

# Minutes of Callander's Countryside Meeting, 12 August 2019, Burgh Chambers, Callander

## 1. Welcome and apologies

**Present:** Paul Prescott, Mike Luti, David Shearer, Lesley Hawkins, Mike Hawkins, John Hair (FLS)

**Apologies:** Emma Martin, Carol McGowan, Mike Steward and Dave Robinson.

John Hair informed the group that he is changing roles within FLS in ~6 weeks into a Project Planning management role so may be standing down from this group. Will Huckerby should also be removed from the circulation list.

## 2. Minutes of meeting 10 June 2019

Item 5a, Emma clarified that it is LEADER rules which require NPA to be owner of the new bridge for 5 years, not HLF.

Item 9, Mike L suggested wording change from '.....a wasting disease among red deer that has been brought in....' to 'may be'.

## 3. Matters arising      addressed under individual agenda items and on Action Log.

## 4. Callander Footpath Strategy

No update

## 5. HLF Callander Landscape Partnership

### a) Leny Falls Bridge and Leny Woods.

Paul reported that discussions with landowners are progressing well and many site visits have taken place so there is optimism for a resolution. It has been suggested that Moray Estate could transfer a sliver of land to Drumardoch Estate to simplify the legal agreements.

Tenders for building the bridge are to go out in the next 2 months. The NPA is deciding on the preferred strategy and contract, potentially a single contractor could be used for both phases. A planning meeting will be held later today and the topic is likely to be raised at tonight's CCC meeting.

Discussions are ongoing with Transport Scotland (TS). Mike L expressed concern that the bridge could be built without TS agreement to the road crossing from the Leny Woods car park.

Paul replied that TS is a mandatory consultee and appears to have bought into the whole concept. However, TS and the NPA have discovered at executive level that there are conflicting remits from the Scottish Government; speeding up road transport vs improving visitor facilities within the NP. The Leny Woods and Coriechrombie crossings are to be set up as a case study. CLP believes an agreement will be reached.

NPA will take ownership of the bridge for 5 years from the end of the CL project, CCDT will not take ownership until 2025.

### b) Little Leny Meadows

A plant survey of the south side was carried out on 12 July and results are being processed to see the effect of cutting the rank vegetation where the ground was not too wet.

*Post-meeting note: the survey of the north side planned for 27 August was cancelled as no work has been carried out by machine due to wet ground and cattle cannot be used until fencing is in place.*

### c) Callander Lower Wood.

It is still not clear how the drainage problems following Stirling Council's path 'restoration' will be resolved. It could be done by the same contractor as the new off-road path to Bracklinn Falls. Three residents have formed a working group with CCC and put forward detailed proposals to take surplus water into the burn alongside the new zig-zag path from Ancaster Road. However, SC have assessed that this burn and

culverts are not big enough to take the water so it is still with SC to resolve the problems.

d) New path to Bracklinn Falls Car Park

The tender is out for response by Monday 19 August. Dave Robinson (NPA) is ensuring that bids come from experts in footpath construction. HLF rules for projects of over £100k demand 5 tenders. The contract could be placed by the end of August for consultation during September / October.

Signage will be added after 2019.

e) Dark Skies

No update on progress but a replacement for Keith Wilson has been identified.

f) Other projects

A reserve project which may be included is the footpath running parallel to Invertrossachs Road from Bridgend to the Caravan Park on Mike Cantley's land. Sheep have been removed and vegetation is recovering so the field will need to be managed. Mike Cantley is also keen to have a footpath from the caravan park to the river and along its bank plus possibly, in the longer term, a bridge over to the Burial Ground. Mike L raised the need to protect the riparian habitat from there to the Meetings, including replacement of the many dying trees to provide shade for fish and to counter increasing water temperatures.

## 6. FLS Land Management Plans

(a) Wester Torrie.

A 5-year lease has been awarded to a young farmer from Thornhill.

(b) Callander Wood, Coilhallan Wood, Balameanoch Wood

John H reported that the transfer of Trean Wood ownership to Drumardoch Estate has just a couple of points of detail to be resolved and is with Neil Cameron.

c) West Strathyre no update

d) Cock Hill Lesley has tried to contact Barry Blackwood at Perth Conservancy but had no response. John H is to confirm Barry's email address.

e) Other Items.

