

Board Meeting 29.6.22

Agenda

Item		
1.	Introductions	All
2.	Chair update	RW
3.	Community engagement update	SL
4.	Worksteam updates: a. Offgrid huts b. Woodland Management Plans c. Quarry site/SLF	RW/SG/SL
5.	Finance update	RW/JR
6.	Resourcing (IT & staffing)	RW
7.	AGM and future meeting dates	RW
8.	AOB	All

Attendees

Richard Whitcomb – Chair (RW)

John Reid (JR)

Peter Vincent (PV)

Martin Catlin (MC)

Peter Atkins (PA)

Tony Edwards (TE)

Samuel Lindsay (SL)

Shelley Gould (SG)

Apologies: Alexander Davey

Meeting notes

1. Introductions and welcome.
2. RW provided the Chair's updates since the last Board Meeting in May 2022 setting out the key successes of the well-attended the Port Gala event (and associated birdbox engagement activities) and having delivered the Forest's first 'Engaging Local Communities-funded' event (the wildflower wander). He provided an update on felling activities and plans to meet with the RSPB and adjacent land owners to discuss potential for a joined-up approach for northern end of forest (as part of a temperate rainforest restoration project). RW noted that funding has been secured



from Argyll and Bute Council to deliver a mountain bike/ebike transfer station which will allow to expand offer/events on the island.

NB: Please see Appendix 1 for the full written update.

ACTION: Separate bike hire discussion required to ensure it works effectively, to agree piloting approaches and maximize opportunities to engage with local partners (TE/RW/SL).

3. SL provided most updates on the most recent community engagement events:
 - Joint campus – following on from our successful sessions with the P2 class, we hope to welcome other year groups after the summer break. We have also met with Dale Somerville & Ailsa Cassidy to discuss how we can engage Academy Pupils.
 - Apple Tree Nursey have visited twice and are keen to establish a regular session. Meeting arranged.
 - North Bute Primary School has visited and we also hope to host St Andrews Primary School in the new term.
 - We have an event planned with Achievement Bute on 13 July 'Gun powder trail' and we have two volunteers hoping to help over the summer as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Award.
 - Branching Out are continuing to enjoy their weekly visits.

Wildflower Wander event attracted 21 people (through Facebook advertising only) and we are investigating the possibility to repeat the event. We also have two Rhododendron clearance events planned 10 & 17 July. Bute Etymologist Society are visiting 2/3 July. ButeFest is last weekend of July and BCF will have a stall there.

SL also updated that he had provided an impromptu interview about the BCF to the BBC Scotland – nature podcast.

ACTION: TE/PA/MC to attend Rhododendron clearance events planned 10 & 17 July@ 2pm

ACTION: SG/SL/RW to make arrangements for community engagement at Bute Fest.

4. Woodland Management Plan: SL provided overview of the document (please see Appendix 2) and set out the broad options for replanting as a starting point. The Board agreed to pursue native/commercial planting scheme which would entail a 30:70 native broadleaf/conifer split or up to 100% native broadleaf as recommended by the Woodland Trust. It was also agreed to focus on the potential for including Aspen conservation as well as Scots pine and juniper to enhance biodiversity.



There was a broad discussion around the requirements for fencing and pest control as part of the Woodland Management Plan and that the plan itself would be an important tool to unlock potential funding for these purposes. There was also a broad discussion about the potential for new pathways and mountain bike trails to be created in the forest. The board agreed to explore these options.

ACTION: SL/SG to provide a rough draft of Woodland Management Plan by next board meeting, including options for planting/paths/mountain bike tracks.

5. JR Finance: BCF has a good income from current felling minus replanting. All debts have been cleared. Insurance is significant ongoing cost but there is potential to consolidate policies next year. JR has confirmed that he will be remaining in position.
6. Resourcing: Board agreed to provide IT devices/mobiles for employees necessary for the ongoing engagement and project delivery work. Staffing: board agreement to extend contract for the Sustainable Rural Tourism Post for one further year from November 2022.

ACTION: SG/RW/SL to explore revenue match funding. Discuss funding strategies and vision at future meeting.

