

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST

Approved Minutes of General Council Meeting, 7.30pm, Tuesday 12 October 2016

held at the Aberdeen Grammar School FP Club Centre, 86 Queens Road, Aberdeen

Present: George Allan (Vice Chair-Trustee), Donald Thomas (Membership Secretary & Aberdeen Mountaineering Club Trustee), Catherine Lacy (Cults Hillwalking Club, Membership Secretary and Trustee), Brian Cornock (Bailies of Bennachie), Jean Robinson (Cairngorm Club), Ken Thomson (Cairngorm Club), Alison Mitchell (Ramblers- Trustee), Carlos Oldani (Stocket Hillwalking Club), Hamish Clunas (Aberdeen Hillwalking Club)

Apologies: Dave Windle (Chair- **Trustee**), Brian Heaton (Individual Member- **Trustee**), Della Russell (Culter Hillwalking Club), Susie Smith; Alistair Beeley, Maureen Stuchbury (Individual Member)

George opened the meeting by noting that it was the first operating under the SCIO Constitution, under which, until the first AGM of the SCIO, Council members are the signatories of the Charity Trustee declaration forms.

1. **Previous minutes (30 August 2016):** These were *approved*, subject to the correction of two minor typing errors.

2. **Matters Arising:**

- a) *SCIO:* The membership list has been updated and sent to Alison, Susie and Catherine. All Clubs have re-joined, and the number of Individual Members has risen slightly.
- b) *Membership Drive:* nothing to report, but item to stay on Council agendas
- c) *Threats to Wild Land:* Glen Banchor: nothing more heard, unclear when it was constructed and whether it should have been notified to the planning authorities.
- d) *CNPA Partnership Plan consultation:* Dave had coordinated and submitted Trust comments from himself, Roger Owen, Ken and Donald. George commented that the Plan was generally felt to be not challenging enough, especially as regards landowners. In response to a query from Jean, it was reported that management at catchment level was advocated to deal with problems of moorland and flooding. *It was agreed* that the comments would be posted on the NEMT website (**Donald**) and summarised in the next issue of *Mountain Views* (possibly by **Dave**)
- e) *Cairngorm & Glenmore Strategy:* This had been circulated to Council members. George reported that spatial plans by Forestry Enterprise Scotland and by Natural Retreats (for the ski area) were to follow, and possibly a Visitor Management Plan. [KJT: see <http://parkswatchscotland.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/160930CNPABdPaper2Annex1CairngormGlenmore.pdf>, and other parkswatch website entries]
- f) *Derry Lodge:* no more heard, but NTS application presumed to be going to the CNPA Planning Committee in the near future. However, Mar Lodge staff were reported to be uninterested in the project, and planning permission (if granted, as seemed likely) might lapse as NTS will have to raise very significant amounts of money.
- g) *Sportsman Club memberships:* these had been arranged.
- h) *Website:* Donald has set up a separate email address for members; **Catherine** to check that this is working properly.

- i) *Bothies*: It was reported that MBA had expressed interest in repairing the Red House ruin beyond White Bridge [KJT: at the Geldie], though planning (and NTS) permission would probably be needed, as well as significant building work.
 - j) *CAPS (Adopt a Path Scheme)*: it was reported that this would now be developed over the next 4-5 years under COAT's The Mountains and The People (TMTP) programme. It was believed that the CAPS website was still live, and that CAPS recruitment and training would be arranged by Rosie Winch in early 2017.
 - k) *Cairngorm Club*: Ken reported that the Club was moving towards charity status via membership consultation and a SGM in November 2016. Nothing more had been heard of the Club's donation towards a new Quoich footbridge.
 - l) *GC Minutes*: It was suggested that these, once approved, should be uploaded to the NEMT website. Discussion took place as to the appropriate way to do this, e.g. a new homepage item for NEMT Administration. **Donald and Ken** to consult with each other on the best way to do this.
3. **Trustees**: *It was agreed* to co-opt Jean Robinson (for the Cairngorm Club) and Ken Thomson (as an Individual Member) as NEMT Charity Trustees until the upcoming AGM, when Trustees would be (re-)appointed.
4. **Invitation to Council meetings**: *It was agreed* that Organisational Member reps who are not NEMT Trustees should be routinely invited to Council meetings as non-voting participants, and also a limited number of other Individual Members, e.g. Maureen Stuchbury. *It was also agreed* that any Individual Members may attend if they choose to do so.
5. **SCIO**: George advised that, following adoption of SCIO status on 1 October 2016 by OSCR on 2nd September 2016, with himself as the OSCR contact, final steps needed to be taken, e.g. transfer of assets (e.g. projector, screen, microphone, display) by end-October. He introduced a resolution to adopt a five-point mandate (see Annex) with the Royal Bank of Scotland, specifying authorisation and other banking arrangements. After some discussion of the second point, this was *agreed*, along with signing rules specifying three signatories (Alison, Catherine and Dave), with the Treasurer permitted to sign alone for amounts up to and including £50. *It was agreed* to close the current RBS account as soon as possible, after opening a new account, when the mandate would presumably come into effect. **Alison** to progress the above with RBS; **George** to send bank signatory names and details to Alison.
6. **Number of Trustees/Possible Change of Meeting Day**: George advised that more (than the current 8) Trustees (especially Club reps) would be desirable, to ensure that meetings included the quorum (of 6). A couple of possible names were suggested. **All Council members** to recruit. In order to encourage new Trustees, a possible change of the standard Council meeting evening from Tuesdays was suggested; majority Council opinion was against such a change.
7. **Annual Return to OSCR**: George advised that OSCR required a return within 9 months of a SCIO's end of financial year (which is 30 September for NEMT). Donald asked if this FY should be changed; GC opinion was not to do so. The status of Catherine and Donald was queried, and resolved as representing Cults HWC and AMC (rather than as an IM) respectively, subject to any club substitutes coming forward.

