

KIRKHILL & BUNCHREW COMMUNITY TRUST

MINUTES OF MEETING ON NEWTONHILL WOODLANDS MANAGEMENT PLAN

INCHMORE CANTEEN

MONDAY 19th AUGUST 2002

PRESENT

Douglas Murray, Area Manager, Fountain Forestry
David Andrews, Highland Council Footpath Project Officer 702288

CT – Community Trust CC – Community Council

Les Bates	831320	CT Board
Ged Church (Chair)	831306	CT Board
Fred Geddes	831324	CC
Sandra Hogg	831674	CT Board
Alan Humphries	831396	CT Board
Cameron Kemp	831552	CT
Erik Lundberg	831742	CT Board
Neil MacLennan	831542	
Alistair McNeil	831339	CC, CT Board
David Shepherd	831600	CT
Donald Shiach	831591	CT
Elizabeth Shiach	831591	CT Board
David Rogerson	831001	CT Board
Yvonne Wall	237528	

Apologies noted from John Finlay 831688

- 1.0 Douglas Murray is a Forester and Area Manager for Fountain Forestry (FF), covering an area bounded by Alness, Dalwinnie, Nairn and Skye.
- 2.0 Woodlands run by Wylie Valley Farming, owned by Mr Robin Clark who also has an estate in Strathnairn. Fountain Forestry manages it for them. They have asked FF to prepare a Management Plan to submit to the UK Woodland Assurance Scheme, based on best management practice. This accesses grant funding and it is now difficult to sell non-certified timber. FF is at the start of the process and is required to consult the public, neighbours and other interested parties
- 3.0 DM passed around coloured maps showing the area in question and the felling programme over the next 30 years. GC had sketched the map onto a large sheet displayed on the floor. The woodlands border Relig (Tillhill) – Dochfour – Inchberry estates and the south side of Inchmore.
- 4.0 The final version of the Management Plan will be discussed with statutory bodies (eg SNH) and the Community Council then the whole of the local community, including over 40 neighbouring proprietors. DM would like to use Crannog to keep the community informed of progress.
- 5.0 The first phase of felling is to begin in 2 years time and continue until 2037. Felled areas will be replanted – this is to be permanent woodland.
- 6.0 GC - Aird Community Links footpath network will include forest paths and KBCT jointly manages Relig woods with Forest Enterprise. DM – FF have to take account of felling plans in adjacent woodlands in Relig and Tilhill and vice versa.

- 7.0 GC – raised forest roads in woods south of Newtonhill crossroads (DM - 30 years till this area is felled), used by walkers, cyclists, and horses. Could existing viewpoints be kept clear of trees and additional ones created? DM – proposals for routes would have to be taken back to the owner – not overly keen on public access. LB – public paths could be in the interest of the owner in connection with the grant scheme.
- 8.0 DShep – difficult to be aware of Woodland Grant Scheme (WGS) applications for felling approval. DM – these are linked to the Management Plan and locals will be informed in advance. Trees of special character have to be considered for retaining and the Plan will show all details of felling.
- 9.0 DA – WGS projects have to promote public access. DM – paths and wildlife will be taken into consideration.
- 10.0 GC – local community and visitors need to know where they can go – leaflets, signs. DM -would needs to know where paths are now/desired routes and will consult the owner. DA – owner has a duty of care for visitors but is not expected to pay for new paths. DM – he could approach Forest Enterprise for WGS funding up to 80% of footpath costs.
- 11.0 DM - The public has a right to roam without damaging the land or trees. With the agreement of the owner, there is the possibility of grant funding to improve the footpath network. GC noted a public fear of loss of paths/barriers due to land being sold for house plots.
- 12.0 GC – KBCT partly formed as the best way to achieve funding for a roadside path was if it was part of a path network. DA – signed paths and paths in good condition are necessary to encourage more people to use footpaths. Funding bodies are looking for social inclusion, health benefits and to encourage the bulk of the population who don't walk at present. Dshep – funding for annual maintenance will be an issue. FG – doesn't like signed paths in a natural environment and knows where to go. ES – signed paths will encourage visitors. AH – the bulk of the paths will be unsigned with a few signed paths for visitors. DA – aim is to improve and sign existing paths, not make new ones.
- 13.0 DM – no problems reported with horse damage to paths so far.
- 14.0 GC indicated an existing route from Newtonhill crossroads to Inchmore. From the map, it follows the edge of 2 felling zones, including the first one to be felled, and could be formed into a proper path. DM – Land likely to be mounded for new planting and may have to be fenced to avoid deer damage. If these were across paths, stiles would be formed. DS – less able would find a kissing gate easier than a stile. DM - Map shows open ground alongside the roadways, which will be kept for natural regeneration and other areas for permanent retention. These are part of the woodland structure and are not viewed as future house plots. Plans will be firmed up and available for public consultation by end 2002.
- 15.0 DM – hopes trees will go for logs and processing if prices are appropriate but it is not likely that the old sawmill would be reopened. Badger setts, red squirrels and specimen trees will be retained.
- 16.0 GC – informal roadside paths in open areas may develop naturally.
- 17.0 FG – a link path to the drove road west of Newtonhill would be useful.
- 18.0 DM –on the question of local employment, FF employees do most work, vehicles provided by local contractors. Local employment is a requirement of the WGS.
- 19.0 DR – would a mountain bile trail be considered? DM – owner unlikely to be keen.
- 20.0 GC – KBCT to map out existing routes and present to FF for consideration, including viewpoint locations to be maintained and submit by end September.
- 21.0 DM – FF will maintain the existing path network and upgrade it where required and apply for grant funding to carry out this work. A decision of plan preparation grant funding is awaited from FE. Should this be declined, the same process will be undertaken on an informal basis.
- 22.0 LB – encouraging to see FF taking the trouble to attend tonight. GC thanked DM for attending and thought it had been a very worthwhile exercise.

End.

Distribution – copy to all who attended & apology.