



Minutes for meeting via Zoom

19.30 hrs, 4th November 2021.

Attendees:

Paul Bulmer (PB), Reg Macdonald (RD), Ros McGhee (RM), Cathleen Russell (CR), Gary Kirby (GK), John McNaughton (JM), Graham Curran (GC), Amber Llovet (AL), Charlie Collins (CC)

Apologies:

Previous minutes:

16th September 2021

GK argued that the minutes were too subjective, a lengthy confrontation followed. The minutes were not approved.

Declarations of interest:

CR is a director of the Scottish Rural Action and the Bute Ferry Group, the advisory group for Argyll and Bute Climate Challenge and Treasurer of the Colintrave and Glendaruel Community Council.

PB Convenor of Colintrave and Glendaruel Community Council and on the board of the Kilmodan Acre Trust.

Administrators report:

CGDT submitted a successful application to the Communities Recovery Fund Phase 2, and has been rewarded £23,360. The CRF2 paperwork was received on 28th October 2021, and will be completed and returned as requested by the funders. All monies must be spent by 31st March 2022.

AL and CR have applied for and been granted £34,580 from Inspiring Scotland. This included money for lockers and compartments in order to sell both chilled and Ambient temperature foodstuffs remotely to the public from a site to be confirmed. This includes an administrative salary until March 2022. It also includes costs toward the new signage in the Stronafian Forest.

CGDT has been preparing an application towards Connecting Scotland: Connecting Scotland is a Scottish Government initiative, managed by SCVO (Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations), to support everyone in Scotland to get online. The programme aims to get 60,000 digitally excluded households online by the end of 2021. Those at risk of social isolation & loneliness due to lack of online access are the primary demographic for this particular phase of funding.

Planning is underway for the Christmas Market 2021, to be held in Glendaruel Village Hall on 11th December 2021.

We have been gifted items from Morrison's for inclusion into a Hamper Raffle Prize. There are plans for a live performance of Carols, a pop-up-cafe (ran by the Hall), and outdoor BBQ.

There is a membership drive under way in preparation for the AGM in early December.

Forest Rangers report:

The new path link between the Cairn and the Forest Road is now in. The path will need some time to dry out and firm up and should be ready for the Summer. The plan is to keep the route closed/taped off and un-waymarked, until the path is firm enough to be used.

The link path to Glendaruel Village is now almost 80% complete, and most of the work has been done on the outside perimeter of the main field that we are going to lease from the Council who own this piece of Land. Concerns have been raised by a well-known local farmer, about people using this route through the field especially if he has cows in it. It appears that he has placed barbed wire and feed troughs across the prospective path.

Report from John Allan on his meeting with Andros Stakis.

It is estimated that Stakis have made about £4m from extracted wood so far, this is not denied by Andros. The remaining value is on Stakis Forestry books at £7m.

Board Options:

1. Fight the original case with a legal battle on the grounds of "unfair influence".
 - a. Legal advice on Chances of success.

- b. How to prove it to the satisfaction of a court – how would Harry’s analysis stand the legal tests required. Spoken to Harry and his view is we would probably not be able to demonstrate harm.
 - c. Costs involved that the Board don’t have – crowd fund?
 - d. Publicity for the Board stirs matters up again.
- 2. Accept the status quo and be constructive to get something, but note this should probably be discussed with the community (AGM) to get their feedback. It should be recognised that:
 - a. Any investment by Stakis forestry will be on a revenue sharing basis including any wind turbine or hydro scheme.
 - b. Any grants from Stakis Charitable trust will be a simple donation requiring Stakis trustee approval and I suspect (don’t know) will have to be self-sustaining.
- 3. Only other avenues will be tinkering on the edges but the Board or community may decide to pursue those:
 - a. Stalking rights – as Andros Stakis is clearly a shooter from his comments that might or might not gain some concessions for local businesses – may include that in the status quo acceptance.
 - b. The release of the solum will be effectively walking away from the forest apart from our area we hold. To do that I would suggest will have to be for a much larger sum than £240k because, at least my mind, it has an ability to be used to raise debt capital. Interestingly in many of their other assets they have done that, but not here, their most valuable asset. Also need to look at the legal propriety of that from the original government terms.
- 4. Finally, I don’t think the Board should rush into this. It’s complicated and needs to be understood and to have community support to move forward in my view. Even after 6 months working on it there are still wrinkles coming out. Doesn’t mean you can’t engage with Stakis and explore without any commitment on your part and just avoid being rushed.

JA left the meeting, and Board discussions brought up the following two points:

- 1. CGDT have the right to purchase the wood on the 46 hectares still owned by us at a set price from Stakis.
- 2. Stakis are unable to borrow on the £7m book value of the wood in their contract unless they owned the solum itself.

CR wanted CGDT to take a positive attitude towards working with Stakis in the future.

GC wanted further research done into the Stakis Charitable Foundation, and for the Board to be united in their presentation at the AGM

GK wanted to further investigate the sale of the lease and the Land Registry’s scrutiny of it.

RD wanted no further interaction with Stakis, and to proceed with a legal challenge.

The Minutes end at this point as PB left the meeting. The meeting continued.

DONM:

Not discussed.