

Kilfinan Community Forest Company

8th Annual General Meeting

9th February 2017

7 pm in Kames Church Hall

Present: Steve Williamson, Mark Bamford, Jo Coley, David Hunter, Willie McAllan, Sara McLean, Rob Borusso, Nikki Brown, Fiona Hamilton

Members of the public: 10

Apologies: Ali Porter, Di Wilson

Minutes of previous AGM

proposed: David Hunter

seconded: Mark Bamford

Chair's report

Steve Williamson welcomed everyone to the 8th Annual General Meeting and apologised for the delay in holding the AGM due to audit process. He thanked staff and directors for all their hard work in the past year. There are now five full-time and three part-time members of staff, eight directors on the Board who all give their time voluntarily. Douglas Lamb was also thanked for his legal advice throughout the year.

Kilfinan is one of the leading community forests, winner of Scotland's Finest Woods awards - recognised by our peers for the efforts being put in. This also means there are lots of bureaucratic obstacles to overcome as pioneers in fulfilling our aims of delivering social and economic health for the community, with a focus on becoming a self-funding business using our natural resources; water, land and timber.

Ownership of the forest has grown from 127 ha in 2010 plus an additional 434 ha in August 2015. HIE, Scottish Land Fund, Forestry Commission were all very keen to make community purchase happen. There have been many community consultation exercises and many promises have already been delivered.

Purchase funds for the additional forest purchase went through bank accounts which made KCFC look, for one day, like a £1m charity. This has resulted in a much more onerous audit process for OSCR than anticipated by the accountants in the timescale they had allowed. Therefore draft accounts only are available tonight, but are these are unlikely to change and will be approved and posted on the website as soon as possible. This process has left KCFC £5k poorer in fees.

Planned felling has been delayed by almost a year, causing some financial cashflow problems.

The Hydro-electric scheme was funded by a loan of £190k, provided jointly by SIS and REIF. It is now fully functioning and bringing in a steady income of around £50k per annum after loan repayments.

Sawmill & woodfuel sales pay for a full time employee.

Over 80 tonnes of material is composted over the year in the composting bays. Negotiations are ongoing with council to increase capacity and allow more income generation. A guarantee for longer term contract is needed before time and money can be committed to upgrading the bays.

The provision of affordable housing and woodland crofts is still an on-going project, to solve the problem of high costs of local housing compared with local salaries. It is also encouraging new families into the area. Provision of housing is vital to achieving all KCFC aims. Desired progress has been slowed hugely by council bureaucracy. Three woodland crofts are planned to boost economic activity in the area.

Woodland burials will generate income and create employment. The feasibility study and business plan are complete. Funeral directors feedback that woodland burials are becoming increasingly popular.

Construction of a training centre and office is the next project to allow land-based courses to be run. KCFC will establish links with Argyll College to run courses. This facility will also provide a boost accommodation providers in village.

Workshop units are being developed and two will soon be available for rental.

Volunteering and community involvement has been continuing. The Forest Access Coordinator post is funded by Robertson Trust. It was initially delivered by Sara McLean and now by Mick Eyre. Youth skills courses, woodworking courses, path building, Branching Out sessions are just some examples of the opportunities that have been provided during the past year.

In the longer term there is a desire to build a bunkhouse, campsite and function area based at old curling site.

In summary, it has been year of frustration but looking back every year has had its challenges and rewards.

Treasurer's Report and Financial Statement

The Financial Statement was presented in draft form. (attached). The Board agrees that it represents an accurate account of the financial position and, once signed off, it will be available on the website.

Significant incomes - sawmill, woodfuel, composting, grants, donations
Expenditure - salaries, forest operations and equipment, professional fees,

The charity can continue to operate in a solvent state for a further year.

It is KCFC's aim to build reserves from income stream. New accountants will be appointed, based in Tarbert, and new cloud-based accounting system will be put in place.

The appointment of the new accountants was unanimously approved

Operations Manager's Report

The most important development has been taking on two construction trainees. A main aim of KCFC is creating employment opportunities.

Compost bays will not be upgraded until council commit to renewing contract.

Forestry operations, it has been written into the felling contract that lorries won't run through the village either end of the school day. Any forestry traffic causing problems is not KCFC-related.

Kilfinan Way - forest path will link and create a loop walk, and also be linked to the Cowal Way, encouraging walkers to stay a further day in the village.

A new circular path has been created up to Barr Liath. Access to the forest is massively improved.

There have been building control problems because of the design of housing to make use of ample supplies of KCFC resources, low-grade timber.

Focus for coming year - completion of new forest centre (training & office centre/community space for the village).

The first house built will be built after 10 years of KCFC ownership of forest. It is vital to keep employment for construction employees. Rural Housing Body status has been awarded to KCFC. This will enable us to ensure that housing is not to become holiday homes and will remain affordable. KCFC will have right to purchase buy back any housing. This mechanism has been used successfully in five other areas.

Machines will be arriving to clear the Events area in May. This is at the old curling area, and will include camping. Improvements have been made in oak wood area - paths, aspen grove, ponds.

Crofting land and burial sites have also been identified. Any interested people are welcome to come up and be shown around.

Forest Access Coordinator Reporter

Mick Eyre explained that the aim is for forest to be an asset for the local area. Assets to be reinvested in the forest.

He explained his role and all its variety.

Youth skills development programme 6 weeks for 5 young people in 2016. To be carried on in the future

Workshop programme; woodworking, willow weaving, environmental art - employing local people to deliver.

Depend on volunteers to help with some environmental tasks. Special mention to Kings Court residents

Staging community events - eg. Autumn Golden Time, Viking boat

Woodworking events and tool library. FCS have granted money to set up tool library.

Workshops are run and tools are also available for loan to the community.

Branching Out, mental health project backed by NHS & Social Care. Because the Branching Out programme is time limited, another group is being trialled at Kilfinan to prevent people slipping back into mental ill-health

Starting very soon Walking group to encourage socialising and knowledge of local area.

Green gym & 'mindfulness', Baby Bears baby and toddler outdoor play, Nature study group, Easter play scheme for 7+,

Once Infrastructure is in place Kilfinan could be a very successful centre for training.

Any Questions?

What is the process if you're interested in a house plot?

Until building warrant issue is sorted, reluctant to get people's hopes up. The day that arrives it will be posted on website and announced publicly.

Election of Directors

Directors to stand down. Willie McAllan, Steve Williamson, Fiona Hamilton

W McAllan standing down, not seeking reelection.

F Hamilton re elected as representative of school.

S Williamson re elected as representative of Community Council.

Election for director to fill W McAllan's position. Two applicants.

Don McInnes and Iain McPherson presented their cases for election.

Motion to increase board from eight to nine.

Vote to maintain the number on board at eight, passed 11 to 8.

Don McInnes: 8 votes

Iain McPherson: 3 votes

Don McInnes elected to the board. Iain McPherson invited to attend next board meeting and discuss co option.

Any other Business

Willie McAllan was thanked for the huge amount of effort he has put. His contribution will be greatly missed.

Meeting concluded at 8.40 pm