

## **MINUTES**

**Present:** Robert Sword (RS) – Chair, Dave Evans (DE), Karl Gerhardsen (KG), Asher Haynes (AH), Cllr Phil Kershaw (PK), Stephen Parker (SP), Robert Peacock (RP), Cllr Subash Sharma (SS), Ian Horton (IH), Julia Clark (JC)

### **In attendance**

Sharon Graves (SG) - Administrator and Company Secretary  
Paul Thompson (PT) – Community Woodland Manager

1. **Apologies:** None

**Action**

2. **Declarations of Interest:** None

### 3. **Minutes**

#### **Minutes of meeting on 18 December 2020**

Clarification on Boardwalk Project raised and confirmed below:

#### **8. Boardwalk Project**

- Northern section closed – Northern Section is a public footpath – National Park maintain it.

The minutes of the meeting on 18 December 2020 were **AGREED** as a true record.

#### **(i) Matters Arising not on the Agenda**

a) *Forge Valley Trees* – PT commissioned a tree survey of the highways. Seavegate survey proved too complex a site to survey and unable to do on an individual basis. PT gone back to consultant and stated not what we asked for and requested them to go back and do another survey on individual trees and consultants in process of doing this.

PT informed Survey stated needed to look at Forge Valley with renewed approach of wider management of site and PT to take up with Natural England. At present, PT does not have a detailed individual tree report for Forge Valley. What came out of the report was that SS mentioned at last meeting that SBC had intimated a cost of £40k for work at Seavegate and PT hopes that outcome of a survey will prove to be a lot less than £40k.

PT has requested consultant to specifically look at trees alongside the highways that could affect the highways in the next 12 months which is a bigger concern. PT hopes the survey will come back with approximately 15-20 trees to deal with, a more realistic figure to take back to SBC for SS/PK to discuss with Nick Edwards. PT envisages working on highways for one year then main public rights of way by Summer 2021.

SS – Mentioned a recent email that was sent regarding a fallen tree. Right attitude taken by RWCE in dealing with this. We now have future provision in place for appropriate person to be informed who can then arrange for tree to be removed rather than using an emergency source which will be more costly.

RP reported Forge Valley issues are critical. Large trees are falling because of ground conditions rather than through wind. One large tree was reported over the New Year and fell across the Boardwalk. Many trees within Forge Valley are towards end of their life.

Consultants highlighted there are much bigger issues than a basic tree survey and a fundamental approach to management of Forge Valley needs to be considered. PT looking to set up meeting with Consultant and Natural England on how we manage this site. Historically, more coppicing and trees were kept relatively small.

RS

b) *Employer's Manual* - RS reported has read through the manual, made one or two suggested amendments and has gone back to Alcumus. DE has had a copy. Awaiting response from Alcumus then manual will be ready to use and distributed. Apologies to PT for it not being ready sooner.

c) *Insurance* – RS - A reminder for RS/PT to look at the wider market when renewal date arrives.

RS/PT

#### (ii) **Confirmation of Confidential items**

The Board agreed that item 6(i) three items are confidential. The full minutes of 8 December 2020 will be posted on the website.

#### 4. **Governance**

##### (i) **Potential New Board Member**

RS Welcomed JC to the Board and everyone looking forward to her contribution, particularly in relation to funding.

#### 5. **Financial update**

##### (i) **CapEx and new equipment update**

RS noted that deposit for tractor/trailer of £2,000 has been paid.

PT has prepared a detailed budget showing income forecast over the next 2 years. By purchasing the tractor/trailer, PT confident that over the next 2 months he can generate income from timber sales. PT needs to extract timber

Countryside Stewardship agreement provides an annual revenue and annual capital payments which PT along with volunteers will enable further income to be generated. Unfortunately, the scheme payment is quite delayed – you may put in an application in say, May but it could be some nine months before a payment is made. Until those funds are received, need to generate income and limit expenditure.

JC asked “does having the tractor/trailer enable the volunteers to do their volunteering?”

PT informed JC, tractor/trailer will not be used at the same time as volunteers due to H&S risks.

JC asked “does having the tractor/trailer have any other community benefit other than for sale of timber?” PT – No.

PT explained we have signed up to a 5 year agreement with Countryside Stewardship which involves management of the woodland site which is what we do as an organisation. Only way of releasing an income is by extracting timber and selling it. Having the use of large tractor/trailer enables efficient extraction of the timber. If we are serious about wanting to manage wood and generate products then having tractor/trailer would assist in achieving this.

PT is in process of setting up a firewood business and all of these should generate income of approximately £5k over the next two or three months. PT hopes this can be extended through the summer period.

PT looking at two things:

- Providing engagement placements that we charge for – proposal put together for Action Towards Inclusion
- Fundraising – as an organisation we are community run, not for profit, manage green space on edge of deprived local community. Lots of selling points to funders and need to maximise this.

