

NORTH EAST MOUNTAIN TRUST

SCIO Scottish Charity no. SC 008783

Approved Minutes of Council Meeting held at 7.30 pm Tuesday 20 August 2024 at Sportsman's Club, Aberdeen

Present: Hamish Clunas (AHCW)**, Mike Duguid**, Morna Harper (AMC)**, Catherine Lacy-Roberts (Culter HWC)**, Allan Moore (MBA)**, Alison Mitchell (RS)**, Donald Thomas*, Ken Thomson (CC)*, Dave Windle* (Chair) [Charity Trustee as *Individual Member; as **Organisational Representative]

1. Apologies: Alistair Beeley, Brian Heaton*, Roger Owen (SMHWC)**,

2. Minutes of Council Meeting 14 May 2024: the pre-circulated draft was approved.

3. Matters Arising, other than as below: None.

4. NEMT Management

4.1. *MBA Council rep:* Allan was welcomed to his first Council meeting, but declined to become a NEMT Trustee.

4.2. *Membership and Subscriptions:* Cath reported that she had received two organisational subscriptions, but had not yet “chased anyone up”.

4.3. *Finance:* Alison reported that the Trust's bank balance stood at £14380, following subscription receipts from ScotWays (£25) and two Individual Members, and £1.72 from *Mountain Views* sales. It was commented that this balance might be regarded as excessive, but decided that the Trust's policy of reducing reserves slowly over the years should be adhered to, possibly by additional or somewhat greater future donations to appeals such as those from HOFWIG (Hill of Fare). It was decided that MV donations, currently going through Donald, should in future be transferred direct.

4.4. *Website:* Donald had nothing to report, but would welcome more or updated material on masts. Mike agreed to prepare an article on this topic, with possible additions such as a map to be added.

4.5. *Mountain Views:* There was some discussion on contributions to the Autumn/Winter issue, Cath to get in touch with Ken on a community landownership piece if necessary. Donald asked that Cath send photo website addresses to him for website use.

4.6. *Lectures:* None were proposed. Ken reported that the Aberdeen Joint Winter Schedule of “outdoor” talks was in preparation, and asked Mike to explore Geological Society talks at Kings.

4.7. *Future Council Meetings:* 1/10 and 3/12 (all booked), and 28/1/2025 after the next AGM.

4.8. *EDI (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion):* Dave reported that on behalf of NEMT he had responded to a LINK questionnaire on this topic, and thought that NEMT might be regarded as scoring “badly”, e.g. as having no EDI policy. However, since NEMT was holding no events etc., it was decided to do nothing in this area.

4.9. *Annual Report:* Dave commented that the usual format might be regarded as insufficiently informative. It was agreed that future ARs should refer to *Mountain Views*, as a source of more detailed information.

5. Donation to ScotWays: A “begging letter” was briefly discussed, but the topic dropped until more information was forthcoming.

6. Consultations

6.1. *CNPA Fire Management:* It was reported that CNPA was drafting a byelaw that would be used to prohibit “open fires”, Park-wide, during periods of “high risk”. A further public consultation would be conducted after November, following by Ministerial consideration, and implementation and enforcement in 2025 or 2026.

6.2. *Earba Pumped Storage Scheme:* Currently with ECU: no further information

- 6.3. *Loch Quoich Pumped Storage Scheme*: It was agreed that Dave and Ken would draft a set of general objections, in light of the “50:50” NEMT questionnaire survey response in June, and be ready to submit these once a formal planning application had been received.
- 6.4. *Cairngorm Capercaillie Project Emergency Plan 2024-30*: it was reported that this had been delayed; when draft plan issued, Dave would consider NEMT involvement (or not).
- 6.5. *Cairngorms Future Land Use Study*: Ken agreed to respond positively to the invitation that NEMT be represented on a focus-group exercise.

7. Threats to Wild Land

- 7.1. *Peatland Restoration (i.e. Damage!)*: It was reported use of heavy machinery etc. for this purpose had not been observed to cause widespread or long-lasting surface damage, and that this activity could be deleted as a routine item in future NEMT Council agendas.
- 7.2. *Tracks, Pylons, etc.*: George’s report was considered, with some discussion on proposed upgrades or new pylon lines in the NE region.
- 7.3. *Masts*: George’s report was considered, with its tally of 65 NEMT objections as of 15/8/2024, of which 8 proposals had been approved, 11 withdrawn (but may well be resubmitted), 2 refused but appealed, and 46 still active. Recent rumours that companies were seeking re-focus of SRN effort on roads rather than near-blanket coverage of remote areas, were, with caution, welcomed.

Ken proposed that a question be put to the NTS AGM in September, asking for that Trust’s attitude to, and actions for, mast proposals on its properties (and possibly on other “wild land”. It was agreed that he should draft a “general” question for Council consideration, for subsequent issue to NEMT members, asking for signatories. Meanwhile, he would continue to seek direct NTS advice.
- 7.4. *Wind Farms*: Aberdeenshire Council was reported to object to the Hill of Fare proposal.
- 7.5. *Other*: Mike raised the prospect of large-scale commercial “gravel-cycling” events being held in the Cairngorms area in September, perhaps with 50-200km routes starting at Ballater, with possible threats if these extended beyond landrover tracks. It was agreed to monitor such events and routes.

8. AOCB: Alison reported that:

- a) Ramblers Scotland had appointed Gavin Corbett in succession to Helen Todd as Policy & Advocacy Manager
- b) She had become involved in NE Scotland Coastal Trail, a Council-led initiative to improve access in various places, e.g. Cullen-St. Cyrus, following the EU-funded NorTrail circa 2000.

Ken Thomson, 2 October 2024