

JOHN MUIR TRUST: TRUSTEES' MEETING

Minutes of Meeting held on Friday 14th June 2013 at Tower House, Pitlochry

Present:

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

Apologies:

None

In attendance:

Stuart Brooks (Chief Executive), Mike Daniels (Head of Land and Science) for items 5, 6 and 13, Fiona Kindness (Director of Resources), Helen McDade (Head of Policy) for item 7, Denis Mollison (present as advisor for item 5 only), Elizabeth Baird (minute taker).

Item 1 – Welcome, apologies

The Chairman welcomed the new trustees: Gill Bond, Jim Gibson, Rob McMorran and Jo Moulin. He also congratulated Bill Wright and Will Williams on their reappointment.

The Chairman reported that Denis Mollison had resigned as a trustee with effect from the AGM because of other commitments. The Chairman thanked him for his long association with and exemplary dedication to the John Muir Trust. Prof. Mollison stated that he hoped to be of further assistance to the Trust. He had been invited to attend for item 5 in an advisory capacity.

Item 2 – Minutes of meeting of 11 March 2013

The meeting approved the minutes subject to the following amendments.

- Item 7 should include “Denis Mollison’s resignation from the Governance Working Group was noted”.
- Item 10, 2nd bullet point. Correct the title of the “John Muir Birthplace Trust”.
- Item 10, 3rd bullet point. Correct the spelling of “Jarvis”.

Item 3 – Matters Arising

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

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

Action point 8 of 3 December 2012, draft energy and planning policies. It was clarified that Helen McDade was still content to take comments on these papers, even though Scottish Government policy was also currently developing.

Action point 3 of 11 March, risk register. The revised register had not been circulated. Stuart Brooks undertook to do so.

Item 5 – Land Acquisition (Paper B)

The Board gave further consideration to a potential land acquisition. As this is a matter of commercial confidentiality, the discussion is recorded in a confidential minute. The Chairman thanked John Finney, Denis Mollison and Will Williams for their hard work in progressing the project.

Item 6 – Position on Deer Management Issues (Paper C)

Mike Daniels reported on the agreement under Section 7 of the Deer (Scotland) Act 1996 relating to the Ardvar woodlands on Quinag. Annual habitat monitoring was showing ongoing and increasing damage by deer. SNH had proposed fencing around the Trust's woodland to protect it. This was a matter of considerable concern to the Trust. Fencing was against existing Trust policy and it had concerns about the cost implications. The proposal seemed to be protecting the interests of sporting estates in preference to the ecological interests of the designated site. This raised a question of precedent as similar issues existed on other designated sites. There were examples of successful deer management agreements elsewhere and SNH was understood in general to favour management without fencing if possible, both of which suggested that another solution might be possible. SNH had now notified the Trust that it recognised that the agreement was in difficulties and proposed negotiation of a new one.

The Board agreed that the Trust should: engage SNH at senior level in the first instance, to make a final attempt to negotiate a more satisfactory Section 7 Agreement; emphasise that wild land has socio-economic value which should not be overlooked in deference to sporting interests; and make clear that fencing deer out of woodland has significant disadvantages and doesn't address long term sustainable deer management. It was also agreed to progress other legal avenues if thought necessary in the future.

The subject, including how best to engage with relevant groups, would be discussed further at the July Topical Forum.

Item 7 – Scottish Government Planning Consultation (Paper D)

The Scottish Government had published consultation drafts of National Planning Policy 3 and Scottish Planning Policy. SNH's map of wild land had been published on the same day. There was some ambiguity about whether the map was in final version or was also

for consultation. The Trust would comment on the consultation by the closing date of 23 July. Trustees agreed to:

- support the SNH map;
- recommend that core wild land should be included in “Group 1: Areas where wind farms will not be acceptable”;
- call for a national spatial framework including a national map for onshore wind;
- emphasise that wild land contributes to environmental value and also has economic and social value;
- promote protecting as well as restoring peat;
- challenge the concept that need for national developments, if considered proven, cannot be altered by subsequent technological and social change;
- argue that the need for national developments cannot be regarded as proven unless described spatially in detail;
- support the implementation of a National Ecological Network;
- support an emphasis on sustainable development. The Trust might leave it to LINK to make the substantive comment on this issue; and
- comment on proposals for a low carbon place in line with Trust policy.

Trust managers had engaged with other relevant bodies on this consultation. Trustees congratulated Helen McDade and her team on their effective lobbying. The Trust would encourage members to comment on the consultation. This would be done via the website, e-news and Members’ News.

