

JOHN MUIR TRUST: TRUSTEES' MEETING

Minutes of Meeting held on Sunday 8 September 2013 at Brathay Hall, Ambleside

Present:

John Hutchison (Chairman), Heather Alexander, Gill Bond, John Finney, Richard Fraser Darling, Jim Gibson, David MacLehose, Rob McMorran, Peter Pearson, John Thomas, Will Williams, Deirdre Wilson, Bill Wright

Apologies:

Jo Moulin

In attendance:

Stuart Brooks (Chief Executive), Mike Daniels (Head of Land and Science), Fiona Kindness (Director of Resources), Helen McDade (Head of Policy), Sheila Wren (Policy Advocacy Officer), Elizabeth Baird (minute taker)

Item 1 – Welcome

The Chairman welcomed Trustees to the meeting. The Trust was visiting the Lake District from 6 to 8 September. During the weekend the Trustees had undertaken informative visits and received presentations on:

- the Trust's work in the Lake District National Park by Graham Watson, John Muir Award Manager Cumbria
- its policy work in England and Wales by Sheila Wren, Advocacy Officer; and
- initial results of the 2013 members' survey by Fiona Kindness, Director of Resources.

The Chairman thanked Elizabeth Baird who had acted as minutes secretary for the past year.

Item 2 – Minutes of meeting of 14 June 2013

The meeting approved the minutes.

Item 3 – Matters Arising

Any matters arising were taken forward by items on the current agenda.

Item 4 – Action Points from Previous Meetings (Paper B)

Action point a from meeting of 8 September 2012, engagement. A recent YouGov Poll had quantified public awareness of the Trust in Scotland – at 38%. This provided a

benchmark against which to monitor future change. At the next opportunity the same question will be asked in a UK poll.

Action point 1 from meeting of 11 March 2013, schedule for public meetings. The Chairman explained that this would be taken forward through public meetings focussed on management plans. A schedule of meetings had been agreed and these would be advertised to members and to the public. The Trust would require to make clear that some aspects would be for consultation while other matters would be for information. The Trust was an exemplar of land ownership in this respect as few other landowners undertook consultation with the community.

Action point 6 from meeting of 14 January 2013, Strathaird. A new short-term grazing lease had been agreed with a local crofter and day to day management was being carried out by the Trust's Property Manager on Skye.

Item 5 – Meeting Dates 2014 (Paper C)

Trustees agreed the proposed dates subject to the following changes:

- rescheduling the September staff gathering;
- “Thursday 24 October” should read “Friday 24 October”;

Item 6 – Energy and Climate Change Policy (Paper D), Built Development Policy (Paper E)

The papers were a statement of the Trust's policy on these matters in support of its Wild Land policy. They would provide delegated powers to staff when representing the Trust's position in relation to planning applications and advocacy on energy issues, and also act a clear statement on the Trust position on these issues and how they impact on wild land.

Trustees had previously considered an earlier draft of these papers. These further drafts took account of developments in the interim. Helen McDade undertook to finalise the papers taking account of relatively minor revisions agreed by Trustees during the meeting.

An implementation plan for the Built Development Policy was distributed at the meeting. A similar plan would be produced for the Energy and Climate Change Policy. These plans would be used by staff to guide implementation. The plans were a management matter, but Trustees will be given sight of them and invited to comment when they are asked to approve new policies.

AP1 – Helen McDade to revise papers in light of comments and publish policies.

AP2 – Trustees invited to submit comments on policy implementation plans.

Item 7 – Standing Orders 2013 Review (Paper F)

Trustees views had been sought on changes to Standing Orders via an on-line survey. The paper presented the results of this survey. It was agreed that:

- AP3 the Finance Committee would consider points relating to itself and submit recommendations to the Board via the Governance Working Group;
- AP4 the Governance Working Group would revise Standing Orders to make clear that, in the event of the appointment of a Chair being contested, a secret ballot would be held;
- AP5 the Governance Working Group would consider the points made about recording and circulating minutes and having decision items at additional meetings (Topical Forums) and submit recommendations to the Board, and;
- AP6 the Governance Working Group would consider all other comments and agree prioritisation at their next meeting and feed back to the Board in due course.

Item 8 – Independence Referendum (Paper G)

Trustees would require to consider how the possible outcomes of the 2014 Independence Referendum might affect the Trust's strategy and operations. This was in line with advice on good governance issued by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator and also prompted by papers from the Carnegie UK Trust and Scottish Environment LINK. They might also consider how to use opportunities offered by the debate to promote the Trust's objectives. An event coordinated by SE LINK in the new year would help to inform the Trust's position.

Trustees noted that, although much of the Trust's land and policy work had focussed on Scotland, it was a UK body with interests in wild land and engagement throughout the UK and with members throughout the UK. It was agreed that the Governance Working Group should develop a statement on the strategic issues for consideration by the Board at its meeting in March 2014 in preparation for the Trust's AGM. When approved, this would be available via the Trust web site.

