

**Minutes of Board Meeting for
North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd
Meeting held at Dervaig Church Hall on
Monday 27th August 2012**

Present: Colin Morrison, John Morrison, Ailsa Morgan, John Addy, Andy Mayo, Catriona Laurie and James MacPhail.

Also Present: Ian Hepburn (Development Manager) and Belinda Hale (Administrator and Company Secretary).

1. CM **welcomed** everyone to the Meeting.
2. There were **apologies** from Alex Duncan.
3. The **Minutes** of the Board Meeting held on 31st July were **signed** by CM as a true record of the proceedings.
4. **Matters Arising.** AM has had a further chat with Dougie Allen at the Post Office about a glazed noticeboard but it was agreed that further options need to be explored before a firm proposal is made. The entry for the award suggested by HIE is being progressed by IAH. NWMCWC Ltd is now a member of the Deer Management Group. The next meeting will be held on 14th October 2012. IAH and JM are liaising to draft a letter to Counsellor Mary Jean Devon about the Dervaig Toilets.
5. Two **items** not already on the **Agenda** were **declared**, i. School request to plant fruit trees, and ii. Email from Hugh Balfour Paul.
6. The **Finance Report** had previously been circulated by JM. No items required further discussion. IAH informed the Board that timber prices are falling at the moment due to the recession and this may have implications in the future.
7. The **Development Manager's Report** had previously been circulated by IAH. Four padlocks and chains that were locked onto our boundary gates have been removed. This would have required bolt cutters or an FES key.

The fixed pier at Fishnish is now scheduled for completion in July 2013. An agreement has been reached ensuring our access to the floating pier in the meantime.

The process of registering the first three Forest Crofts has finally been completed and invoices sent out to the Crofters concerned for the ingo premium and first year's rent. Steve Maker has made a request concerning clearing some dead larch. He has also offered to make an information booth and some seats. In principle the Board agreed to this generous offer but would like to see drawings and exact locations for the proposed amenities. Steve has a chainsaw licence but it was agreed that he should be reminded of the guidelines about not operating a chainsaw when alone. **Action IAH** to liaise with and thank Steve.

The full application for a CARES loan has been submitted and a response is expected in September. A connection application has now been lodged with SSE.

Minute re Anonymous Member's Complaint to an Anonymous Councillor.

Following an earlier telephone conversation between IAH and Claire Hannah from HIE the Chairman received an e-mail from Claire Hannah a Development Manager with HIE on the 24th of August requesting that we investigate a complaint from a member of the Company.

The complaint had been forwarded to HIE by a Councillor who wished to remain anonymous. When asked if we would receive a copy of the HIE response to the Councillor Claire Hannah advised that that was not likely.

The request from Claire Hannah was as follows:-

"I refer to the minutes from a board meeting on 16th January 2012 <http://www.nwmullwoodland.co.uk/minutes/160112.pdf>, and the specific wording in item 7, viz: "The HIE Review is due to commence on

Thursday 19th January. All Directors, past Directors and employees will be interviewed over a 2 day period."

I would be grateful if you would clarify at the next board meeting that, while the review was part-funded by HIE, the brief, albeit with my input, was put together by the Company and the work was led entirely by the Company. I would also suggest that in the interests of transparency, the reasons behind any failure to interview any directors, past directors or employees are also discussed and minuted. Perhaps the consultants who carried out the review will be able to shed some light on that."

A fully detailed paper prepared by Ian Hepburn was presented which set out the timeline of the initial complaint, the responses thereto and the origin of the wording in the minute referred to above. The wording is extracted from an e-mail from the consultants sent on the 23rd of December 2011; the full text of the e-mail which is included in IAH's paper contains the qualification "It's not critical that we see all of these people"

The paper makes it clear that neither the invitation to tender nor the accepted tender specify who will be interviewed and as the subject of the Review it would have been inappropriate for the Company to seek to influence the Consultants in their choice of interviewees. The paper also sets out that a full survey of the Company's catchment area was carried out with a questionnaire sent out to every household, by this means everyone was invited to comment.