RP mentioned RWCE has the goodwill of a local farmer to help us bring/take materials and shred the waste. Although volunteers have helped removing shrubs, we have relied on local help to remove the waste. Tractor/trailer do compliment this work and fits in with some of work that the volunteers do.

JC – Need to create community engagements and subsequent donations. How can we put it together as a package. Need to come up with reasons why we cannot do without tractor/trailer and engage various Trust/Foundations. JC needs to explore these avenues.

SP – Power to Change Funding is supporting a change for RWCE to become a self funded organisation. Use of Tractor/trailer to raise an income stream to assist with funding and volunteering work.

PT to create a budget for next meeting and issue before meeting. Item on agenda for budget

PT/SG

## (ii) **Financial Statements – December 2020**

The current overall balance is £42,038.26:

- *Wild About the Woods* - The closing balance is £479.39 - virtual office costs/room hire costs are being allocated to this fund.
- *Unrestricted funds* - The closing balance is £9,152.92. Forestry costs - £2,810.65, Other includes Landbased training for DE, RP, PT and D Norman - £492.00.
- *Power to Change* – The closing balance is £32,486.35. Spend of note salary costs - £2,350.63, Forestry equipment - £971.27, Forestry supplies - £366.26, Vehicle Costs - £552.99, Deposit for tractor/trailer - £2,000

Three outstanding receipts of £400 (RP to chase), £3,325.00 and £7,234.25 (SG to chase).

RS has spoken to Anne Mead at accountants regarding accounts for 2019/20 and should be ready by end of February beginning of March. VAT question raised and until we exceed the annual limit RWCE will not be registered.

RP/SG

## 6. **Funding**

### (i) **Power to Change Update**

The following was noted:

DE – For JC's information. £113k Power to Change consisting of £50k capital and £63k revenue. Revenue to spread over 2 years. RWCE has drawn down most of the capital but £18k so far of revenue leaving approximately £13.5k for this year. DE will contact Power to Change (Claire Goodwin) to ask when officially money can be drawn down – it may be now or in 6 months. In 2 years time RWCE should be self funding.

RP updated the meeting following contacting Clare Goodwin:

- (i) Clare has sent a link about further COVID-19 support but nothing really and referred us to Government website. One avenue could be to apply for £100,000-£2.5M in business support for Not for Profit organisations with interest rate of around 6%. Looks like the only avenue available to RWCE if needed. Something to bear in mind. RP will send link to PT.

RP

- (ii) Funding for Business Plan Review (£8k). Catherine sent email requesting Power to Change needed confirmation that RWCE had sought CAVCA and were happy to use CAVCA. RP sent email confirming that approach which should result in release of funds but to date nothing forthcoming. Clearly, a communication gap between Catherine and Power to Change. RP continues to pursue confliction of funds

RP

## **(ii) Higher Tier Countryside Stewardship Scheme**

RP reported he was waiting for this Board Meeting to agree the signed confirmation. PT has diligently gone through paperwork and identified areas of discrepancies. Received information on payment schedule and RWCE will have to submit an applications for the capital before end of June 2021 for first application and again similar time frame for 2022. Latest information regarding claiming capital indicates submission should be done online and evidence supplied showing before and after of photographs. Claims for monies will not be released until Natural England are satisfied with evidence that is provided. Any queries, we will be liaising with Forestry Commission.

RP reported PT has met with James Shallcross at Forestry Commission regarding the discrepancies.

## **(iii) Sirius Foundation and Others**

The following was noted:

- Regarding Sirius No further progress. AH suggested await next round of funding from Sirius. Will keep in touch with Gareth.
- RS asked JC any comments on funding: JC – 25 years of experience. Not got all the answers but a wealth of knowledge and experience. Will speak with Board Members to gain background information and PT on initiatives he has. RS identified key members are RP, DE, SP, PT and JC.
- PT would like to set up a Fundraising Working Group separate to Board Meeting to identify funding ideas and who to target. JC identified three funding channels - trust and foundations, corporate and community.
- RS suggested PT/JC form a Group and ask interested parties if they would like to get involved. RS recommended keeping the group small.
- RS explained that it was decided to convert RWCE to a CIC; originally chosen primarily to enable RWCE to trade. Acknowledged CIC's more difficult to raise funds. As things develop may need to look at converting to charity. This needs to be flagged up with CAVCA when reviewing the Business Plan.

PT/JC

## **7. Community Woodland Manager/Business Plan Focus Group**

### **(i) Woodland Management update**

The following was noted:

PT – Active woodland management with Graham Norman – felling and extracting 2-3 days a week. Aim to set up a proposal with Graham Norman to assist in generating firewood products – log nets to sell at £5 to local farm shops, petrol stations et al. Aim to sell timber in 10ft lengths to sawmills and also sell direct to the public. In process of developing these two products.

