

The Well Inn, Scotlandwell

Present: Dave Bachelor, Louise Bachelor, Lesley Botten, Alison Bradley, James Gilmour, Jeff Gunnell, Mike McGinnes (Chair) and Jim Shepherd.

Apologies: Dave Carruthers, Stewart Garvie and Karen McDonnell

James Gilmour reported that weather had been too poor for weeding. There is a work programme among the young trees on the hill. The Woodland Trust will tackle the nettles. He is leaving the Woodland Trust and going to New Zealand so is not sure that he will be present at the next meeting. The Woodland Trust will recruit his successor but in the meantime Jill Aitken will be the contact. He will email Jill's details. He has asked SWT to do their work on the Moss: they are due at the end of the month but their original squad are no longer available as they have been re-structured. Eric Cool of SWT is leading their Moorland Raised Bog project and would like to come to one of our meetings. (See PDF of report on SWT website). Two years remain before the Management Plan is due to be reviewed. PCWG needs to pressure Woodland Trust in the interim and should get started now. There will be available funding so the sustainability aspect is less crucial.

Louise Bachelor attended meeting at Holyrood where Langlands Moss, which is sponsored by local industry, was mentioned. She pointed out that Local Authorities need to offset carbon emissions and that Kinross Council have never been asked for anything by PCWG. At this meeting the representative from Langlands Moss said it was not worth trying to take out big birches but just to remove small ones. This has been done fully successfully at Flanders Moss. The maintenance cost would be around £2,000 per annum with the hope that over the long term the birches will sort themselves out and grow tall, straight and spaced.

Future Actions: Mike McGinnes said that he has contacted Denise Reed of NNR in regard to the probable wish of the Woodland Trust to hand over management of the Moss to PCWG and the possibility thereafter of the restoration of the Moss being incorporated into a project for enhancement of the natural resources of the Loch Leven area. He has contacted Neil Mitchell, also of NNR. The NNR is planning on a lottery bid to facilitate this and Denise gave Mike the name of Steve Longster from Flanders Moss NNR who is currently working at Loch Leven. He will come to view the bog.

Jeff Gunnell: said it is necessary to demonstrate the science behind the carbon sink and noted that some raised bogs are emitting carbon, not absorbing it. He does not know how much dams will cost.

John Williams is to do a GPS survey of the Moss

Jeff Gunnell will arrange to move trees while they are small – a work party will be organised in September/October.

A report will be put in the Newsletter.

Lease: James spoke to Woodland Trust Legal Department about taking on area with conifers – but was advised the PCWG would be better to take on the whole thing. He has since been similarly advised by their Land and Property Department. A lease style has been supplied.

It was agreed to look into available avenues e.g. is Woodland Trust planning to overplant ground with trees? The proposal is likely to be that Woodland Trust would allow birch to regenerate to create a wet woodland rather than a raised bog. It was agreed to try to put pressure on the Trust to maintain the Moss as a bog.

Louise suggested that to get Lottery Funding it would be necessary to create additional amenities. A time scale would be required.

The work done to date on expert advice, has been effective, but moss is not regenerating, further expert advice is required on, for example, levelling off ground and restoring flat surface. (This has been done most effectively in Canada).

Louise said Pete from SWT is to come to look at the Moss this summer and to put it on the national inventory. To maintain it as it is would cost around £5,000 per annum.

Jeff suggested an alternative would be a one-off cost to do something entirely different. SNH would have to be approached for this and expert advice would be required from SNH/SWT. Mike said SNH has an expert on raised bogs in the county. It was proposed to invite appropriate people to meeting on funding. Mike felt moral support from Wetlands International is required but this would involve a planned event including site visit.

Dave wondered if we required to commission a study. Jeff felt this was needed. SWT required approximately £25m. to save raised bogs in Scotland and this could be brought into play on Moss.

The Forestry Commission was very successful in removing trees from raised bogs in south west – tiny trees were mulched. Dave suggested big stumps should be ground down to encourage rotting.

It was suggested that a Management Plan review be undertaken and then a community meeting be held to discuss the whole matter. This would be put on in the Hall and we would try to attract members of community to attend together with experts. Jeff suggested that a small scale initial event comprising experts plus PCWG should be held in the autumn at which detail would be worked out, e.g. how it began, where we are now, how we proceed. It was proposed that the people being invited to attend should not be offered payment as the majority will be professional and this will be part of their job. Following upon this a two day conference should be organised including SNH, SWT, Scottish Government, English Nature, a Canadian bog expert and Scottish bog project people. The question of financing of such a meeting was raised. James said the lack of commitment of the Woodland Trust meant we could not pull in their fund raising team. Both SWT and the Wetland and Wildlife Trust are concerned with habitat. The earliest practicable date would be in November, though Dave B. suggested it might be attached to the Burns Supper, with the meeting taking place over the Friday and Saturday! A more realistic earliest date would be March/April. The names of Mike Barnacle and Roseanna Cunningham, the former Environment Minister and now Justice Minister, as well as Richard Lochhead were put forward, but it was felt that neither of the latter would attend. It was also suggested that university departments be contacted with a view to getting PhD students to take on aspects of the Moss as a subject. Hydrological information can be obtained for nothing - all Environmental Departments etc. should be contacted.

Jeff suggested the cost of continuing what we and the Woodland Trust are doing. would be in the region of £5k per annum.

Mike said £32m had been spent on doing up the museum with an estimated £10k per annum for maintenance being met from annual income. The actual annual income is now £15k.

Louise said more pressure needs to be placed on Woodland Trust to increase funding, but the risk is that they will say this is not within their core objectives.

James said that there is still time on our side, the Woodland Trust management decisions are UK wide but there is a certain flexibility in local areas.

Jeff felt it was necessary to keep as many balls in the air as possible. A letter should be sent to Carol at Woodland Trust to put the Trust in the position of defending the decision rather than their 10 year commitment just coming to an end.

Carbon capture is too much of an unknown science – birches break up peat but also suck in carbon.

Mike McGinnes will contact Steve Longster to explain the situation and ascertain what he thinks. Louise will contact Jonny Hughes to find out how his project is doing and also his views on this project.

Jeff suggested we raise questions to Woodland Trust pointing out regional meetings and we want to have points to consider. Assume Woodland Trust is going to hold on to Moss, we will get in experts etc. and they will support us.

Jeff will draft and James will cast an eye over a letter to Woodland Trust for next meeting when the whole plan can be discussed. A letter is also required to get people interested to attend meetings in November and April (to go to Woodland Trust, SNH, SWT, Scottish Government, Forestry Commission and BTCV).

Louise will contact SNH.

Jeff suggested SWT be invited for part of next meeting.

SWT people have visited bog looking for osprey nests.

Domain Name: will expire on 22nd June but will automatically renew provided Karen's credit card is up to date!

Update website. Two squirrels have been seen on two occasions in Moss probably same pair of squirrels. Thanks were expressed to James, but he hopes to be here next month with Jill.

Viewpoint Indicator: Shep and Ian have looked out the location. Shep will check with Ian if the board has been removed from the hall.

Pruning Course: There is interest in a Pruning Course at a suggested charge of £5 per head. Shep says Karen has all the equipment and there are sufficient funds in the bank to subsidise this.

A proper Agenda highlighting talking points is required for the next meeting. **Alison is to prepare this.**

Next Meeting: 19th June.