

# Balloch Village Trust

## Minutes of Board Meeting, 15 May 2014

<b>1 Welcome</b>	
<p>Present:            Charles Stephen (chair), Carolyn Gethin (treasurer), Susan Williams (secretary), Elspeth Fraser (BCC rep), James MacKenzie (elected), Gary Murphy (coopted), John Orr (Highland Council Ranger, invited)            Minutes of 20 March 2014 amended to replace 'design' with 'look into' under AOCB.            Minutes proposed by JM, seconded by GM.</p>	
<b>2 Matters arising</b>	
<p><b>Archives</b>            EF confirmed that BVT archive material has now been deposited at the Highland Council Archive Service.            Selection of photos and captions for the Hall is ongoing.</p> <p><b>Community woodland</b>            Grant Stuart (Forestry Officer, South Highland Forestry Commission Area) met Chair BCC and GM to discuss removal of branches on beech tree at SW corner of woodland. GS confirmed that the tree is a mature beech of good form and in good condition. He would not be in a position to support the complete removal of the tree, but it would be acceptable to crown lift the tree to clear the ground by no more than 4.5m and thin the crown by removal of no more than 30% of material throughout the crown.            Timing of this should be November to avoid disturbance to nesting birds, squirrels and bats. BCC agreed that the tree may be crowned as per the guidelines provided by GS, asked BVT to progress with this work and will pay 50% toward the final cost. CS to coordinate and obtain quote.</p> <p><b>Fundraising events</b>            A fundraising Hallowe'en community event was suggested to coincide with publicising progress with the Management Plan - ongoing.</p> <p><b>Members</b>            Moira offered to design a simple poster using a QR code for interested residents to email <a href="mailto:b.v.t@btinternet.com">b.v.t@btinternet.com</a>, and to post minutes on the BCC notice board.</p> <p><b>Dog mess</b>            GM purchased 3 cans of biodegradable spray paint. GM and CG offered to produce posters: a warning notice re the paint, and a request for walkers to 'bag it and bin it'.</p>	<p>MU, GS</p> <p>CS</p> <p>MU</p> <p>GM, CG</p>
<b>3 Treasurer's report</b>	
<p>The BVT account balance is £903. In addition, payment of £300 for the Woodland Plan has been received from BCC. CS suggested that we need to consider raising funds.</p>	
<b>4 Community woodland</b>	
<p>BCC are happy with the principal aims of the plan: the creation of a link path, an educational area and clearing of the more overgrown areas. BCC also requested that BVT start to apply for a felling licence, in preparation for the removal of trees.            Following a site visit with GR, JO commented favourably on the woodland plan and BVT's revised location of sitting area and related paths, and felling objectives. Notes, additions and queries on the plan by GS, JO and GR are listed in Appendices 1 and 2. GM requested that there should be no tall growth near his boundary (SW of site). The existing path near the western boundary should be left but with a new section at the southern end towards the bench to provide a gentler gradient. We should plan to fell in October/November 2014, taking advice from GS.            CS reported that the Manager of the Bridge unit has indicated they could get their pupils to make a bench and seats as a project if BVT supplied the materials.            BCC had prepared a bill of quantities for repairs to paths in the woodland in 2011; to be forwarded shortly.</p>	<p>SW</p>

<p>Actions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cut out lower branches on trees to be retained. This could be done at any time by volunteers.</li> <li>2. GM to obtain quotes from contractors for felling and chipping up to 25% of the conifers. Chippings should be retained on site to surface paths or sitting area. Value of felled timber to be included in negotiations.</li> <li>3. JO to check cost of a bat survey if it is needed.</li> <li>4. JM to apply for felling licence. Is there a fee and how long is it valid for?</li> <li>5. CS to investigate funding sources.</li> </ol>	<p>GM JO JM CS</p>
<p>Items outstanding: revising the map with re-sited sitting area and paths, and publicising the revised map and brief details of work and timescale on website and noticeboard.</p>	<p>SW, MU</p>
<p><b>5 AOCB</b></p>	
<p>Brief discussion of what is picked up on woodland inspection: cans, paper, occasional bottles and broken glass.</p>	
<p><b>6 Date of next meeting</b></p>	
<p>Thursday 26 June 2014, 7.30 pm, 11 Meadow Road. NB - changed from Wed 25 - coincides with BCC meeting</p>	

