



Management Group Meeting Minutes

Monday 18th July, 7pm, Estate Office, Applecross House

Present: Owen Kilbride (Archaeological Society), Alistair McCowan (AMcC) (Historical Society), Alasdair Macleod (AMac)(Community Council), Gill Fairweather (Walks and Traditional crafts group) Tom Kilbride (co-opted member), Jacqui Liuba (co-opted member), Mary Gibson (adviser), Sam Bridgewater, Elodie Chopin.

Apologies of absence: Archie MacLellan, Chair (Applecross Trust), Lorna Lumsden (Applecross Trust), Derek MacLennan (Bealach group), Mike Summers (Applecross Crofters), Gordon Cameron (Heritage Manager).

The minutes of the MG meeting of the 13th June 2011 were approved by all present and will be made available via the ALPS notice board and the website.

Updates

SB provided a brief update on progress (available as a separate update).

Minutes

Paths

It was agreed that good progress was being made on the paths. AMcC stated that he thought that a crusher dust finish was not appropriate for the paths as the rain is likely to wash it away. SB stated that the smoother surface was part of the original specification developed during the ALPS development phase and provided standard finish for such paths in the area, with providing All Ability Access an important criteria for funders. MG also stated that a dust finish was standard in many other places. JL liked the existing finish (type 1) and didn't see the need to add the dust. OK said that he wasn't originally for a dust finish for the broch path, but that it had weathered well. SB clarified that work on the Clachan path was now well underway and that repairs to the Cruary-Heritage Centre path, including the establishment of waterbars would be done in July/early August. SB informed the group that the path contractor would be spending a week with David Abraham in late July on a non ALPS project to make repairs to some stalking paths. SB also informed the group that the path would likely come in under budget, and that money should be available to construct a drystone wall below the path entrance at the Coal Shed to mirror the recently built wall on the other side of the road. He thought any additional excess should be ring-fenced should additional repairs be required during the autumn/winter period.

Clachan Church

The group were presented with indicative figures for work on Clachan Church based on tenders received the Friday before the meeting. SB thought that the budget was tight, although the lowest tenders would appear to be affordable. It was asked if architect fees were included. SB thought they weren't, but not yet having seen the full tenders would clarify this with the architect. It was asked if

contingency was included. AMcC said it was usual for such tenders to include contingency. It was agreed to arrange a meeting asap with the architect to discuss all the tenders, assess the detailed costings and complete the procurement process. SB stated that the architect was providing a detailed tender assessment report. He also stated that there might be the need to amend some of the works if the budget was not sufficient. Concern was expressed that the lowest tender was from northern Ireland and that there might be issues with the financial resilience of this company. AMcC stated that he thought that there were project management problems with Clachan and that everything was proceeding far too slowly. SB asked for clarification on what aspect of project management were problematic. He reminded the group that this project had always been listed as a year 2 project and that significant progress had been made in year 1, including raising the shortfall of ca. £100K and finalising work specifications, the heating component of which was not agreed until late April 2011, and that it was not possible to go to tender until such time as specifications were finalised and agreed by all. AMcC still thought that progress was too slow. SB reassured the group that all necessary statutory permissions (Planning; Building Warrant; Listed Building Consent; Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent) had been applied for. AMcC wanted to know what efforts were being made to speed these through. SB stated that the process was frustratingly long, and that he would contact the architect to see how it might be swiftened. He reminded the group that the statutory bat license could not be applied for until planning had been granted, although not all works would require a bat license, and that bat surveys could not have been undertaken before the breeding season.

Hebridean Barns

SB informed the group that specifications for consolidating the northern-most Hebridean barn had been drafted and that the Highland Council have requested that Listed Building Consent is applied for before any works can be undertaken. SB stated that this had been done, but had not yet been granted. Work to the northern barn would consolidate the pillars and replace the roof replacing 'like with like', with new timbers used where appropriate. JL asked whether there were still plans to turn one of the barns into an interpretation area. It was generally agreed that this would be a suitable use, and that the southern-most barn (without a roof) would be the most appropriate venue due to it not having silage pits. The question was asked whether money from the interpretation budget could be used to help restore the southern-most barn. MG stated that she thought it might be problematic, and that as a funder, SNH, as an example, would not agree to any of their funds earmarked for interpretation being used in this way. SB thought the other funders might also be reticent, and that it would be prudent to wait until there was a better idea of the costs of other planned interpretation elements. It was asked what the likely cost of restoring each of the barns would be. AMcC thought it might be possible to do each for ca. £10K, with essentially the same work needed for both, and that he was expecting indicative costings shortly.

