

# Friends of Glenan Wood

## Minutes of AGM held by “Zoom” on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2022

### Present

Robin Webster (Chair)

Niall McFarlane (Treasurer)

Craig Ward (Trustee)

Katharine Lowrie (Trustee)

Leoma Armstrong (Trustee)

Rhyddian Knight (Forest Ranger)

Andrée Hawke

Donald Cumming

(There were several other members in attendance, but because it was an online meeting it was difficult to capture everyone’s name.)

### Apologies

Eve MacFarlane (Secretary)

Mark Appleton (Trustee)

Robert Borruso (Trustee)

Kate Gray

### **1. Welcome**

Robin welcomed everyone to the meeting, confirmed that we were quorate, and said that as the time we had was limited by “Zoom”, his report had been posted in advance along with the invitation to the AGM. His report is inserted into these minutes here:

### **Chairman’s Report for Friends of Glenan Wood AGM**

#### **History**

The Friends of Glenan Wood is a charity (SCIO:SC047803) formed to purchase Glenan Wood for the local community. With the support of our members and the wider community we finally brought Glenan Wood into community ownership in December 2019. We received a grant for this from the Scottish Land Fund, who also helped us to employ a Forest Ranger and a Development Officer at the start of 2020, to aid conservation activities and generate new opportunities. The Development Officer left in October 2020, while the Forest Ranger (Rhyddian Knight) continues to be employed, now only for one day a week.

Friends of Glenan Wood is a member of the Atlantic Woodland Alliance and is currently the only community woodland within the project. We also have a Memorandum of Understanding with the Northwoods Rewilding Network (part of “Scotland the Big Picture”) who may be able to assist us with finding funding in the future.

#### **Charity Aims**

The aim of the charity is to maintain and support the ancient oak forest (a remaining part of the Atlantic Temperate Rainforest), for the benefit of the community and to sustain this ancient and important site. Katharine Lowrie has carried out an ecological survey of the wood, identifying various significant species there, and Angus Bevan has agreed to produce a mid and long term management plan for the wood, which once complete should help us to get further funding to support our aims.

A number of areas requiring action have been identified and during the past year the following activities have been undertaken to support the woodland.

### **Ringbarking**

We have a programme of ring barking to take out non-native conifer species. All non-native conifers should ultimately be removed from the woods as they will compete with the native trees, shrubs and herb layer for light and root space and they continue to colonise more ground through the establishment of seedlings. This ringbarking is currently being carried out by the Forest Ranger with the help of volunteers.

### **Over-grazing by Deer**

The population of native roe and red deer in Glenan (and across Scotland) is believed to be at record levels due to lack of native predators (lynx and wolves). The deer are grazing and browsing woodland plants, preventing regeneration of woodland, and preventing understories to form within the woodland. Left unchecked, such relentless herbivory will cause the death of the woods.

One of the methods we intend to tackle this problem is through the creation of temporary deer “exclosures”. We have identified areas in the wood for volunteers to begin to install lightweight, temporary “exclosures”, using netting and ropes. These areas will therefore be protected for a number of years, allowing a generation of seedlings to become established. We have received a grant to supply the materials for this and for ring-barking from Argyll Forests.

### **Removal of Rhododendrons**

Invasive rhododendron is one of the most serious threats to any woodland ecosystem. We have been fortunate in receiving help this year from Argyll Community Trust (ACT) to tackle this problem. They have employed a local Kames contractor (Ascog Ltd) on our behalf to clear a large amount of dense rhododendrons in the wood, although inevitably small patches remain, and constant vigilance is required to ensure it does not return. To this end, we are asking members of the community to pull any rhododendron they see while walking in the woods.

### **The Community Orchard**

We received a grant from “Keep Scotland Beautiful” (CCAF) to create an orchard at the eastern boundary of the wood. An area of existing non-native conifers were felled while the brash was cleared by volunteers. The area was fenced off to keep deer out, and 85 fruit trees have now been planted, along with some soft fruit. The trees are currently in blossom, although we do not expect to harvest any fruit for a couple of years. We expect eventually that harvesting the fruit along with juice and jam making activities will be a popular community activity.

### **“Boost it” Fund**

Our development officer negotiated a loan from the “Boost It” fund to develop six shepherd’s huts, a community kitchen, hall, toilets and storage. We received planning permission for these buildings in December 2021, but decided to pay the remainder of the loan back, as we were unable to meet their timetable, and the Board felt that it was not an immediate priority for the charity. We will seek funding to build the toilets and kitchen (which are located by the orchard), which will help with community activities there, and may eventually decide to build the rest in due course, when we have funds to do so.

### **Covid**

We have still been impacted by Covid, and as a result the intention of mobilising groups of volunteers to help maintain this special Atlantic oak wood habitat has been put on hold, and instead “lone wolf” volunteering has taken place during the pandemic with the support of our forest ranger. We hope that more volunteering can now take place, as originally planned.

### **Funding Sought**

The Trust needs to find core funds to pay for insurance, the Forest Ranger, and ongoing maintenance of the wood. We expect to make further applications for grants to help us with this, while contributions from members, volunteers, and friends is always welcome!

We are seeking funds to help us with a number of items of immediate importance:

1. The paths are in need of improvement and whilst work has been undertaken on drainage and access, we need to enhance the network with better signage, as some folk have become lost and have contacted the coastguard and emergency services to rescue them.
2. To build a shelter, noticeboard, and an honesty box at the entrance car park, to help visitors to learn more about the wood which can encourage them to contribute to its maintenance.
3. Long term funding to allow us to employ a forest ranger for four days a week.
4. Funding to bring water and electricity to the orchard, and build some storage, toilets and a kitchen there to assist with community activities.

