

The Well Inn, Scotlandwell

Present: Dave and Louise Batchelor, Lesley Botten, Alison Bradley, Stuart Garvie and Mike McGuinness

Apologies: James Gilmour, Jeff Gunnell, Karen McDonnell and Jim Shepherd

JAMES GILMOUR'S REPORT: - The storm damage along the Portmoak boundary has all been cleared and non slip netting has been repaired on a number of bridges across the site.

- Tree weeding will begin towards the end of April as well as straightening tree stakes and tubes across all the recent planted areas.

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- **ACTION: (1) Ask James what is to happen to remains of large tree near entrance to Moss from Wellburn track. This has closed off the original path and necessitates taking a diversion which is likely to be affected by brambles later in the year.**
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James Gilmour and Louise to be at Holyrood on Thursday representing the Moss. Jonny Hughes, Policy Director of SWT is giving a report on Scotland's lowland peat bogs. Meeting will be at Scottish Parliament with the Head of Department and Louise will be giving a presentation on the Moss. International Wetlands felt the biggest stumbling block was the trees. She will be pleading for funds to prevent the regeneration of birch scrub. Mike said it would be impossible to prevent birch regenerating unless the established trees were removed. He proposed the easiest solution would include leaving the Scots pines and spruce but removing the Sitka. The birch is growing because the ground is too open. There is little chance of retaining the red squirrels as there is insufficient nourishment. The efforts of the SWT with the birch last time had limited success – they can only be brushed if very young. Stuart, asked to give a back of envelope estimate, suggested the birch etc. could be cleared in two weeks with 10 people. He suggested an expert should offer a perfect solution and a practicable one could be negotiated from there. Was it cheaper to buy the fields off the farmer and let, for example, willow grow: an outdoor workspace could then be created.

- **ACTION: (1) Jonny Hughes will be asked to send someone over to offer a range of options from perfection to compromise.**
- **(2) James Gilmour will be asked to find out how much dams would cost.**

A hydrologist could advise on the viability of more dams, call for closure of ditches etc.

2. LEASE OF MOSS: James Gilmour's Estates Manager has supplied a style lease.

- **ACTION: Circulate style lease.**

Public liability insurance could be funded by Community Woodlands, if not, BTCV volunteers are insured for chainsaw use. An alternative would be to use local labour which would cut the trees for nothing in return for our insuring them. This would leave us with logs to sell to offset the cost of insurance. It was agreed to explore this. Alison thought it would be preferable that SWT be owners/tenants with PCWG as managers, but it was felt that the intentions of SWT would not necessarily accord with our own, though they already have six lowland peat bogs which would make it easier for them to get funds. It was agreed to invite the relevant person from SWT to come to the Moss. Are there any other peat bogs like ours? It was noted that the Woodland Trust is efficient at removing dangerous trees but there are two chainsaw users in PCWG and we could use the same contractors as the Woodland Trust. It was agreed that BTCV would be asked what insurance would cost.

The question was raised of whether we can make the Moss into an economic going concern. How can it be made to generate income to cover the costs of a part-time administrator/ranger. The only practicable route would be ownership and to plant willow, Christmas trees etc. to create a community resource. Could funding be obtained from the Climate Challenge Fund? Could workspace be made available for courses etc. total cost say, £1m. So far the PCWG has not contributed financially to this as our funds are insufficient to be effective. There was a debate as to how funds might be raised: whether to train someone up and then charge for courses, sell firewood, have a donation box for Friends of the Moss, sponsoring of planting of new trees etc. Skilled labour volunteers would be a charge in the Accounts. It was suggested a competition be run among students to design "Disabled Access" with the hope of getting support from Access charities. John Hughes has expressed concern about future generations taking

responsibility for the Moss. A conference should be arranged to look into this. James is to be asked to provide examples of what others have done.

It was noted that the fence around the Moss is down on the side nearest to the Batchelors.

3. ORCHARD: Planting was finished on the last Sunday in March, there was an excellent turnout from Portmoak Primary School. Louise has prepared a report for the Newsletter. John Williams is to be asked to mark GPS location. 2 apple trees have been planted at the school and 98 in the orchard. The children were very involved and Karen explained grafting. There is loads of blossom on last year's plantings. Most of those who came were from young families who wanted to be involved in future events. The head teacher had emailed parents but more publicity was wanted.
4. PARKING AREA: It is intended to proceed with this. Stuart will pass the style lease to Brian to show to his solicitor. When having the access to the new houses extended Brian will arrange for the contractor to upgrade the access to the Moss and to the parking area at the same time. Planning conditions require that a hedge be planted to soften the landscape around the houses.
  - **ACTION: Louise is to email the lease to all members.** She asked that Alison check it through for obviously inappropriate clauses etc.
5. VIEWPOINT INDICATOR: It was proposed that when the unveiling takes place this should be videoed and the video shown at the Burns Supper

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Next Meeting: 15 May 2012.