PT

### **(ii) Community Engagement Update**

The following was noted:

- Due to COVID-19 and latest National lockdown not able to do much regarding community projects.
- Two successful volunteer days with x12 volunteers. Day one – planted x180 trees and Day two – coppicing. There is a good core of volunteers who are enthusiastic and add value.
- Did have dates lined up for January but still unable to go ahead due to latest National lockdown.

### **(iii) Infrastructure/Resources Update**

The following was noted:

- PT - Plenty of infrastructure that requires ongoing repairs to keep things in good order.
- PT - Hazelwood car park – very muddy and farmer had to assist pulling a car out of a muddy slope. RP – Not the first time car park has been a problem – wild camping last summer caused problems and anti-social behaviour and SBC had to close car park. PT - Car park has now been closed off until further notice.
- PT - Picnic area needs reseeding this Spring – may be with wildflowers. SP has some wildflower seeds and will give to PT to use.

SP

### **8. Boardwalk Project**

The following was noted in respect of the Boardwalk Project:

- RP has been in touch with Dave Smith, National Park Ranger who is in charge of public rights of way and asked for an update of Debbie Trafford's replacement. Post has not been filled and has been re-advertised. Michael Graham, Director of Park Services responded and would like National Parks to arrange a meeting with RWCE and others to discuss a way forward. RP asked SBC to be invited to meeting.

RP

**Robert Peacock left the meeting at 7.00pm**

### **9. Business Plan Review update**

Nothing to report.

### **10. Publicity, marketing and events**

#### **(i) Income – Licenses and Permits**

The following was noted:

- PT produced a paper with ideas that will bring in small streams of revenue, ie. Catering concession (Throxenby Mere) for coffee/ice cream, forestry school, organised running, organised cycling, commercial dog walkers, organised fitness groups and filming/photography and would welcome any advice or feedback.
- PT has asked National Park to send their concession license and rate card. Not heard anything back to date.
- DE reported that it had been discussed with RP, DE, SP – great idea.
- KG - need to identify what small/large groups are in terms of numbers (state how many).
- RS stated cost of catering concession fee may be on low side and will make enquiries on what other estates charge.
- RS also happy to assist with permits/licenses.
- SP mentioned the need to differentiate between profit organisations and community based organisations.

PT

RS

#### **(ii) Social Media**

The following was noted:

- Good reaction to social media.
- RS asked if we added events onto social media? PT informed the Board that events were uploaded on the day of the event.
- Instagram (82 followers), x7 sign ups.
- Facebook (585 likes) – people who want to follow you.
- Any engagements will now be uploaded on social media.

It was **AGREED** to record progress at all Board Meetings and to be put on next Agenda.

SG

**(iii) Photo Competition**

- PT would like to do a photo competition with a view to raise revenue by doing a calendar capturing each season and would also raise RWCE profile. Hope to raise a maximum of £800. **PT**
- RS asked JC for input. JC will look at getting donations via media – Facebook, Instagram. Need to look at this with RWCE being a CIC. **JC**
- AH mentioned doing a flyer for each car park with email address etc. to send photos. PT – good idea – will organize. **PT**

**11. Health and Safety**

**(i) Seavegate – tree safety inspection**

This has been covered.

**12. Any other business**

The following was noted:

- (i) DE asked whether the Board the need to have a monthly Board Meeting – may be every 6 weeks or 2 months. DE/RP/PT now meet on a regular basis.
- (ii) RS – Suggested initial thoughts could be filtered through to RS. Whether a need to restructure Board Meetings. RS/SG put together a response and RS to feedback at next meeting. **RS/SG**
- (iii) PT – Presented a H&S policy at last board meeting and to date no response or feedback and apart from a small typo PT seeking approval of document. DE supported this. AH not seen report and will look at report and feedback to PT. PT to report back at next meeting. **PT**
- (iv) PT – Created a report of dangerous tree log. To date no entries have been reported. KG asked if reporting form on Website? No. KG will send email to PT. **KG**
- (v) RS suggested a H&S report at future Board Meetings. **PT**
- (vi) PT noted anyone who signs up as Member is not receiving a newsletter. The lists needs updating. PT will speak with RP. **PT**
- (vii) PT – SS raised at last meeting about people knowing what we are about as an organization and what we do in respect of conservation/biodiversity aims. Members have access to Board Meetings via website but not newsworthy and need to look at raising profile. A need to record of what we are doing. RS suggested putting this item on next Agenda. **PT/SG**

**13. Dates of next meetings**

Will decide if 16 February Meeting will be held via Zoom nearer the time.

**2021**

- 16 February 2021
- 23 March 2021
- 27 April 2021- Annual General Meeting (reverted back to usual timing)
- 25 May 2021
- 29 June 2021
- *August meeting to be determined if needed.*
- 7 September 2021
- 12 October 2021
- 16 November 2021

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