8. Threats to Wild Land

- a) *Natural Retreats (NR)*: Dave, along with Drennan Watson of the Cairngorms Campaign and Tessa Jones of the Badenoch & Strathspey Conservation Group, had met NR representatives re their "indiscretions" such as bulldozing without consent, and mess left on the hill. NR agreed that work had not been carried out to the required standard. They had apparently needed to use more space than expected, and would try to estimate better in future. They were hoping to retain a new track under retrospective planning consent; NEMT has objected on grounds of lack of need, and George has asked to speak at planning committee. NEMT has pressed the case for a plan to clear up the whole area (old fencing, machinery, unused buildings). NR were clearly focussed on boosting summer activity, probably mountain biking. Nick Kempe's Parkswatch blog was believed to refer to a new building at the top of a ski-tow: **Dave** to check. [KJT: see <http://parkswatchscotland.co.uk/2016/10/12/empowering-planning-deliver-great-place-cairngorm/#comment-475>]
- b) *Glencoe Ski Area*: an application had been submitted for a substantial (4m wide) track, relying on an earlier successful bid for permission for a tow replacement – a typical "one after the other" tactic. The track would be very visible from the main road, and NEMT, along with other voluntary bodies, **has** objected, on the basis of lack of need, since helicopters could be used.
- c) *Windfarms*: Refusals of both Culachy (SE of Fort Augustus) and Caplich (north of Oykel Bridge) have been appealed, and SG reporters have been appointed for forthcoming public inquiries. Glen Dye and Tomchrasky (N of Loch Cluanie) are both scoping exercises, with no formal planning applications as yet, although SNH will almost certainly object to the latter, as being in a Wildland area. More generally, with a new policy regime, WF applications have gone quiet, but extensions (rather than new locations), and even bigger turbines, are expected in the future.
- d) *Scoping Exercise for an Uplands Vision*: Ken and George summarised a draft NEMT response to a SNH consultation on this; Dave was due to submit this in finalised form by 14 October [KJT: and has done so]. George opined that the government will try (and fail) to meet all interests; he had advocated that the Vision should be to bring back the Uplands to ecological health, and then ask how the various interests could support this.

9. **Hilltracks**: George reported that LINK is seeking funds (e.g. from SMT) to employ someone to take over checking the applications, while in the meantime volunteers continue to report applications, rumours, etc. SG has considered the independent review of the new legal arrangements for hill tracks but is not about to change its guidelines. George has collated the findings of the LINK group (e.g. to accept public comments on prior notifications, and to require grassy mid-tracks), and Helen Todd of Ramblers Scotland has sent these to all relevant planning authorities. Donald asked about NEMT's Hill Tracks project; George said that this was effectively "dead".

10. **Mountain Hares**: no more heard

11. **Mountain Views**: The latest issue had been produced and distributed on time by Catherine (who was to be congratulated) and others.

12. **Deputy Chair:** George announced his intention to resign this position at the forthcoming AGM due to time pressures, though he was willing to continue with Trusteeship, Hill Tracks, Natural Retreats (with Dave), the OSCR link, and the occasional NEMT "campaign". He would play a lesser role on *Mountain Views*, and drop his involvement in the Lecture series after the forthcoming series. Alison regretted the likely absence of both the current Chair and Deputy Chair from many Council meetings; George replied that Dave was often active, despite work abroad, on consultations and Lectures, and that a new Deputy Chair could of course be chosen. **George** to circulate a list of DC duties, though these never formally defined.
13. **Lectures:** Arrangements for Nick Kempe's talk were all in hand under Dave; Jean offered to help on the night if wanted. **Catherine** to email Liz Lindsey, Jean and Dave to check people available including As regards the situation after the 2016/17 season, it was essential to find a new Lectures Organiser; otherwise, abandonment of the series might become necessary although the Lectures, along with MV, were the main benefit to Members, and were popular, with attendances usually between 25 and 50. *It was agreed* to raise this as a priority at the AGM. Alison asked about arrangements in the case of lecture cancellation, which was not mentioned on the current A5 leaflet. George replied that this could be seen to for 2017/18, and that in any case emails could be sent out.
14. **AGM 29 November 2016: George** would send material such as the Annual Report (currently under preparation by Dave) to Catherine in time for member notification, and the spreadsheets to **Ken**, who would draft an AGM Agenda.
15. **Subscriptions 2017:** After discussion, *it was agreed* not to propose a rise in rates for the next Membership Year (which runs from 1 January), or for the subsequent one, i.e. 2018, since the change of NEMT bank account would create enough activity meantime, and there was no immediate need for more funding. *It was also agreed* not to request members to change from Standing Orders to Direct Debits (which would make a rise in rates more feasible) at the current time, although **Alison and Catherine** would investigate the procedures (for members and banks) involved in doing this, and for enabling BACS payments.
16. **Membership Leaflets: George** to ask Sandy McIntosh to produce a new version once the new bank account details were known (to Alison), and to send the result to Catherine and Alison.
17. **Preparation of agendas: Ken** to draft these for future Councils and AGMs, and send to Dave, George and Catherine for checking/approval.
18. **AOCB:** Alison reported that she had been asked by Helen Todd (Ramblers Scotland Policy and Landscape Officer) to make widely known RS's PathWatch project, currently being extended to Scotland on a 6-month basis. It allowed walkers to report experiences (views, obstacles, signage) to Helen via a free mobile phone app. **George** agreed to send the link to Council and individual NEMT members, after a gap in general NEMT emails since the one on the October lecture.
19. **Date of Next Meeting:** Tuesday 29 November, immediately following the AGM.