

Arran Community Land Initiative

Minutes of AGM Meeting

Monday 27th November 2017
at Whiting Bay Golf Club

Trustees in Attendance: Keith Robertson (KR) Chair; Juliette Walsh (JW) Treasurer; Ishbel Gordon (IG) Secretary and Jane McCartney (JMcC) Trustee.

Staff in Attendance: Pippa Downing (PD) Project Manager; Matt Searles (MS) Community Gardener

KR took the floor and delivered his Chairman's Report. He reflected on the past year and all that ACLI had achieved: -

- the new access road, named the North Track, which is after works paid for by Scottish Water, very roadworthy and now our main access to the car park. He asked all present to use this track in the future rather than middle track;
- the Bee Group are now active on the land with four hives en-situ;
- the two new polytunnels, one for the allotment holders and the other for the Community Garden
- Climate Challenge Funding (CCF), our two gardeners Matt and Darren are funded by this;
- Whiting Bay Primary School grew a variety of Arran potatoes on the land;
- the High School kids visit the site every week;
- 23 local kids all making guys on site in November at the very successful Grubby Greenies Club which runs on the 1st Saturday of the month;
- the compost toilet;
- the hub building which is a nice warm classroom;
- local horse owners who rent our fields.
- Argyll College ran a horticulture course (NPA in Horticulture) on the land which was delivered by ACLI gardener, Darren Townsend.

He reported we need a final path to connect to Glenashdale. Looking at our 5-year plan we are doing all within that and have had a very successful year. He said that we are looking to grow more food on the land in the coming year.

JW then asked someone to propose the Chairman's Report and at this point Rob Cowieson brought up the issue of metrics and specifically by what means 'success' was measured?

JW had handed out copies of ACLI Accounts for the year and John Dick asked questions about the breakdown of the £74,000. PD talked about where we got the funding from. JW explained the money went on payroll and invoices and that we had to account for all funded money spent to our funders and to OSCR. JW was asked to provide more detail. John suggested a broad breakdown - no more than a 10-item analysis, a spreadsheet was also mentioned. JW said that she would provide more details and that all who wanted a copy should provide an email address. Also, it would go on our website for all to see. It was agreed that a link from the website would be sufficient and all present would be put on the e-newsletter link so they can find the AGM documents.

Then a question was asked about other income with a view to moving towards self-sustainability and JW answered that the ponies and the allotments provide income. She explained that funders are keen to see us source other methods of income i.e. more educational courses with a possibility of becoming an educational provider in our own right. Caroline McGinlay asked about volunteers and the current level of volunteering. In answer we have a volunteer day once a month and a garden

workshop on the first Saturday of every month. Volunteers do weeding, planting and any digging of beds needed.

PD said we got 100 fruit trees and 100 fruit bushes from the Climate Challenge Fund and 420 free from the Woodland Trust. Rob Cowieson asked by what process was it decided to plant 200+ trees as a hedgerow between Field 1 and Benview? In light of the Initiative's interest in environmental matters the planting of trees individually would increase their carbon capture potential by up to 20 times. It would also be courteous to discuss the planting of a bounding hedge with affected neighbour before commencing planting.

Nanette Cowieson stated she asked a teacher who was supervising a group of children planting trees what kind of trees they were and that the adult could not say, PD said that the children were planting many types of trees i.e. ash, oak and rowan to name a few. Also the adult was not in fact a teacher but an instructor from Arran Outdoor Centre whose job was to supervise the task of planting on that day.

Rob Cowieson then went on to say that more than 65% of the land under ACLI's stewardship was not being utilised. KR responded by indicating plans for future planting of potatoes and pumpkins and ongoing work on the infrastructure and access to the site.

Rob Cowieson then asked about drainage strategy given that water run-off affects all of our neighbours. Nanette Cowieson suggested creating a specific project around drainage and encouraging volunteers to address this specific issue.

Rob Cowieson voiced a specific concern about the current lack of land productivity and the lack of financial sustainability in the context of the Land Fund's stipulation for same. JW explained that the fund advisers expect us to go only some way on the farming model, that they do not expect us to be totally self-sufficient and that our main remit is education and recreation. The CCF is interested in carbon-saving, saving the climate primarily and not in being a business (we are a charity).

Nikki Harris raised the issue of water problems and JMcC reiterated that the Land Initiative undertake to do something about this subject to getting volunteers to help.

Zoe McGovern talked about excess cars going down their track ('Middle Road') June McLean also talked about the state of the track. JW said that ACLI have had repairs carried out previously and that house owners are due to contribute something towards repairs. JMCC said that since there were clearly some neighbour concerns it would be helpful to have regular neighbour meetings i.e. once a month or quarterly.

Nikki Harris then nominated Rob Cowieson to be a Trustee of ACLI and June McLean seconded this.