We are grateful to all our friends and supporters, and in particular to those who have helped with activities in the wood and with planting in the orchard, as well as those who have contributed financially: without this help we would not be able to continue.

## **2. Elections**

The Constitution require some trustees to stand down at every AGM, although they may be re-elected for a second term. (A year has to elapse between anyone after their second term before they may return as a trustee).

Last AGM **Eve MacFarlane** and **Mark Appleton** stood down, and were re-elected.

This year **Robin Webster** and **Robert Borusso** stood down, and were re-elected.

Two further trustees were confirmed as elected: **Kate Gray** and **Leoma Armstrong**, who were welcomed.

The total number of trustees now is nine, and the maximum we should have is ten, so we can still elect someone else.

(We are also allowed to co-opt people onto the Board, if necessary, although they would not be full Trustees.)

## **3. Treasurer's Report**

Niall summarised the financial situation as follows:

### **Financial Statement Year ended 30 Sept 2021**

Opening Bank Balance £56,500

**Income**

Scottish Land Fund Grant - £11,000 restricted funds for Forest Ranger salary

Keep Scotland Beautiful Grant - £9,870 restricted funds for the orchard

Tighnabruaich Development Trust Grant £3,136 unrestricted

Donations of £2,737

Insurance Claim £1,335

### **Expenditure**

We returned unused portion of grant from Boost it Loan, Firstport as unable to progress development with current funding - £46,052

All funds from orchard grant were used. Total spend - £9,876

Salaries - £11,808

Replacement of equipment NFU - £1,335

Closing Balance £9,861

The accounts for this year are probably more in keeping with our ongoing activities than previous years.

Key activity is to retain our forest ranger and whilst he has reduced hours in the current year to 1 day per week from 2 days, we are actively looking at further resources to support the forest ranger longer term and ideally employ a new development officer.

Individual donations during the year amounted £2,737 and we are extremely grateful to all who have supported the charity and we will continue to look for support from the community.

The return of the funds re Boost it Loan was correct measure as it was identified that initial estimates for the development were ambitious and without further funding we would be unable to complete the proposed shepherd huts.

We are hopeful that a volunteering programme will be introduced shortly.

Unrestricted funds at close of year was £2,242

We currently have sufficient restricted funds to maintain our forest ranger in position beyond 2022.

The formal Accounts will be posted on the website along with these minutes once signed off.

### **4. Management Plan and Ecological survey**

Katharine Lowrie undertook an Ecological Survey Report of Glenan Woods last August on behalf of Scotland the Big Picture, 'Northwoods Network' a rewilding organisation. During a day of surveying she registered 31 bird species, two bumble bee species and seven butterfly species. Habitats and plants were described and assessed. The impact of deer and invasive rhododendron were outlined and options for their control suggested. The importance of the woodlands from an international to local scale were highlighted, also the species-rich grasslands along the pathways, fringing beaches and at the entrance to the woods.

Opportunities included the retention of important standing and fallen dead wood, the use of bird boxes and mammal boxes to increase nesting, hibernation and roosting options and the future introduction of missing native mammals to the ecosystem. The report will soon be uploaded onto the Glenan Woods website for all to view.

A local forester is working on FOGW's behalf to create a Woodland Plan which will be funded by Scottish Forestry.

The plan will inform the key management practices necessary to secure the short, medium and long term ecological restoration of the woodland.

Core objectives will likely be the follow-up and ongoing removal of invasive rhododendron, creation of further exclosures to control booming deer populations which are preventing natural regeneration of the woodland and the removal of the remaining conifer stands.

#### **5. Forest Ranger Progress and potential funding**

Rhyddian showed some excellent aerial photographs of the wood while we were waiting for everyone to join us, and later explained the progress with the rhododendron removal, and what percentage still remained in different pockets of the wood: he now has an accurate GIS based record of this. It had been a successful project with a local contractor, but a very short and limited one: he said that Ian Dow of Argyll Community Trust (ACT) was looking into the possibility of long term funding for Glenan, and this could be extremely helpful, although we await the details. He noted that Glenan Wood is still eligible for Nature Restoration Funding.

He also spoke about the deer exclusion zones and showed on an aerial photograph where they would be.

He confirmed that he and volunteers had completed 12 days of ringbarking invasive species of trees, which creates standing dead timber which will help increase biodiversity in the wood.

Katherine Tubb of Northwood Rewilding has advised us that building bird hides and catering for bird watchers can also provide a useful income.

Further substantial funding may be possible from a proposed wind farm (on the other side of Loch Fyne), and the Heritage Lottery Fund: these would be investigated and applied for by the Trustees.

#### **6. Questions from those attending**

Robin asked for comments and questions from those attending.

It was thought that repairing, maintaining and improving the paths was extremely important for everyone who visits the wood.

Craig said that he was aware that Portavadie Marina were keen to map routes for cyclists: we should consult with them.

The recording of what species exist in the wood is thought important, so that in the future we will be able to tell if the biodiversity is improving or not.

Our constitution requires some trustees to stand down at every AGM. Eve and Mark had stepped down in the past, and had been re-elected for a second term. This time Robin and Robert stood down, and were re-elected for a second term. (A "term" is for three years, and no trustee can serve for more than two consecutive terms). The officers (eg the Chair, secretary and Treasurer) are selected and appointed by the Trustees. We know that Eve would like to pass the role of secretary on, and we are currently looking for a replacement. (Note: the role of secretary is a very important one, but the Secretary does not have to be a trustee.)

#### **7. Meeting Closed**

The meeting closed at 2010, as the free "Zoom" period had expired. Anyone wishing to ask further questions is encouraged to get in touch with any of the trustees.