

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST
SCIO Scottish Charity no. SC 008783

Approved Minutes of Council Meeting held 7.30 pm Tuesday 25 January 2022
held via Zoom

Present: Debbie Fielding**, Morna Harper**, Rob Mackay, Alison Mitchell** (Treasurer), Roger Owen**, Donald Thomas*, Ken Thomson*, Dave Windle* (Chair) [* Charity Trustee as Individual Member; ** Charity Trustee as Organisational Representative] . George Allan also attended.

1. **Apologies:** Alistair Beeley, Catherine Lacy-Roberts (Secretary)
2. **Declaration of conflicts of interest:** None.
3. **Minutes of Council Meeting 30 November 2021:** after brief discussion, the circulated draft was approved.
4. **NEMT AGM 2022:** no matters arising for immediate attention were noted, but the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer were confirmed in their posts.
5. **Other Matters Arising, other than as below:** Re Item 7.1 (unresponsive Aberdeenshire Access Officer), it was suggested that a local MSP be approached to generate a response on the next occasion. Alison reported that some Aberdeenshire Access staff changes were afoot.
6. **NEMT Management**
 - 6.1. *Membership and Subscriptions:* Alison reported that a couple of queries had arisen, and that over 80 annual subscriptions (many with donations added) had come in as SOs. She would seek to reconcile these with Cath as soon as possible, and also ask her to approach clubs for prompt subscription payment by them.
 - 6.2. *Finance:* Alison reported that the bank balance stood at £12,279.92, after credits of £64.99 for book sales and £9.76 as EventBrite commission, and payments £14.39 for monthly Zoom usage, £171.30 to Cath for *Mountain Views* postage, £50 for a speaker's voucher, and £24 for domain hosting. Further work on Gift Aid using older forms was needed; DT expressed himself happy to help with this.
 - 6.3. *Website:* Donald said that he had little to report, but that he had started to "fiddle about" with the underlying template. He wondered if the website was generating sufficient browser interest to make work on it worthwhile.

Roger raised the suggestion of a NEMT Facebook group, which might encourage interest amongst younger people; after discussion, Roger undertook to look into this.
 - 6.4. *Mountain Views:* Dave undertook to finalise, with no major changes, the Contents list previously circulated.
 - 6.5. *Lectures:* Deb reported that the December 2021 talk on the Borders Forest Trust had had to be cancelled at the last minute when the speaker pulled out, though suggesting a 2022/23 talk. The January talk on the Bailies of Bennachie had gone well, and arrangements were in place for the February and March talks. There had been a tentative offer of a talk on climbing by a guidebook author.
 - 6.6. *Discounts:* in Cath's absence, no discussion.
 - 6.7. *NEMT Work Plan:* Dave proposed that this not be updated for the time being.
 - 6.8. *Dates of Next Council Meetings:* These were agreed as: 1/3, 19/4, 31/5, 23/8, 4/10, 29/11 and 24/1/2023

7. Cairngorms Campaign AGM 5 December 2021: Ken reported that he and Donald had attended this meeting by Zoom, but that little Campaign activity seemed in prospect.

8. NEMT Policies

8.1. *Biking:* in the absence of further Strava maps, no discussion, but Roger offered to investigate graded bike trails on Trailfork maps.

9. Consultations:

9.1. *CNPA Partnership Plan:* Dave reported that he had submitted the NEMT response with no significant changes from the version previously circulated.

10. Threats to Wild Land:

10.1. *Bennachie Bench:* George provided background to this, which had recently appeared above the Rowantree car park treeline, after three ladies had contacted Pittodrie estate for permission and the Bailies for information. He felt that such structures represented “urbanisation” of the hill, and might lead to local erosion, as had happened at the bench on Millstone Hill. Discussion covered practice on other estates (generally discouraging). It was agreed the George should discuss with Dave and then Council a draft statement of NEMT’s reservations about this bench and possible others, and then send the final version to the estate, the Bailies, and the Aberdeenshire Ranger Service for information.

10.2. *Dalwhinnie Rail Crossing:* No further news.

10.3. *Tracks:* George reported on: (a) his representations to CNPA on a major track upgrade on the RSPB Abernethy estate had resulted in satisfactory statements by the planning offer on both its width and central reservation; (b) his objection to a proposal for major (3m wide) forestry road to be established across open moorland joining Glen Banchor and the Pitmain estate, in order to avoid “unsuitable” public roads. He would suggest (i) the use of smaller vehicles and (ii) removal of the road once the relevant trees had been extracted, and had asked to speak at the CNPA planning meeting.

George wished his appreciation to be recorded for the work of Sandy McIntosh and Carlos Oldani in regularly monitoring the planning websites for new planning applications.

10.4. *Cairngorm Mountain:* No further news.

10.5. *Wind Farms:* No further news.

11. AOCB:

11.1. *Aberdeenshire Ranger Service Charges:* Alison referred to a recent P&J article foreshadowing this, possibly for cruise ship outings. Roger undertook to investigate with his ranger contacts.

11.2. *BrewDog Land Purchase:* Alison referred to the previous evening’s BBC1 programme, which had included a piece on tree-planting (not yet started, and to be state-funded) as carbon-offset, at Kinrara near Aviemore. Discussion mentioned other similar areas (Glen Dye, Glen Girnock, and Hill of Foudland), and peat restoration work by NTS on Cairn Geldie. Trustee preference was for deer control rather than tree-planting.

11.3. *Glen Derry Tracks:* Ken referred to his recent encounter with more ATV tracks on either side of the “closed” footbridge halfway up the glen. He had been informed that the bridge was to be replaced by a wider one, thus enabling ATVs to use the eastern track between Derry Lodge and the bridge. It was agreed that no immediate NEMT action (following up a visit to Mar Lodge some years ago) seemed needed.

Ken Thomson, 2 March 2022