Nanette Cowieson nominated Caroline McGinlay as a Trustee and John Dick seconded this.

At this point Michael Gettins then assisted by chairing this section of the agenda.

Rob Cowieson nominated Jane McCartney and Hugh McLelland seconded this.

Juliette Walsh nominated herself and Nicola Dee Kelly seconded this.

Neil Wilkinson nominated Keith Robertson and Andrew Downing seconded this.

Juliette Walsh nominated Ishbel Gordon and Andrew Downing seconded this.

Nanette Cowieson nominated Michael Gettins who declined but agreed to assist the project with specific pieces of work.

Timothy Billings was also nominated but declined to stand.

There being 6 nominations for six places, all 6 were elected Trustees.

JW then asked PD to start her PowerPoint presentation with MS adding comments about sessions held on site.

PD talked through a number of slides with pictures and summaries of the last year's work and achievements.

Food growing on site: -

- 12 rental allotments up and running this year with water tap facilities;
- demonstration plot created for schools to demonstrate crop rotations, soft fruit bushes, groups planting;
- the creation of the Community Garden which Whiting Bay Primary School worked on;
- developed an herb bed;
- 2 large polytunnels went up, one for allotment holders to have a shared raised bed in and one for the Community. The Community polytunnel has been a huge success with lots of tomatoes and cucumbers having been grown, we passed tomatoes onto Arran High School who made tomato chutney (the school got half) and we are selling our half on a stall with an honesty box on the land. 5 or 6 students planted seedlings and developed a seating area.

Other accomplishments this year: -

- we also have a compost toilet and a new hub which is great for teaching groups;
- we have the Arran Bee Group working an aviary on site;
- the Bee Group and ourselves shared a tent at the Farmers Show which was very successful. Darren and Matt our two gardeners made bug hotels with children there;
- we also organised the Big Arran Green Event in collaboration with Eco Savvy, inviting the Bee Group and COAST and other green organisations on Arran. Almost every primary school on the island brought their children to this event. There were activities to demonstrate food miles and carbon activities in this extremely successful event;
- we also run Grubby Greenies Kids Club the first Saturday of every month where parents and kids learn about where food comes from and how to cut, slice and cook it on an open fire. Foods such as stir fries and even pizzas, flatbreads, baked potatoes and baked apples have been made in our hand-made pizza oven. And many, many a marshmallow have been roasted over an open fire by children. Outdoor crafts based on seasonal themes are also taught to this group;
- we have been active in Kilmory Hall providing activities for Kilmory Primary School children to enjoy;
- Whiting Bay school children made bug hotels and made pizzas on the land;
- some children from different schools have completed their John Muir Awards on the land;
- the Climate Challenge Fund have provided funds to create an orchard of 100 fruit trees behind the allotments and 100 soft fruit bushes also;
- we have undertaken trials of potatoes this summer and plan to plant more next year. Planting and growing our own food means less food miles;
- we have created walking routes all over the land and a new path linking Glenashdale is being developed;
- Arran Outdoor Centre use the top field for a compass course and kids who are doing their Duke of Edinburgh Awards use the land to camp in overnight;
- we have had over 800 people on site this year, and are only 7 months into the funding year – well above target on participants and session numbers promised;
- we also have a woodland recreation area;
- Darren our gardener has run a successful Horticulture course on the land for Argyll College this year;
- plot to plate sessions have been operating on the land in all weathers;
- as well as collaborating with Eco Savvy and the Bee Group we have also collaborated with COAST and the Forestry Commission;

Coming soon...

- Orienteering activities, we have had a map drawn up;

- Archery;
- Glenashdale (path in planning stage);
- an ambition of ours is a Nature reserve with wildlife and viewing hides but we have no funding yet;
- Permaculture forest garden (funding application has been submitted).

Nikki Harris suggested we take away the fencing of fields 11 and 17 and allow the horses to free graze where they want, it was also suggested we have sheep and cows on the land including Highland cattle as they would clear the land and be a tourist attraction too. JW said we need paths to keep people separate and safe from animals and that when we looked into grazing cattle in the summer in the past, we realised the return would be very small.

Andy SurrIDGE asked about progress in resolving the ownership of a small piece of land between Field 5 and the Glasshouse/Benview Cottage. A lively discussion ensued between the outgoing board and many attending members. Jenny Martin proposed that the Trustees should take positive steps to resolve the issue by drafting a letter to OSCR, the Scottish Charity Regulator to ask them if we can effect the outcome of the SurrIDGES gaining the piece of land in dispute. The membership present were strongly in favour of this approach.

Finally, Jenny Martin suggested that the new Board in light of the many concerns and emotions expressed through the course of the meeting take urgent and active steps to build good and effective lines of communication with ACLI's neighbours and the wider community.