risk of a problem arising which could be avoided by more extensive policies. Data protection appeared to be the top priority, because of the impending legislative change. Members of the HR Policy Committee might be able to help translate the HR adviser's documentation into a workable staff handbook. Trustees also noted that the list of policies focussed on management issues, whereas the original question had been about the Trust's activities.

Trustees **concluded** that Andrew Bachell and Kerry Ross should propose a prioritised action list to their September meeting [**Action Point 7**].

Item 18 – Published Land Report

Mike Daniels provided Trustees with a near-final copy of the Trust's Land Report 2017, updating a document which had proved a useful publicity tool, describing briefly what was being done on the land managed by the Trust. Trustees **welcomed** the report and suggested that it might include a list of major donors and encouragement to become a member.

Item 19 – Kirkibost roof repair (Paper K)

Mike Daniels reminded Trustees that they had seen the former Kirkibost church during their visit to Strathaird in September 2015. Action was now urgent if collapse of the roof was to be avoided. Funds had been set aside in the budget agreed by Trustees and quotes for the work were now to hand.

Trustees agreed that action was justified by the reputational damage to the Trust if the roof collapsed. They welcomed the community interest but it remained to be seen whether that translated into a viable future use for the building. While they would welcome third-party involvement in a future use, they cautioned against any expenditure by the Trust beyond that essential to preserve the fabric. Meantime, they welcomed the fact that the building was used for storage by the local community, generating a modest income. Trustees **noted** the position.

Item 20 – Operational and Financial Update (Papers Li and Lii)

In discussion of the Operational Report, Trustees said that it would have been desirable to attend all the main political party conferences, not only those of the governing parties, but they recognised that resources did not currently permit. They highlighted the importance of responding to the current consultation on protected landscapes in Wales and suggested that, if the policy team did not have the capacity to do so, the Wales Working Group might be able to prepare a draft response, perhaps in conjunction with other interested NGOs. Andrew Bachell would consider how best to respond [**Action Point 8**]. On Stronelairg, Peter Pearson quoted from a member's letter which said that the Trust's action in mounting the judicial review made him proud to be a member. Trustees **noted** the Report, which they found a valuable way of keeping in touch with the breadth of the Trust's work.

Speaking to the Financial Update paper, Fiona Kindness pointed out that income (particularly from legacies) was well ahead of profile and that costs, normally low in the first quarter, were on track. There were no immediate concerns. Trustees **noted** the report. Trustees **warmly thanked** Fiona Kindness for her work as Director of Finance and Resources over the previous 4 years and for her calm and authoritative advice, and wished her well in her new post in London.

Item 21 – Chairman's report (Paper M)

Trustees **agreed** to further exploration of the possibility of special membership for Sierra Club members, and of partnership with Yosemite National Park [**Action Point 9**].

Item 22 – Brexit

There were no relevant developments to report.

Summary of Action Points

- AP1** Topical Forum on 28th July to discuss the Wild Land Policy and the Trust's role in Wales.
- AP2** Bank mandates to be changed to reflect the appointment of Andrew Bachell and Kerry Ross.
- AP3** Andrew Bachell to report to the September meeting on his conclusions about membership of the Wales Working Group, North Harris Trust, Knoydart Foundation and Nevis Partnership.
- AP4** Governance Working Group to consider altering the requirement for the Human Resources Policy Committee to meet twice a year.
- AP5** Trustees to express an interest in standing for Chair to Andrew Bachell by 1st August.

- AP6** Guidance on handling questions on deer management to be prepared for Trustees.
- AP7** Andrew Bachell and Kerry Ross to propose a prioritised action list on JMT policies to September meeting.
- AP8** Andrew Bachell to consider how to respond to consultation on protected landscapes in Wales.
- AP9** Possibility of special JMT membership for Sierra Club members, and of partnership with Yosemite National Park, to be explored.

Duncan Macniven
7th July 2017