

Aigas Community Forest

Steering Committee

Minutes

of meeting held in Kilmorack Hall
at 7.30pm on Wednesday 15th April

In Attendance		Apologies
Steve Byford	Calum Fraser	Mia Scott
John Graham	Mark Hedderwick	John Lister-Kaye
Philip Knott	Andrew Leaver	
Lara McDonald	Peter Masheter	
Graeme Scott	Alisdair Stewart	

Item	Action
<p>1 Formal membership of Committee</p> <p>Andrew Leaver welcomed everyone to the first meeting of the Aigas Community Forest Steering Committee, the establishment of which was one of the actions agreed at the public meeting of 25 March 2009. The purpose of the Steering Committee is to develop plans for a community purchase of Aigas Forest from the Forestry Commission. All present had volunteered to join the Steering Committee. All present introduced themselves.</p> <p>It was agreed that with the addition of Mia Scott, who was unable to attend, those present would be the formal members of the Steering Committee.</p> <p>Philip Knott explained that he was representing Aigas Field Centre and that other individuals may represent the Centre at future meetings.</p> <p>It was agreed that it may be appropriate to invite others to join the Committee at a future date.</p>	
<p>2 Election of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer</p> <p>Andrew Leaver invited nominations for Chair. Graeme Scott was proposed by Alisdair Stewart and seconded by Peter Masheter. There were no other nominations and Graeme Scott was elected Chair.</p> <p>Andrew Leaver volunteered to be Secretary and was formally proposed by John Graham and seconded by Steve Byford. There were no other nominations and Andrew Leaver was elected Secretary.</p> <p>Lara McDonald suggested that a Vice-Chair be elected. This was agreed. Lara McDonald was proposed by Mark Hedderwick and seconded by Andrew Leaver. There were no other nominations and Lara McDonald was elected Vice - Chair.</p> <p>It was agreed to elect a Treasurer at a future meeting. Graeme Scott took over Chairing the meeting and introduced</p>	

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<p>a discussion on the timescales involved in making a National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS) application. The NFLS has a strict timescale for its various stages as outlined below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">→ The initial trigger is the formal notification of the sale of the forest.→ We then have up to 28 days to formally notify our interest to the land agents.→ We then have up to 56 days to jointly instruct a valuation.→ We then have up to 56 days to submit our application to the National Forest Land Scheme (NFLS)→ If that is successful we then have 18 months to find the money. <p>The discussion raised a number of questions and points including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Request clarification of the phrase ‘Jointly Instruct’ the District Valuer• We should ensure that we have experienced individuals who can show the District Valuer the worst parts of the forest as this will help bring the value down. Forestry Commission will be showing the best parts of the forest.• At what stage must a ballot of the community be undertaken?• At what stage must the Steering Committee become a formally constituted group / become a charity?• At what stage do we undertake the feasibility study?• There was discussion on the purpose of the study and the need to select a consultant or consortium of consultants with experience in forestry, natural history / conservation and working with communities.• It was stressed that the feasibility study will be highly consultative and community driven.• Later in the meeting it was agreed to put the brief for the feasibility study on the agenda for the next meeting.	
<p>3 Name for project / Committee</p> <p>It was agreed to use the name ‘Aigas Community Forest’ for the project.</p> <p>There followed discussion on the boundaries of the Community. Mark Hedderwick suggested that the community should be defined relatively narrowly so as to encompass those with the most direct interest in the Forest.</p> <p>Andrew Leaver suggested the two postcodes IV4 7AD and IV4 7AE which contain 38 addresses including Aigas Field Centre, Aigas Farm, Crask of Aigas, Cluanie Farm and Teanassie School. There was general agreement that this area may be an appropriate starting point subject to further consultation.</p> <p>Lara McDonald expressed concern that this may exclude anyone who lives outwith the two postcodes from participating in the Steering Committee. It was stressed that this was not</p>	