Item 8 – Members’ Survey (Paper E)

The last members’ survey was carried out in 2008. Trustees were asked to submit comments on the draft survey by 17 June. The survey form would be circulated in booklet format in the Members’ News and could also be completed on-line. It was agreed that there needed to be consistency of approach to allow comparison with the results of the previous survey.

Item 9 – Trustees on Committees & Working Groups (Paper F)

In line with Standing Orders Trustees agreed the following appointments.

- Finance Committee. Convenor Peter Pearson. Members John Finney, Jim Gibson and David MacLehose.
- Human Resources Policy Committee. Convenor John Thomas. Members Heather Alexander, Richard Fraser Darling and Bill Wright.
- Governance Working Group. Members Heather Alexander, Richard Fraser Darling, John Hutchison, David MacLehose, Peter Pearson, Will Williams and Deirdre Wilson. The post of Convenor would be considered in due course.
- John Muir Birthplace Trust. John Thomas remained the John Muir Trust’s nominee to the Birthplace Trust until the end of his term of office in 2015. Susan Wright is also a Trust representative.

Item 10 – 2013 AGM Initial Feedback (Paper G)

Trustees discussed the initial feedback and experience of the 2013 AGM. A full report would be produced based on a survey of participants' views. The Board noted that the AGM was an important opportunity for members to engage with the Trustees and senior staff of the Trust. Although numbers attending were relatively small, these members were committed to the Trust. The holding of an event on the Friday evening of the AGM was a relatively new venture and had generated positive feedback. Those who attended on Friday evening generally also attended the larger gathering on Saturday evening.

Plans were in hand for the 2014 AGM. This would be an important meeting marking the centenary of John Muir's birth and would be held in his home town of Dunbar. The provisional intention was to gather on the Friday evening, hold the AGM and excursions on the Saturday with a further gathering on that evening and disperse on Sunday. Jo Moulin stated that the John Muir Birthplace Trust would be able to advise on excursions.

Item 11 – Chairman's Update (Paper H)

The Chairman had circulated a report of some of his activities on behalf of the Trust since the previous meeting. He particularly drew attention to a meeting with Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Scottish Government Minister for Environment and Climate Change, and the First Minister's Special Adviser. Mr Wheelhouse demonstrated a clear understanding of the role and value of the Trust. A range of issues had been discussed. The Chairman had expressed concern that the proposed 'John Muir Trail', which was to open in 2014, presented neither John Muir nor Scotland well. Having made representations previously, Trustees were very familiar with the issues and the Chairman assured the meeting that he would continue to pursue this.

Item 12 – Operational & Financial Update (Paper I)

Operational update. Trustees noted the operational report and commented on the value of the UK advocacy work which was a fairly new initiative. The meeting was informed that the new Wild Space visitor centre had made a successful start.

Financial update. The financial situation was satisfactory. The Trust had received more than expected in legacies in the quarter to 31 March 2013. For the coming year SNH had increased its framework grant to £95,000 and awarded a grant of £25,000 for Award project activity.

Item 13 – Strathaird Farm (Paper J)

Strathaird Farm was now being managed in hand by the Trust, with one local farmer taking up the offer of grazing. Trustees emphasised the need to ensure that any agreements were formalised and adhered to. Trustees were concerned about the amount of management time which this issue absorbed. Mike Daniels explained that

considerable work had been achieved and would be necessary in the near future to bring the farm infrastructure and condition up to a satisfactory standard. The experience provided lessons for tenancies elsewhere. It was agreed that Mike Daniels should investigate the up to date situation and report back to Trustees for information.

Item 14 – Footpath Project – 1st stage HLF application (Paper K)

This paper was for information only. Trustees’ approval would be sought in due course.

Action points

1. Item 4. Circulate risk register. **(SB)**
2. Item 6.
 - a. Progress discussions with SNH re Ardvar woodlands. **(MD)**
 - b. Continue deer discussion at July Topical Forum. **(Trustees)**
3. Item 7.
 - a. Submit JMT response to planning consultation. **(HMCD)**
 - b. Encourage members to engage with planning consultation.. **(HMCD)**
4. Item 8. Trustees to comment on draft members’ survey. **(Trustees)**
5. Item 10. Progress arrangements for AGM 2014. **(FM)**
6. Item 13. Investigate grazing arrangements at Strathaird and report back to trustees. **(MD)**