After a detailed review of the facts the Board was content that the review was carried out impartially and in accordance with the accepted tender.

The Board was also happy to minute the fact that Claire Hannah from HIE was not involved at any stage in the management of the Review.

The Board also wished to make clear their view that:-

A Councillor should not :-

- Take up complaints with HIE without first extending the courtesy of an opportunity to comment to the Company.
- Take up matters that are simply a dispute between the Company and one of its members and as such not within a Councillor's remit.
- Insist on remaining anonymous.

Also that HIE should not be:-

- Content to deal with an escalated complaint when the Company has not been afforded the chance to respond.
- Prepared to deal with anonymous complaints.
- Comfortable with not affording the subject of the complaint the courtesy of a copy of the HIE response.

The Board agreed that the above minute would be circulated to all our Councillors and to HIE.

8. There were no progress reports.

9. Communication Issues. There continues to be a steady stream of emails from one member criticising the Company, its employees and the work they do. Responding to the emails takes a lot of time that really can't be spared and no answer is accepted without a series of 'supplementary' questions. The Board agreed that it is clear this member has multiple issues with the Company. Directors further agreed that the member should be invited to a face-to-face meeting where the person will have the opportunity to explain exactly what the real problem is. **Action IAH** to draft an invitation for the Directors to consider.

10. The draft **Policy on Director Attendance** had previously been circulated by email and hard copies were available. Following a minor amendment to the final paragraph the Board unanimously voted to accept the Policy with immediate effect.

11. The **Harvesting Demonstration** was attended by around 50 people including locals and visitors to Mull. Everyone enjoyed watching the harvester and forwarder at work. Several positive comments were made about the tidiness of the felled areas.

The **Forest Fun Day** was also well attended and very enjoyable. Thanks were given to CL and AM who worked very hard to ensure the event's success. Initial indications are that after the toilets and bouncy

castle have been paid for and a donation made to Wings Over Mull, a profit will have been made. It was agreed that this money should be put towards a forest education project or amenity improvement in the Forest School area. Helen Mortley has been sent a letter of thanks for donating a beautiful artwork for auction. **Action CM** to thank Matthew Reade for his woodcarving demonstration and auction.

12. JMac has cleared some of the area earmarked for the **Secure Compound** and JM has produced some sketched designs. An anonymous donation towards the costs of building the secure compound will enable us to proceed without further delay.

13. Minister's Path. All the fallen trees have been cleared throughout the length of path that crosses NWMCWC land. JMac has offered to put in a drain and culvert at the bog and fill round with rotten rock. This will provide a permanent solution to the problem without the need for a work party so JMac's generous offer was accepted. Once the path restoration is finished the sign will be reinstated.

14. Correspondence. The Mull Archaeology Group would like to put forward a design for a multi-purpose building at the Langamull hammerhead to service the Kildavie Project and the Woodland Burial site. They also suggest preparing a phone app for visitors with information about Kildavie and local paths etc. **Action IAH** to contact and say the Board agree in principle with these suggestions but they should be considered more fully nearer to the time when the area is ready for such developments.

BT has finally agreed to take Michelle Cowe's name off their correspondence.

15. Any other competent business. i. Dervaig Primary School have approached CM with a request that they be allowed to plant some fruit trees in West Ardhu near the Forest School as part of a 'growing food' project. A site meeting has been scheduled for this Wednesday when an exact location will be decided and deer fencing discussed. It was agreed that fencing could possibly be funded using some of the proceeds of the Forest Fun Day.

ii. An email has been received from Hugh Balfour Paul asking when the cattle grids will be installed, but these have been in place since last October. He also complains about unauthorised vehicles using the road and poachers on his land and suggests that a local police officer has offered to intervene in this civil matter. IAH has forwarded the email to our lawyer for comment on this and previous correspondence. The response will be circulated round the Directors prior to any reply being made to HBP.

16. The **next Board Meeting** will be held on Tuesday 25th September at 7.30pm in Dervaig Church Hall. The following one will be on Monday 22nd October.

The Meeting closed at 9.45pm.

