**Minutes of Open Meeting of Steering Group**

**5th February 2020**

[NB For convenience some items have been recorded out of order of occurrence.]

*Present* : Martin Hill (in Chair) , Susan Duncan Millar (Treasurer), Chris and Margaret Cleare, Richard Deveria, Peter Ely, Jeannie Grant (Greenspace Ranger), Cecily Hill, Peter & Ruth Howell, Doug & Sheila Wilson.

Apologies received from : Jennifer Bidwell, Charles Platt, Donald & Julie Riddell, Lorna Ross, Stuart Smith and Margaret Thomas

**1 Welcome** : MH welcomed all and in particular new attendees, explaining that this was technically a meeting of the Steering Committee but all present could consider themselves members as widest input was required to plan year’s activity.

**2) Minutes** : Minutes of previous meeting (18.09.2019) having been previously circulated were approved. Any matters likely to arise would be covered in the Agenda.

**3) 2019 Projects/work to be completed** : MH noted that the fencing at Carse Farm and the additional ditching at Camserney Pond were still outstanding. Fencing contractor delayed by hold-up in timber supply; ditch delayed because of difficulty in getting digger contractor back to site. Andrew Barrie (PKCT) is chasing. Some signage to complete work on Riverside Path still to be done. JG getting signs and waymarker posts from PKC.

**4) Volunteer Working Parties for 2020** :

There appeared to be no particular preference for days (weekdays or weekends) so we will proceed with a variety and note which actually appear more popular over the year. Dates had been chosen to fit in with JG’s commitments.

After some discussion of work to be done it was agreed that the 10 (or 11) monthly parties would be provisionally allocated as follows :

2 on Riverside Path (completion of signage on Farleyer section and general maintenance at Comrie Bridge end),

2 more at Kenmore (clearing rhododendrons on Gallops),

1 or 2 on Railway Path ( complete Pruning of Broom at the Lagg section, repair rail on footbridge),

2 on Weem and Glassie Circular ( Signage and in liaison (JG) with forestry people) ditching at top of Weem track)

1 on Wade ‘s Road/Pitilie track (MC & CC to provide photos of work to be done)

1 on Camserney Dull track ( finish pruning broom at Camserney end and/or possible ditching work at Dull end).

MH to provide and publicise schedule with dates/times. Locations to be kept flexible in case other priorities emerge.

JG indicated that School Group is interested in suitable projects. JG will liaise with Doug Woodrow.

SDM had met with Kerry from Taymouth Stables to discuss co-operation on sharing Gallops between Horse-riders and pedestrians. Stables might produce a working party. SDM also in touch with Donald Meldrum (Taymouth Castle Estate). SDM/JG to pursue.

**5) Maintenance Contracts** : It was agreed that in principle mowing (on Railway and Riverside paths) ought to be funded through the 4 local Community Councils. To date the Treasurer has approached the Councils on an ad hoc basis. The pros and cons of trying to get the Councils to accept on-going responsibility for funding mowing and some other basic maintenance work requiring funding were discussed. Funding generally will come from disbursement of mini-grants made available to the Councils by Griffin Wind Farm Fund. PE raised possibility of getting a large grant from Griffin to cover, say, 3 to 5 years. MH commented on the difficulty of getting maintenance as opposed to Capital grants from Griffin. PE also mentioned that the Kenmore Council was already involved with a multiplicity of paths in its area including for example current developments on Drummond Hill. It was agreed to continue on an ad hoc basis (Treasurer to make appropriate applications) this year but to explore further with (a) councils and (b) Griffin Fund (MH to discuss with Douglas Craik ). MH noted that the sheep currently grazing on the Railway Path had solved the overgrowth problem but the fenced section of the track would need cutting, also several fence strainers broken. JG indicated some new strainers had been provided.

In context of fund-raising, we should explore possibility of joining Rotary Car Boot Sale in May.

We had unsuccessfully applied for week in Thrift Shop : hopefully will get a week in 2021.

**6) Major Projects** : MH explained that after our efforts last year a quieter year was planned !

Three possibilities were discussed:

i) DW suggested that the surface of the Kenmore Gallops needed scraping to remove the build up of leaf-mould over many years and some holes filling with appropriate improvement to drainage.

MH noted that the establishment (or not ?) of the “Tayside Way” might be relevant. PKCT is working on this. JG noted that clearance of Rhodos and other overhead branches would improve light and wind access and hence help dry the path. It was agreed that this would be a useful project to explore further

ii) MH raised the possibility of re-establishing the link from the top of the Birks to the Calliachar Forestry. We had looked at this a few years ago but put it on the back-burner. All agreed that such a link would be beneficial. MH to raise with Jane Pritchard(PKC).

iii) MC & CC raised the possibility of improving a link between the Dun Path and the Forestry. It was noted that we had looked at this previously but had concluded too difficult to achieve. Maybe we should re-visit.

MC mentioned repair needed to Deer Gate on Dun Path. MC/JG to liaise

**7) Equipment –Training Da**y :

It had been agreed at last meeting that group should acquire some basic tools – not to replace JG’s equipment but in order for volunteers to be able to do some small-scale basic maintenance aside from “Volunteer Working Days”. MH would like a two-wheeled strimmer ! We will review further after the PKC Training day at end February.

The Training day at the Atholl Palace Hotel in Pitlochry is intended for all the Highland Perthshire Paths’ Groups and will provide both training on equipment and opportunity to network with other groups. JG/MH to circulate details and encourage members to attend.

**8) Birks of Aberfeldy Community Group**:

MH/JG outlined the setting-up and rationale for this new group. We have arranged to be on each other’s circulation lists. There was a brief discussion of the shortly to be unveiled Birks Management Plan. It was noted that UTPG was not directly involved with the Birks paths as PKC has a management contract. JG is running a series of Working Days for the Birks Group at which everyone is welcome (details will be circulated). The Birks group is also in process of acquiring equipment and there may be possibility of co-operation in this area.

**9)Public Relations and Recruiting**:

It was agreed that we should circulate information to Community Councils both to keep them informed and interested and for their websites. Volunteer needed to handle PR and publicity generally. Could someone, please, step forward. Contact MH or SDM if interested.

**10) Chairman/Treasurer/Secretary**:

MH will continue as “Acting” Chairman for this year but will need replacement for 2021.

SDM has been Treasurer for many years and would like to be replaced but will continue for time being.

We need a Secretary to do minutes and some other admin – not a demanding job as only two/three meetings each year. Volunteer please ?

**11) A.O.B.**

i) Beavers. MH noted that UTPG should not take on general “Beaver Problems” unless Paths were directly affected (as on Riverside Path at Camserney and Railway Path on section from Aberfeldy Cemetery). We are in contact with SNH Beaver Mitigation Group and they are due to come back to us with thoughts/training on riverbank repairs. MH to follow up.

ii) Mark Purrman -Charles from the Scottish Invasive Plant Initiative has been in touch wanting volunteers to train in destruction of Giant Hogweed and Japanese Knotweed. The former is spreading down the Tay probably from an original plant(s) on Farleyer Estate. SIPI will provide equipment, training and chemicals. Mark will attend the above-mentioned Training day. In meantime MH will be in touch with him to arrange meeting(s) with relevant landowners. If anyone is interested to undertake the training, please let MH or JG know.

**12) Date & Place of Next Meeting.**

Next meeting will be AGM followed by Open Steering Committee Meeting at 7pm on Wednesday 16th September 2020 (unless earlier Steering Committee meeting is needed).