AP7 – Governance Working Group to develop approach to strategic issues raised by Independence Referendum for Board meeting in March 2014.

Item 9 – Approach for Development in England and Wales (Paper H)

The paper set out an approach to developing a stronger presence across different parts of the UK in order to deliver the Trust's vision. Further expansion across the UK would entail a blend of land management, Award activity and policy tailored to the priorities and needs of different parts of the UK. The recent members' survey had confirmed that all these activities corresponded with members' aspirations. Barriers to expansion would be: resource issues – limit of free reserves to invest in new activities; and the need to target limited funds towards the unprecedented level of risk to wild land currently in Scotland. Expansion of activity through further land acquisition could raise the profile of

the whole range of Trust activity, but the benefits in terms of increased membership were hard to quantify and posed a challenge in terms of management capacity.

The Board agreed that it was essential for the Trust to resist threats to wild land and that the programme for expansion of activity should be planned to avoid conflicting with this work. The recent survey had identified that members regarded the protection of wild land against inappropriate development as their highest priority in relation to expansion of the Trust's activity across the UK.

It was agreed that the Trust should continue to develop its UK-wide approach but maintain flexibility about the time-scale to take account of capacity issues. The Chairman said that a review of priorities for future land acquisition would be completed by the end of the year. This would complement the existing land acquisition strategy. It was recognised, however, that the Trust had no control over when suitable land acquisitions might come on to the market.

AP8 – Mike Daniels to lead on land acquisition prioritisation paper for consideration by the Board in December 2013

Item 10 – Chairman's Update (Paper I)

The Chairman had undertaken a number of activities on behalf of or relevant to the Trust since the previous meeting. He highlighted the following.

- The Sierra Club had decided to present the Trust with the International EarthCare Award 2013. The presentation would be made on 21 September at a ceremony in the USA. The Award would be accepted on behalf of the Trust by Richard Cellarius who would present it to the Trust later in the year during a visit to the UK.
- The Chairman had contributed to a steering group preparing events to mark the John Muir centenary in April 2014. The steering group was coordinating the celebration but looked to member bodies to deliver events. John Thomas offered to consider the scope for a members' walk on the new John Muir Way to mark the occasion. The Chief Executive undertook to explore how the John Muir Award programme could engage with the Way.
- The Chairman would become chairman of a new charitable company "Scottish Rural Action". This body would support the development of a Scottish rural movement and of a Scottish Rural Parliament. Rural Parliaments were being developed across Europe to build up rural momentum and to seek to influence governments.

AP9 – John Thomas to explore scope for a members' walk across the John Muir Way.

AP10 – Stuart Brooks to consider how John Muir Award could engage with the John Muir Way.

Item 11 – Operational and Financial Update (Paper J)

Operational Report June – August 2013. The Chief Executive highlighted the following.

- The Trust had responded to the Scottish Government’s consultation on Scottish Planning Policy and would carry out an in-house analysis of responses and of the impact of Trust publicity on responses from others.
- Recent experience of bracken control on Skye had taught lessons about the need for improved communication with local residents and the need for a land management policy covering this activity

AP11 – Management Team to analyse SPP consultation responses.

AP12 – Mike Daniels to produce a land management policy to cover bracken spraying

Financial Report for January – June 2013. The Director of Resources reported that the budget was on track for the year but that next year would be more challenging financially. A substantial legacy to be received later in the year and donations in response to appeals would increase the projected voluntary income. It was noted that, apart from these, donations had been lower than usual in the first half of the year. The reasons were not clear. The Finance Committee would consider a draft budget before bringing it to the Trust for approval. Stuart Brooks congratulated Fiona Kindness on having made such an effective impact in her new role as Director of Resources.

Item 12 – Wales Land Acquisition (Paper K)

The Board gave further consideration to potential land acquisition. As this is a matter of commercial confidentiality, the discussion is recorded in a confidential minute.

Summary of action points

AP1 – Helen McDade to revise papers in light of comments and publish policies (Item 6).

AP2 – Trustees invited to submit comments on policy implementation plans (Item 6).

AP3 - Finance Committee to consider required changes in Standing Orders (Item 7)

AP4 - Governance Working Group to revise Standing Orders in relation to appointment of Chair (Item 7)

AP5 - Governance Working Group to consider Standing Order points about additional meetings (Item 7)

AP6 - Governance Working Group to consider all comments from survey and feed back progress to the Board in due course (Item 7)

AP7 – Governance Working Group to develop statement on Independence Referendum (Item 8).

AP8 – Mike Daniels to draft paper on priorities for land acquisition (Item 9).

AP9 – John Thomas to explore members’ walk of John Muir Way (Item 10).

AP10 – Stuart Brooks to consider how JM Award engages with JM Way (Item 10).

AP11 – Management Team to analyse SPP consultation (Item 11).

AP12 – Mike Daniels to produce a land management policy to cover bracken spraying