ACTION: SG to contact Bute Museum to make arrangements for September AGM (dawn Collis: 01700 504429)

Next Board meeting date: Monday 15 August 2022 @7pm (Venue TBC)

Appendix 1: Chair's update

A warm welcome to Shelley Gould – our new Delivery Resource – 0.6 FTE for the 3 years until end of March 2021. Shelley has almost completed her first full month – so far so good! We are delighted to start building a staff 'team' – this massively increases our capacity to deliver.

Over the Spring 2022 – since our last Board meeting at the start of May – we continue to progress a range of activities and projects. We continue to be in a good place. Samuel and Shelley will update on some specifics but some notable achievements are:

- A highly successful Port Gala-day where we had a very strong and visible presence at what was a very well attended event;
- The first event under our Supporting Communities Fund programme – the Wildflower Wander;
- A range of new user-groups at Moss Wood Forest.

Our felling has continued – and after a short pause where the harvester was being repaired – is nearing completion. John will update us on the finances – but suffice to say we have been managing the process well (receiving timber income and paying harvester and haulage contractors). We continue to expect to make an overall profit in line with forecasts.

As the felling completes, it brings in to focus the 'what we do next'. This will be governed by our Woodland Management Plan. We now have confirmation from Forestry Scotland that 2 Woodland Management Plans will be sufficient – one for the SSSI and one for remainder covering Moss Wood and our plantation. Samuel and Shelley have been working on ideas for non-SSSI plan – we will have an initial discussion on this as part of this meeting.

The non-SSSI Woodland Management Plan is important since it will set out what we want to do in this area, not just in terms of replanting (where we are already committed to 70% broadleaf) but also in terms of infrastructure (paths, mountain bike trails, off-grid hut site, community use area etc.).

Having 2 Woodland Management Plans is a good outcome for us – it saves on a single Long-Term Forest Plan which is more onerous to prepare; we should be able to produce the Woodland Management Plans ourselves and use it to draw down Forestry Scotland grant funding (e.g. in relation to deer fencing).

Fortuitously, as we consider the Woodland Management Plans, we have been introduced to the RSPB (via Don Murray – advisory Board member to the RSPB). The RSPB has heavily involved in Rainforest Restoration. They are excited about the prospect of us being a potential project. Ideally, this would take the form of a whole landscape approach for the North End of the Isle of Bute. To this end, a meeting has been set up for 8th August to discuss synergies and partnership working. This is positive and a chance for us to get to know more about the family's plans (as a minimum we know they are also replanting their Rhubodach forest with broadleaves).



Our confidence with external funders continues. We are delighted to announce that we have received £10,000 from the Crown Estates Fund for an e-bike to mountain-bike handover station. This will be administered by Argyll and Bute Council. The initial idea is that folk on e-bikes will be able to leave their e-bikes safely under cover and then either transfer to a mountain bike to explore the north end, or progress on foot (potentially a guided walk with Samuel). Fyne Futures are keen to work in partnership – maybe selling joint packages. We will work through the project details as we progress – the funding is to be spent by 31 st March 2023.

This new project builds on work we are already progressing, notably the purchase of the Quarry Site, our off-grid huts and the Community Shelter. Shelley will update on the Quarry Site and off-grid huts. Regarding the Community Shelter, this is actively being considered now by Argyll and Bute Council and we expect a decision very shortly. We are also close to trialling our Mountain Bike hire, using Fyne Future’s website platform for booking – we will choose some selected days.

Overall, another very positive 6-8 week period since we last met. The future continues to be exciting and – with increased capacity – we can look forward to delivering our projects and shaping our future plans. We will also be able to continue our very good level of community engagement – including our next planned event drawing on volunteers.

Appendix 2 Woodland Management Plan – summary of structure

1. **Details** – General Forest location details and BCLC details.
2. **Woodland Description** – A history of previous management, forest/ecosystem health, and other general information about the forest followed by maps outlining the forest and infrastructure.
3. **Vision and Objectives** – clearly stating our economic, environmental and social goals.
4. **Stakeholder Engagement** – engaging with the community to get their feedback on our goals and visions and an opportunity to contribute.
5. **Analysis and Management Strategy** – Factoring in stakeholder feedback and looking at think of the constraints and opportunities to the feedback.
6. **Management proposals** – An in-depth look at all projects and strategies that we look to carry out as part of managing the forest for the next 10 years.