Development Managers Report July – August 2012

1. Timber Haul Road

Evidence of items going missing. Further thefts from the road this time 4 sets of padlocks and chains all on our boundaries, these were locked in place and could therefore only have been taken either with cutters that would handle ¼ inch chain or by someone who has a Forest Enterprise key.

2. Fishnish Fixed Pier

- a. Set back with this as FES are now not predicting completion until July 2013.

3. Timber Harvesting

- a. Harvesting is now continuing in Langamull with the breakout and production rate significantly better than the prediction used for the initial budgeting on the project.
- 4. Timber Haulage and Floating Pier**
 - a. The timber haulage contract is now underway using the Low Ground Pressure vehicle and another Central Tyre Inflation vehicle from TSL direct with all exports via the floating pier.
- 5. Forest Crofts – Final documents now received from the Land Court for Crofts 3,4 and 5 letters sent to all three requesting payment of the ingo premium and the 1st years rent.**
 - a. Steve Maker has several requests:-
 - i. Wishes to create a parking space alongside the haul Route opposite his caravan by bringing an existing built up area to the level of the road.
 - ii. Wishes to remove dead standing larch from the area earmarked for continuous cover forestry (CCF)
 - iii. Wishes to design and with our approval create a 3 sided information booth for the company out of larch from the CCF area
 - iv. Wishes create a pedestrian entrance from the B8073 alongside the burn on the west side of the Haul Route to a small open area where he would like to install some seating within the CCF
- 6. Access Feasibility Study – The final report has been received and is available in the office, we now need to start work to prioritise the possible projects.**
- 7. HIE/FCS 5 year Review – The final report has been received and is now available to all on the website – I feel it is a fair and balance document which should assist in our future plans.**
- 8. Housing - Sale of Proposed Building Plots - Use of Sitka - No change**
- 9. Medium Term Income**
 - a. Woodland Burials – as soon as the preferred area in Langamull North has been harvested initial surveys on soil depth etc will be undertaken
 - b. Leasing Birch Woodlands – Not progressed this month.
- 10. Micro Generation – Hydro West Ardhu**
 - a. Initial acceptance received onto the CARES Loan scheme, detail application is now lodged for a loan of up to £45K and will be considered in late August.
 - b. A connection application has been lodged with SSE.
- 11. Emails**

Emails from a member require discussion.

IAH 23/08/12

North West Mull Community Woodland Company Limited

Finance Report to 21st August 2012

General

Petty cash stands at £9.67.

Cash available is £15,718.31. This balance is after payment of salaries and all other invoices due this week.

Significant movements during the past period were

1) Payment of £250 for website costs and maintenance cost for the next year.

- 2) Payment of £207.50 for Deer Management membership and carcass collection costs.
- 3) Payment of £863.80 for the First Aid Course costs (funded by FCS Seedcorn grant).

Haul Route

In the coming months, there will be one further bill related to Servitude final payment to be paid to FCS (£15,000).

Fundraising

The Directors must continue to focus on future/innovative fundraising activities and / or grant opportunities to help meet upcoming costs.

Upcoming Costs and Receipts

Further significant costs will be incurred in the coming months re the Haul Route (Servitude as noted above), Mini Hydro, Forest Crofts and Paths and Access projects. Specific costs are noted below;

Mini Hydro - Planning and connection fees - approx £1,500

- Access works at West Ardhu - quotes being obtained.

Paths and Access - All bills for this study have been paid and the Company will be due approximately £5,215.07 of Grant funding to offset our expenditure. This is currently being processed by Leader and should be credited to us in the next few weeks.

VAT repayment on proceeds of sales to date of Roadline timber, approx £2,900 will need to be paid to HMRC.

Forest Crofts legal costs re Scottish Land Court registration of 3 crofts - £996.00 due for September payment.

There should also be a small receipt in due time re chip and firewood proceeds of sale of the roadline timber but that will be not be significant.

Short Term Future Financial Position

Cash remains secure for the next several months.

Trading Company Balance

Balance stands at approximately £2,200.

J.N.Morrison - Treasurer