

Balloch Village Trust
Minutes of AGM – 30 September 2015

1. **Present:** Charles Stephen (Chair), Susan Williams (Secretary), Carolyn Gethin (Treasurer), Adam Johnson, Hamish Johnston, Davie MacCulloch, Gary Murphy, Mary Quemby, Kenny Ross, Judith Thonson, Moira Unwin, Ian Williams
2. **Apologies:** Rachel Arkell, Elspeth Fraser, Sheila MacIver, Geoff Robson, Gillian Spalding
3. **Minutes of last year's AGM:** Proposed by Ian Williams and seconded by Gary Murphy
4. **Matters arising:** Geoff Robson would prefer to be remain invited rather than co-opted to the Board.

5. Chairman's report

This was circulated at the meeting.

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 is now being implemented. Carols at the Christmas tree last December was again a successful community event while work is underway to create a new play park. We trust these endeavours are welcomed by the people of Balloch and would welcome more of you as members.

Directors

As in previous years Directors come and go. James MacKenzie has already resigned from the Board due to his relocation to the south of England. We wish him well with that move. Elspeth Fraser will stand down from the Board at the AGM. We thank them both for their valuable contribution and are grateful to them for their service to the community. We welcomed Rachel Arkell who was co-opted during the year. I will also stand down at the AGM having served 4 years on the Board.

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*** is being implemented. The following is a brief overview:

- More than half of the Sitka Spruce we planned to fell has now been taken down. This allows considerably more light into the woodland floor by thinning out these very large trees. Our grateful thanks to Davie McCulloch and Adam Johnston for volunteering to carry out the work and to BCC for their support.
- The large beech tree on the southwest corner has been crown lifted and thinned.
- A community space with log benches has been created near the eastern boundary in a woodland clearing.
- Much of the brash from the tree felling has been shredded and spread on the open space at the northern area of the woodland.
- We plan to create 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. This will require fundraising to secure grants to deliver it.
- A new noticeboard will be erected at the north (Forest Drive) entrance to the woodland. This will enable BVT to post current information to keep local people informed.
- A monthly inspection rota is in place, which provides a regular report regarding the condition of trees, paths and volume of litter.

Carols at the Christmas tree

The fourth Carols at the Christmas tree was held on Thursday 18 December 2014 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 Tesco for the mincemeat pies and to for their contribution. 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 but particularly to Dave and Lynn Caddell for the use of their kitchen.

Membership

The current membership of Balloch Village Trust is 78. 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.

Play Park

Balloch Village Trust has agreed with the Balloch Parents Action Group to oversee the development of a new play park in the field adjacent to the Primary School. They are currently working on funding applications to raise the funds required to install new equipment. We are grateful to Rachel Arkell and Gillian Spalding for their work with this.

Balloch Gala

It was really wonderful to have a Balloch Gala this year, enjoyed by a very large crowd. Thanks to Moira Unwin and all at Balloch Primary School who helped organise this important village event. BVT appreciated the opportunity to raise our public profile and enrol new members.

Paths for All course

Balloch Village Trust hosted a Paths Survey and Design course presented by Paths for All. This was attended by 18 people from BVT and other organisations who are involved in improving and maintaining community paths. Thanks to Susan Williams for organising this really useful event.

Lyme mapping

Several members of Balloch Village Trust took part in a LymeMAP Workshop in June. This project, which aims to combine citizen science and GPS technology to tackle tick bites and Lyme disease, has been awarded funding from the European Space Agency (ESA). The ESA has awarded €250,000 to test the feasibility of LymeMap, a proposed phone app and web-based system that will help to identify tick hot-spots.

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.

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 endeavour over the past year and in particular to Susan Williams for her work as Secretary and to Carolyn Gethin for her work as Treasurer.

Charles Stephen, 30 September 2015

In the resulting discussion, Ian Williams (Chair BCC) noted that the Community Council had received £500 as payment for access to water services and this would be made available to BVT as payment for work (e.g. brasher hire) in the woodland.

6. Treasurer's report:

BVT continued to make Woodland Maps available through the Scotmid shop throughout the year to 31st March 2015, but none were sold. £262.50 was received from Balloch Community Council towards the cost of works on the beech tree. Works undertaken in the CW (as part of the woodland plan) accounted for most of the 2014/15 expenditure (£726), with a further £39 being spent on Governance (Hall hire, Co House return fee etc) and £70 going towards promotion (website, Carols at the Tree).

Expenditure in 2015/16 so far mainly printing of more maps and 50% of chipper hire (other 50% funded by BCC). Small income (£20) from Balloch Primary School Gala earlier in year, plus £261 grant from Scotmid towards works on paths.

At the end of the year the cash in hand / at bank was £318. Cash in hand / at bank currently stands at £621.

7. Proposed change to Constitution to lower age of membership

This item was withdrawn as it should have been tabled as a Special Amendment. However, the meeting agreed that the age should be lowered to 16 to reflect the new lower age of eligibility to vote and that the new Board should take this forward.

8. Appointment of Examiner

The appointment of Stuart Pattison as independent examiner was carried unanimously.

9. Membership of the Board

Rachel Arkell and Gary Murphy were co-opted for another year.

Mary Quemby was elected as Director.

10. Any other business

Hamish Johnson suggested map sales would be increased if a copy was put on the Community Council noticeboard. Melanie Smith of UHI had asked that the Board consider two items: closer links with the Scottish School of Forestry and the Culloden Forest Partnership. It was agreed that BVT should ask for further information and suggest that Melanie present her proposals to BCC and BVT.