## Appendix 1: Woodland plan notes GS/JO

Item in plan:

4. Woodland is listed on ancient woodland inventory as Long Established Plantation Origin (LEPO) – LEPO is woodland continuously wooded since 1860. Appeared as woodland on 1st ed and 1980s OS maps but not necessarily continuously wooded.

7. Zone 1: Thin conifers by removing 25%. How high should lower branches be removed? Gradient on steep bank should be 1:12. Consideration for tree roots when building new footpaths. How far should vegetation on either side of footpaths be cleared? Seating area: size, surface, other features?

Zone 2: Control bracken. Benefits of nettles (insects, seeds, moths/butterflies). Tree planting needs to be outwith crown spread of existing trees.

Zone 3: No more felling or pollarding of trees near neighbouring property.

10. A felling licence will be required from the Forestry Commission.

11. Add bats to list of species to consider.

Supplementary information:

Table 3: Work with Balloch PS on theme and design of tree sculptures. 3a No more broad leaves. 3c Felling contractor to leave stumps at possibly higher than 9ft.

Table 4: 4d Ensure adequate separation of hawthorn and blackthorn planted close to fence line.

Map 2: No indication of why these 19 trees are proposed to be felled. Timber storage area would need to be adjacent to forest road along south side of site.

Contact details: Both businesses listed are tree surgeons – would need a forestry contractor for conifer felling.

## Appendix 2: Notes from Geoff Robson

I met John Orr the Highland Council Countryside Ranger who covers East Inverness and Nairnshire, at the Community Woodland to discuss elements of the Management Plan. He agrees that the best site for the Community Area is the one we identified on our 'walkover' visit when we last met. A flat area about 10 metres in diameter should be sufficient and this could be achieved by felling 5 or 6 of the sitka spruce at the edge of the Community Woodland near to the boundary fence.

John suggested that it may be sensible to plot the alignment of the proposed new paths with canes to ensure that gradients can meet 'all-abilities' standards, failing which they can be modified until these can be met. There are a number of bat and bird boxes that were installed a number of years' ago that are now well past their 'sell by date' and need to be replaced. These could be supplemented with squirrel boxes too.

John commends the Management Plan's objectives of improving the biodiversity of the Community Woodland through the removal of 'exotic species', selective felling to let more light in, clearance of undergrowth and planting of shrubs to provide a better habitat. He suggests that wood piles are left following the felling to improve habitat to improve the range of flora and fauna.

John had a number of suggestions and ideas some of which had worked and others had failed - experience he had gained through working with other Community Woodland Groups. It may be worth considering inviting him along to the next meeting of the Group on the 15th May if he is available to 'pick his brains'.

On a related topic can I make a suggestion about the crown lifting and proposed works to the large beech tree on the south west corner of the site - it would be sensible to invite the Council's Forestry Officer to personally brief the contractor appointed to undertake the works to ensure there is no ambiguity or confusion as to exactly what his requirements are.

Similarly it may be sensible for the Group to meet with the Forestry Commission to establish their precise timetable and scope and area over which they are carrying out felling operations before they let the contract. This should include provisions for maintaining access to the Moray Estates woodland during the felling operations. It would be useful to understand what future plans the Forestry Commission Scotland have for the felled area, whether and how it is to be re-planted and to what extent 'recreational use' of the area features in their plans and how the Balloch Community could input into this. This may also afford an opportunity to discuss whether there is scope to extend the Community Woodland and how this could be addressed.