Milton Loch

SB made the group aware of a draft management plan for Milton Loch. Those that had seen it thought it was a useful document collating all known information on the loch and that it gave a good basis for future management. SB stated that the final invertebrate survey would be done the week of 18th July, with final macrophyte mapping done during the week of the 25th July. He hoped that a work party could be mobilised to start clearing some of the rushes and vegetation in early August. AMcC stated that he thought that such clearance was largely cosmetic. SB and MG agreed, stating that the loch was in a natural process of becoming a marsh and that cutting of vegetation could only delay it. SB said that this fact had been made clear in the management plan. TK wondered why there had been such an exponential increase in vegetation in recent years, and wondered if it was linked to the introduction of a septic tank at Lochend. AMcC thought that the small size of the tank would make it unlikely to have such an impact on increasing nutrients in the loch. MG said that the

healthy population of white water lilies suggested that nutrient levels were not abnormally raised, with SB saying that the presence of stoneworts in the loch also indicating that the loch was still mesotrophic in nature. It was agreed that maintaining Milton Loch as a loch in the long term would likely involve dredging, but that this did not come under the scope of ALPS. JL said that could white water lilies be cleared if they were too many as the report said they were of special worth. MG stated that the species was a good indicator of mesotrophic lochs, but not actually protected.

Interpretation

It was agreed that if any of the Management Group had additional comments on the second draft of the Interpretation Plan and the audit (Appendix B) they would forward them to SB before the end of July. It was generally agreed that the second draft was a significant improvement on the first draft. No actual specific problematic issues were raised about the second draft. SB informed those members of the group who were not present on the trip, that a useful meeting had occurred at the top of the Bealach with Verity and Alistair Milligan from Ross Associates (who did the designs for Knockan Crag). Various ideas for interpretation were discussed and that Alistair was preparing rough sketches for feedback from the group to help take the process forward of interpretation at this site.

Guided Walks

SB stated that the Guided Walks programme had begun with mixed success to date, although 12 people attended the last natural history walk. OK expressed an interested in adding an archaeological walk to the list and would liaise with SB over dates and times. GF stated that improved publicity would be useful, and that a flier for B&Bs would be ideal. SB confirmed that there was a budget for this.

Other matters arising

SB stated that he had been contacted with concerns voiced over the holding of an ALPS event on the Sabbath. The MG agreed that it had always been ALPS policy not to hold events on the Lord's Day, and that such a policy should continue.

MG enquired about what work was still pending at Smiddy as rushes were appearing on the area it was hoped would be grassland. SB stated that he would contact Scottish Woodlands regarding their management. Strimming was suggested by JL as one option. MG stated that chemical treatment was also possible. SB confirmed that the area had not been limed at the time of seeding due to the unconsolidated nature of the ground making it dangerous for machinery to operate, but that liming was proposed in the future. It was generally felt that this would be an opportune time to discuss progress of Smiddy, and also the development of plans for the Gateway Woodland, and that Bruce Taylor should be invited to meet with the group when he is next in Applecross. JL stated that Bruce had been across with Danish foresters recently. SB said that he had been introduced to the Danish foresters by Bruce at a prior meeting, but that he had not be aware of this more recent visit and did not know the degree to which plans have been developed at this stage. TK expressed concern that in the most recent updated on Gateway woodland stated that 'the professional input required at this stage is not being funded as part of the project except in so far as there is an expectation that Scottish Woodlands will be contracted to project managing and undertake the work'. Issues of procurement were raised. SB stated that both Scottish Woodlands and the Trust had been made aware of the need for any contract to be advertised with a transparent bidding process in place to fulfil public funding procurement policy. It was enquired as to what degree work depended on ALPS funding to proceed. SB stated that ALPS funding was essential. The group agreed that they need to be kept fully informed and allowed to influence future plans, and these issues and additional ones of community involvement should be raised. OK thought that community management should be central to all ALPS projects.

Next MG meeting will be held on Monday August 22nd. SB stated that his partner's baby was expected around this time and that he might not be able to make it and would be on paternity leave for two weeks after the birth.