John gave an update on Phytophthora. FLS carries out helicopter inspections across Scotland then sends in a ground team to fell diseased trees and send samples to the lab. If phytophthora is identified FLS will carry out further felling. Over the last 3 years cases in the Cowal District have increased from 2 to 4 to 29 cases, one in Leny woods where trees have been removed. FLS was previously served with a SPHN notice giving 6 weeks to fell all trees within a 250m radius of a diseased tree. However, FLS will now take a more proactive rather than reactive approach.

New Forest Management Plans will include removal of 20% of larch from the forest estate between Loch Lomond and Stirling by 2023. FLS is regulated to replant all felled areas but larch will no longer be planted, species such birch and alternative conifers will be considered.

More generally, 85% Sitka Spruce will be reduced to 70% then 45% over the next 20 years. Conifer replacements under consideration include Norway Spruce, Douglas Fir, Japanese and Red Cedar as commercial crops.

Mike L asked about felling of trees in Coilhallan at the A81 end.

**Action:** John H to report back why this was done and at what cost.

## 7. Possible acquisitions by CCDT

a) Coilhallan Wood

At the last CC meeting it was reported that the CATS submission would be in June but this was delayed until the end of August since the CATS Panel delayed their next session to November due to a small number of applications. The independent CATS

panel makes a recommendation to FLS Executive on suitability of transfer to the Community. Notices will then be displayed by FLS in the local press and at all entrances to the wood to inform users that the application has been submitted and providing an address for comments . The October/November BLV deadline is 6 September.

Dick Johnson has joined the Woodland Group and adds essential expertise in hydrology and mapping of Coilhallan Wood in the past.

*Post-meeting note: the application was submitted on 28 August.*

John H said Sue Morris (FLS Visitor Services Forester) is the best contact for the potential joint volunteer event to tidy up the footpaths and arboretum enclosures. Lesley will contact her.

**b) Stirling Council assets – no update on progress.**

This could include car parks on Station Road & Riverside, the Meadows, Camp Place play park and the Lower Woods. Information has been requested from SC.

Car Parks are seen by CCDT as potential funding for community facilities but there may be a conflict with CCC (David Shearer) proposals on free parking for residents and possibly limited free parking for visitors.

**c) Other Acquisitions**

The Leny Woods car park will remain in FLS ownership but be leased to the NPA for 5 years from the end of the CL project. FLS have no current plans to sell Leny Woods but, if that changes, then Community Groups would get first refusal before going on the open market.

Mike L said CCC would want to see a Community consultation ahead of any transfers. This is built into the protocol.

An application is to be made for transfer of the Strathyre Picnic Area to Balquhidder, Lochearnhead and Strathyre Development Trust.

**8. Cleaner Callander.**

The Cleaner Callander volunteers have been supporting a study by a Stirling MSc student to look at the effectiveness of 3 different signs at Bracklinn Bridge car park, one of 3 sites in the Park. Each Monday throughout May and June, litter was collected from the car park, counted and categorised. The results will be presented on 14 August.

**9. Wildlife projects**

The local SWT group is continuing to remove Himalayan Balsam along the Teith from the pedestrian bridge to the Woodland Caravan Park. Although significantly reduced amounts are now present, missing a single plant leads to re-infestation.

A recent Stirling Observer article highlighted that the Forth Rivers Trust is about to run out of funding for tackling invasive non-native plants, even to the extent of not being able to provide chemicals to volunteers. Luckily Callander has no giant hogweed which is a major problem along the Allan and the Forth. FRT has promised to spray Japanese Knotweed at reported sites along the Teith this year but no longer supports its website for reporting of sightings. The NPA is setting up its own site but in the interim Graeme Auty can be emailed locations of invasive plants.

No-one is controlling mink in Callander.

**10. Any other business**

None reported

**11. Appointment of CCDT representative for 2019-20**

With John's resignation from this group a new CCDT representative is needed but none has volunteered. Paul said he thought it OK to be without a representative for a short period. Mike Luti said he would consider the role if necessary.

**12 Date of next meeting Monday 14 October 2019, 10am, Burgh Chambers Callander.**

*Lesley Hawkins*