

FERNAIG COMMUNITY TRUST
OPEN MEETING
TUESDAY 10 MAY 2016
7.30PM ACHMORE VILLAGE HALL

Present Colin McAndrew, Georgie Grimson, Roddy MacPherson, Dave Mockett, Duncan Gibson, Lizzie Bird, Calum and Kate Bulloch, Jill Charnley

Colin opened the meeting explaining that the FCT had invited Trust Members to discuss two topics.

1. Improving Public Access - a proposal to submit a funding application under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) to provide new and upgraded footpaths on Trust land between Achmore and Braeintra.
2. The allotments – how they are being used, and what might be done to improve the situation.

1. Improving Public Access

Colin ran through the FCT's process to reach the position where we are ready to submit a funding application to SRDP regarding new and upgrading footpaths on Trust Land.

- The Trust talked a year ago about a project to bring tangible results to improve access to the Trust land to local residents and visitors to the area. It was agreed that new and upgraded footpaths would be of benefit.
- Potential funding was sought and although the FCT does not qualify under the local payments scheme another source of SDRP funding was available for land improvements, sustainability and conservation. This would cover all materials and labour approved by the SDRP.
- Ideas were discussed and the Trust's directors set up a small sub-group, Dave, Georgie and Colin, to prepare a plan and application.
- Colin provided a map to show those at the meeting the proposed path routes.
 - Entry by Achmore Bridge which would follow the line of the fence by the river up to the Braeintra burn. This path laid to SDRP official requirements including gates and fence to separate path from fields/stock.
 - At the burn, a turn to the right for about 50 yards and then put in a bridge over the burn to continue along the track, a river walk, to the existing bridge, up the northern boundary of the Hay field, turn to the corner of the nursery and through to link with new gate at the Braeintra road.

- Included would be self-closing gates, benches, adapting path over two existing culverts, and stock fencing where needed. Maps would be posted at the Achmore and Braeintra ends of the path with finger posts and way marker posts at key points.
- The application to SDRP would be for approximately £71K and has to be submitted by the 31st May. It will take approximately 6 months before notification of a successful application is given which would mean work being undertaken in 2017 by SDRP approved contractors but there is scope for volunteer input.
- The FCT's application covers 4 areas of criteria required by SDRP
 - **Connectivity**
 - ❖ Links to Forestry Tracks
 - ❖ Links to Core Paths (Fernaig and Strome Woods) nearby
 - ❖ Linking Braeintra and Achmore
 - ❖ National Trust, Balmacara
 - **Value for money**
 - ❖ Linking Braeintra and Achmore
 - ❖ Accessibility for residents and visitors
 - ❖ Act as a catalyst for further environmental projects
 - ❖ Access to allotments
 - **Barrier-free and multi-use**
 - ❖ Flat, level walk (all other paths/tracks have steep sections)
 - ❖ Car parking at both ends of path
 - **Contextual benefits**
 - ❖ Wildlife
 - ❖ River and burn
 - ❖ Burial mounds
 - ❖ Sear's Oak (heritage tree)

The meeting approved the proposal and the board will submit their applications to SDRP.

2. The Allotments

Colin explained that we are awaiting a plan of the allotments from Andy Bone (FCT director responsible for Allotments) to show working occupation, non-working occupation and empty plots. 2 plots were taken last week but this still leaves some of the occupied plots not being used and half the allotment area not being worked to the detriment of existing plot holders and the general look of the area. It was noted at the meeting that rubbish has been left on plots together with trees/bushes not being attended to and becoming very overgrown.

It was agreed at the meeting that we have to make the plots more attractive to potential and current users by

- Identifying whether occupiers of plots not being used still wish to hold them (Andy Bone's plan should identify this)
- A tidy up of held allotments regarding overgrown trees, bushes, vegetation
- Ploughing in unused plots and then marking them out to show size available. It was agreed that splitting down unused plots into half or quarter size might be of more interest to potential users
- Advertising availability of allotment plots outwith the Stromeferry & Achmore area. Local residents would get priority but as we have not received any such interest and needing the land to remain viable, we have to source new allotment holders

Other points raised at the meeting were

- Issue of new contracts to existing plot holders. Will be referred to Andy Bone
- Was water access a problem? –response was that water butts can resolve this.
- The access road to the allotments has become very pitted again. Suggestion was to see if we can get some infill from FCS to fill the holes
- A 'thank you' was noted for the creation of the car parking area opposite the entrance to the allotments

The meeting closed with a thank you to the chair, Colin, and to all those who attended.