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	the intention and agreed that clarity would be sought from both Forestry Commission / NFLS and HIE Community Land Unit (CLU).	
4	<p>Aims of the project</p> <p>Members of the Committee outlined their reasons for participating in the project and their long term hopes for the Forest. There was general agreement that the aims of the project are to put Aigas Forest into community ownership to allow local control and the opportunity to develop a major community asset.</p> <p>Developments would include restoration of natural habitats, reforestation with native trees and development of tourism opportunities including paths, mountain bike tracks and art and cultural events. This is not an exhaustive list.</p>	
5	<p>Timeline for NFLS applications</p> <p>Much of this discussion was covered in 2 above.</p> <p>A number of actions were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Andrew Leaver to monitor the Forestry Commission website and to notify all members when the Forest is formally put up for sale. • Graeme Scott to approach Kirsty Conti and Andrew Anderson at the CLU to seek clarification of points minuted in 2 and 3 above and to invite Kirsty to attend the next meeting • Alasdair Stewart to contact Malcolm Wield at the NFLS to seek clarification of points minuted in 2 and 3 above and to invite him to attend the next meeting 	<p>A Leaver</p> <p>G Scott</p> <p>A Stewart</p>
6	<p>Start-up and Feasibility Funding</p> <p>It was noted from the public meeting that a number of offers to provide financial support had been made:</p> <p>The CLU offer a 100% grant to support start-up costs and further support for the feasibility study</p> <p>Margaret Davidson offered to tap in to the Ward discretionary budget to provide start-up support</p> <p>The Strathglass Community Woodland Trust offered £700 currently held in their bank account</p> <p>It was agreed to follow-up these offers and actions were agreed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graeme Scott to discuss with the CLU • Lara McDonald to approach Margaret Davidson • Lara McDonald to contact Bob Hemingway at Strathglass Community Woodland Trust 	<p>G Scott</p> <p>L McDonald</p> <p>L McDonald</p>
7	<p>Interim mechanism for channelling funding</p> <p>The offer of support from Kilmorack Community Hall was</p>	

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	welcomed but it was uncertain what requirements funders would put on the Committee before funding could be provided. Graeme Scott agreed to investigate this with the CLU.	G Scott
8	Membership of Community Woodland Association (CWA) It was agreed to join the Community Woodland Association. Lara McDonald to contact the CWA and complete the membership application. Membership fee to be reimbursed once start-up funding secured.	L McDonald
9	Future meeting dates The next meeting was set for 7.30pm on Monday 27 th April 2009. Andrew Leaver to arrange and confirm a venue.	A Leaver
11	AOCB Graeme Scott suggested that the brief for the feasibility study be added to the agenda for the next meeting.	

Summary of Actions from Meeting		
Ref	Action	Person Responsible
1/1	Forestry Commission website to be monitored for formal notification of sale of the forest and all members to be informed immediately	Andrew Leaver
1/2	Kirsty Conti and Andrew Anderson at the CLU to be approached to seek clarification of points minuted in 2 and 3 above and to invite Kirsty to attend the next meeting	Graeme Scott
1/3	Malcolm Wield at the NFLS to be approached to seek clarification of points minuted in 2 and 3 above and to invite him to attend next meeting	Alasdair Stewart
1/4	Start up and feasibility funding to be discussed with the CLU	Graeme Scott
1/5	Margaret Davidson to be approached for support from The Highland Council ward discretionary fund	Lara McDonald
1/6	Bob Hemingway at Strathglass Community Woodland Trust to be approached for clarification on the availability of £700 currently held by the Trust	Lara McDonald
1/7	CLU to be approached to clarify if they require bodies receiving start-up and feasibility funding to be formally constituted	Graeme Scott
1/8	CWA membership application to be submitted. Membership fee to be reimbursed once start-up funding secured.	Lara McDonald
1/9	Venue for next meeting to be arranged and confirmed.	Andrew Leaver