

Balloch Village Trust
Minutes of AGM – 1 October 2014

Present: Charles Stephen (Chair), Susan Williams (Secretary), Carolyn Gethin (Treasurer), Elspeth Fraser, Adam Johnson, Davie MacCulloch, Andrew MacGillivray, Diane MacGillivray, Simon MacGillivray, James MacKenzie, Gary Murphy, Gillian Spalding, Moira Unwin, Ian Williams, Kate Williams-MacKenzie.

Apologies: Martyn Crawshaw, Hamish Johnston, Sheila MacIver, Geoff Robson, Irene Straiton, Ian Thomson.

Minutes of last year's AGM: Proposed by James MacKenzie and seconded by Ian Williams.

Matters arising: BVT members were asked to approach dog owners seen not removing their dog's mess and suggest that they use the bin provided. Free poo bags are now available from Scotmid and Culloden library.

Chairman's report:

1. Introduction

Balloch Village Trust continues to make progress with its principal objective of managing community land and amenity assets on behalf of and for the benefit of the community and of improving or developing facilities for recreation.

The Community Woodland Management and Improvement Plan has now been approved and is being implemented. Carols at the Christmas tree last December was again a successful community event.

We trust these endeavours are welcomed by the people of Balloch and would welcome more of you as members.

2. Directors

As in any organisation Directors come and go. We invited Geoff Robson on to the Board during the year and are grateful to him for his valuable contributions from his considerable environmental experience. Moira Unwin is being proposed for election as Director at the AGM having been a co-opted Director thus far. Gary Murphy will be invited to be again co-opted. Ian Thomson has decided to step down as Director after many years' service.

Thanks to each of them for their valuable contributions during the year.

3. Balloch Community Woodland

Balloch Village Trust manages the community woodland on behalf of Balloch Community Council and local people. The Woodland Management and Improvement Plan has now been completed, approved by Balloch Community Council and is being implemented. The following is a brief overview:

- Forestry Commission Scotland has given permission to fell 19 Sitka Spruce in the woodland, which will allow some clear space and more light into the woodland floor. This will be staged over several quarters starting in November.
- The bat survey commissioned by BVT revealed no bats roosting in the woodland, although one of the Sitka Spruce has potential to accommodate bats so will have to be re-examined immediately prior to felling.
- Two local men, experienced foresters, have volunteered to fell the trees.

- The large beech tree on the southwest corner will be crown lifted and thinned. Highland Council's Tree Officer has given permission for this work to be carried out.
- The sycamore stump on the western perimeter is to be carved by a tree sculptor. Balloch Primary School has provided a design idea based on a stag's head.
- We plan to commence a community orchard by planting native fruit trees on the northern edge of the woodland.
- Work will be carried out to improve the existing paths and to construct a new path across the woodland to reduce the gradient from northwest to southeast.
- We plan to create a community space with a table and bench near the eastern boundary of the woodland.

A monthly inspection rota is in place, which provides a regular report regarding the condition of trees, paths and volume of litter.

4. Carols at the Christmas Tree

The third Carols at the Christmas Tree was held on Thursday 19 December 2013 with about 70 people gathered around the Christmas Tree at Cherry Park to sing carols and enjoy mincemeat pies with warm mulled wine. Our thanks to ASDA for the mincemeat pies and to TESCO for the mulled wine. Culloden Baptist Church was magnificent as their choir and musicians led us in singing. Santa made his usual appearance to the great delight of all the children. Thanks to everyone, particularly Dave and Lynn Caddell for the use of their kitchen. Carols at the Christmas Tree will be on Thursday 18 December this year.

5. Membership

The current membership of Balloch Village Trust is 61. Balloch has a population of about 1300 people so an increase in members would help it to be more representative. The target is to achieve membership of 10% of the community. Membership is free so you can now join for no charge. Please consider becoming a member and encourage friends and neighbours to do likewise.

6. Looking forward

The Development Strategy 2012 – 2027 provides direction for the coming years. The immediate priorities are to:

- increase membership of Balloch Village Trust
- implement the Community Woodland Management and Improvement Plan.

7. Finally

The Board recognises the support of the current membership and other supporters for which it is grateful. We extend our thanks to all who have helped in various ways over the past year and look forward to working with you and for you in the year ahead. Thank you, also, to the current Directors for their support and endeavours over the past year and in particular to Susan Williams for her work as Secretary and to Carolyn Gethin for her work as Treasurer.

The report was augmented with Powerpoint slides of the woodland which led to some discussion: the fence and bridge had been repaired and the dark spiny bushes should be protected when trees are being felled. Chair acknowledged Ben Davies' work in preparing the Management Plan and thanked BCC for their financial support.

Treasurer's report:

BVT continued to sell Woodland Maps through the Scotmid shop throughout the year to 31 March 2014, raising £57.

A further £300 was received from Balloch Community Council towards the cost of the woodland plan.

The woodland plan accounted for most of the 2013/14 expenditure (£600), with a further £103 being spent on Governance (independent examiner's fee, Companies House return fee, etc.) and £31 going towards promotion (website, Carols at the Tree).

At the end of the year the cash in hand/at bank was £909.00. Cash in hand/at bank currently stands at £913.00.

Maps continue to be on sale but no income this financial year so far. Expenditure in 2014/15 so far mainly £150 on Bat Survey; £20 on neon spray paint, £2 postage and £49 on website (3 years – would be £54 over 3 years if paid annually). For remainder of 2014/15, possibility of grant applications etc. towards woodland works.

Appointment of Examiner

The continued appointment of Signpost as independent examiner was carried unanimously.

Membership of the Board

Chair noted retirement of Ian Thomson and thanked him for his contribution to BVT over the years.

Moira Unwin was elected as Director.

Gary Murphy was co-opted as Director for a second year.

Geoff Robson was co-opted as Director.

Any other business

Felling of selected trees will take place this coming November and February, with a prior site meeting. Trees will be felled at base; separate arrangements might be needed to leave stumps for carving or bat boxes. Volunteers from the Sea Scout Explorers might be available to move the brash into piles prior to these being chipped. The question of rails on steeper sections of path was discussed. BCC confirmed that they have insurance cover for the woodland and BVT inspect the woodland regularly.