

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST
SCIO Scottish Charity no. SC 008783

Minutes of Council Meeting held 7.30 pm Tuesday 2 June 2020
held via Zoom

Present: George Allan*, John Hughes (Stonehaven M&HWC), Brian Cornock (Bailies of Bennachie), Debbie Fielding** (Cairngorm Club), Morna Harper** (Aberdeen Mountaineering Club), Brian Heaton*, Alison Mitchell** (Ramblers Scotland), Carlos Oldani, Roger Owen**, Jean Robinson*, Donald Thomas*, Ken Thomson*, Dave Windle*
* Charity Trustee as Individual Member; ** Charity Trustee as Organisational Representative

1. **Apologies:** Catherine Lacy-Roberts** (Culter HWC)
2. **Declaration of conflicts of interest:** None declared.
3. **Minutes of Council Meeting 21 April 2020:** draft approved after two minor corrections.
4. **Matters Arising from above Minutes other than as below:** It was reported that Donald had replied encouragingly to “Teach the Future”, but that their aims fell outside NEMT’s remit.
5. **Dates of Next Meetings:** confirmed as 25/8 (via Zoom), 6/10, 1/12 and 26/1/2021.
6. **NEMT Management**
 - 6.1. *Membership and Subscriptions:* Catherine’s report (sent by email) was noted, as follows: All individual members paying by cheque had done so. A new SO is awaited. One member had resigned as no longer able to attend meetings, but another had been recruited. Seven clubs had paid their membership fee, but the Aberdeen HW, Alford and Ellon clubs needed chasing up; payments by Ramblers and Scotways were “in the pipeline” and “awaited” respectively.
 - 6.2. *Finance:* Alison reported that on 2/6/20, after expenditure including *Mountain Views* printing and postage costs of £480 and £150 respectively (total £630), and £60 to renew website hosting, the bank account stood at £10,407. She had renewed insurance cover, with changed address, equipment location, and cover reduced to £1000.
 - 6.3. *Website:* Donald reported that, as agreed, he had posted the Spring/Summer 2020 issue, minus its editorial. Otherwise, the website was ticking over.
 - 6.4. *Mountain Views:* Dave referred to his email of 10 May regarding the content of the Autumn 2020 issue. In the absence of any further comments than received subsequently, he proposed to proceed accordingly, with inviting authors etc.: this was accepted.
 - 6.5. *Lectures:* It was reported that Donald had sourced a high-quality microphone, though at a somewhat higher cost than expected. Dave proposed that a sum of about £400 be authorised for its purchase, though not until the future of non-virtual lectures was clearer: this was approved. Deb reported that she had approached a couple of the earlier speakers, but had not yet heard back. She would report back on dates etc. when possible.
7. **Consultations:**
 - 7.1. *CNPA non-statutory guidance:* George reported that in April the CNPA had decided to consult on non-statutory guidance regarding the proposed Local Development Plan (LDP) 2020-25, currently with the Scottish Government. It appeared that respondents would be asked to comment along four main topics, e.g. natural heritage, landscape, renewables and culture. Although consultation had been expected in May, it now seemed more likely in the autumn.
8. **Threats to Wild Land:** George reported as follows:
 - 8.1. *Cairngorm Mountain:* Gordon Bullock had contacted the Masterplan consultants, who planned online engagement sessions in July. George had contacted HIE on the date and public availability of the funicular repair case going to SG, but had received only a non-

committal response. He has asked to be advised when the case is submitted but has not yet had a reply. There might be FOI requests.

The Park had given planning approval for the funicular repair, despite NEMT objections re lack of a Masterplan, and concerns over practice. As permitted development, contractors would be allowed the use of ground outside the planning application area, so long as the ground was restored afterwards. Ken pointed out that conditions attached to the planning approval should ensure this, but it was agreed that monitoring would be wise.

No more had been heard about the closed system, but Dave's note on how NEMT might respond was available. Jean asked whether the summer/winter "footfall" was known; George and Dave thought that such data did exist, and the former would try to obtain this.

8.2. *Hill and Hydro Tracks*: George had reported that:

- i. The LINK Hill Track Group was concerned over what was happening with tracks (and raptors) while lockdown was in place.
- ii. Pitmain estate (Monadhliaths): an application (to which NEMT had objected) to convert an informal ATV track into a constructed one had been withdrawn due to the Park's inability to carry assessment during COVID conditions, but was likely to be re-submitted, possibly along with other such tracks.
- iii. Glen Clova: following comments from NEMT (not an objection), the Park had approved an application for a forestry track in woodlands west of the river, but with conditions related to wildcats and otters.
- iv. Glenlethnot/Tullibardine: Angus Council had received 3 prior notice applications for agriculture/grouse tracks, apparently ATV "short cuts" between existing tracks. NEMT has objected to all three. Two were in a Wild Land Area, and one nearby, though no WLA assessment had been carried out. Comments on such applications had previously been disallowed, but would now appear on the website. Interestingly, the local Community Council had also commented.

8.3. *Wind Farms*: no further applications, but one scoping report, for 26 turbines in Glencassley (12 km west of Lairg, within WLA #34), where a 2012 application had been rejected. George reported that MS and JMT were likely to object to the full application, and proposed that NEMT should link up at that stage: this was approved. Jean expressed uncertainty over the pros and cons of wind farms, and Ken asked about general criteria for judging such cases, e.g. landscape, wildlife, climate change. Brian and Dave offered to come back to Council with a one-page outline of the NEMT view.

8.4. *Trees in the NEMT Area*: Ken apologised for not tabling his promised paper, but explained that expanding his short paper to Council in April was taking longer than expected, due to gathering evidence on a number of criteria (e.g. landscape, climate change) and considering the most relevant geographical area and afforestation types. Continued interest in the topic was expressed, and a number of comments and suggestions made.

8.5. *Mountain Biking in the Uplands*: Donald reported that he had received a report on this topic, e.g. use of footpaths. No action was proposed.

9. AOCB:

9.1. *Citizen Science*: Roger reported a meeting to design a research project on natural tree regeneration, and had suggested that the hillwalking fraternity would be interested in monitoring work. Ken asked if this was proposed at individual or group (e.g. club or NEMT) level. Roger agreed to get back to Council if anything further emerged.

9.2. Roger also reported that, in the absence of SG assistance funding to date, NTS had issued redundancy notices to 429 of their 751 staff. Wearing another hat, he had already written to MSPs with concerns over loss of long-term ecological monitoring at Mar Lodge. It was discussed whether NEMT should write similarly as regards ranger services. It was agreed that Dave would do so if further information from Roger or elsewhere suggested that this might be effective.

Ken Thomson, 26 August 2020