

Minutes from Portmoak Community Woodland Steering Group Meeting 19th August 2010, Well Inn, Scotlandwell

1. Apologies: D Batchelor, R.McDonnell, A.Bradley

2. Present: L.Botten, M McGinnes, S.Garvie, K McDonnell, J.Gilmour, L.Batchelor, J.Gunnell

3. Woodland Trust Update :

Volunteer Chainsaw Users: D.Batchelor and R.McDonnell had received letters from J.Gilmour WT Site Manager advising that the WT had in isolation made the decision to withdraw the position of volunteer chainsaw user with immediate effect. They advised that is had followed a period of review of their legal obligations regarding noise and vibration from machinery for their volunteers who use chainsaws, brushcutters and other forms of machinery. Apparently the WT review found that the administrative burden and level of monitoring required had become very onerous and that the operations management team had taken the decision that volunteers should simply not be using this type of equipment on WT estate. This would also apply to the mobile saw bench owned by PCW.

Those present were unhappy that the review had taken place in isolation particularly given the huge expense incurred by the Group in relation to purchase of equipment and associated training to meet the WT standards. The PCW/WT partnership was longstanding and individual group members had provided a 'free service' to the WT following high winds etc. The group's ability to remove timber as agreed with site manager from the Moss was, and within successive management plans was also threatened by this which all present felt was entirely unacceptable given that we are a partner in managing the Moss.

To use 'health and safety' as an argument for withdrawing the position of volunteer chainsaw user was entirely inappropriate, the hierarchy of control measures within the legislation mentioned in association with a suitable and sufficient risk assessment undertaken by the group is more than adequate to manage the risk. PCW have been undertaking activities within the woods since the initial purchase of the Moss, and have a range of risk assessments covering these activities, more often than not contractors working on behalf of the WT have been observed by group members not wearing PPE or leaving materials across paths etc which has been reported to the appropriate woodland officer.

KMcD to word a letter in response, and also to explore alternative means by which PCW could work within the woodlands that we manage in partnership with the WT, becoming a BTCV member and working under our own insurance was one possibility. BTCV assist WT on a number of their other sites.

Top of Moss: SWT have been into the Moss and commenced a sequential clearing of the peat crown, there is a significant difference. WT have agreed 8 days per annum with SWT to reduce the birch regeneration etc.

Kilmagadwood : The gorse clearance on the front of the hill was discussed, agreed that whilst this was 'high impact' this would lessen over time as the area regenerated . Over the next few months contractors would be involved in tube maintenance, pre-planting maintenance, estimated 1,000 tubes to be in place out-with enclosure on front of hill.

Next planting 1st-5th November with schools involvement target to plant 2,000 trees.

4. Orchard update: D&L Batchelor are taking this forward have met with a local 'apple' man who has provided advice on the most appropriate species for the area to be planted. He will also visit site and provide supplementary information and advice as project develops.

5. Land by Car Park: no update

6. Storage of tools etc. No update

7. Information Boards: These are now available James Gilmour to provide a design for the mounts, PCW to arrange for these to be made and then put boards in position.SG/JG/JS to be involved.

8. Timber inside Moss gate: Discussed possible uses, JG to look into having this planked, turned into posts or other products. It was suggested that there could be an 'open' day on 6th November when wood could be milled, KMCD to explore the possibility of a drumming workshop on the same day.

9. Paths Network: SG leading small CC team looking at options for linking Church car park to Well Green then onto Moss car park, also seeking an alternative to the 'dog-leg' on the Grahamston part of the Round the Loch trail. SG will update PCW group following this exercise.

10. Shooting in Moss: Two individuals one with a gun had been spotted in the Moss this had been reported to police. SG to speak to J.Bird of PCC regards sending a letter to the local police to establish what action was taken.

11. View Point Indicator: This should be reconsidered over the winter months, should adopt a more simplistic approach and consider locating adjacent to the bench in the Field a'bin the Kirk.

12. Additional/Renewed Dams: SWT are considering including the Moss in a bog restoration resurvey and development of an appropriate action plan. The general opinion is that the restoration is progressing and that it would be useful to set up a long term project to map how the raised peat bog evolves. James Gilmour to speak to SWT regards potential partners.

14. Woodfuel Resource Assessments: CWA visit during early September 2010.

AoCB

Steps within the Moss: Netting requires to be replaced WT to instruct contractors

Iron Horse: KMCD had spoken with a potential supplier of a Mini dumper HS400 with a farm bed, this would cost around £6,000. Can make an application to the Kinross-shire fund however would need to resolve the issue around volunteer's using powered equipment in the Moss prior to taking this forward.

Next meeting: 16th September 2010

