

SCOTTISH WILD LAND GROUP [SC004014]

2020 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Saturday 5th December 2020 at 15.00 hours via Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

The Convenor welcomed the attendees and explained that an audio-only recording of the meeting would be made to help with minute-taking. Contributions from members would be recorded in the minutes but individual members would not be identified by name. To ensure a quality audio recording it was proposed by Jane Meek that participants should be muted while the Convenor and any other speakers made their presentations, with the option to unmute for the purpose of asking questions or making comments. These arrangements were unanimously accepted by those present. Additional advice was given to participants on how to improve a poor broadband connection by turning off the video function on their device.

The Convenor explained that, given the extraordinary circumstances occasioned by the Covid pandemic and the need to hold the AGM online, this would be a “business only” meeting. She thanked those members present for their participation as this ensured that the AGM would meet the requirements of both the charities regulator and the constitution of the Scottish Wild Land Group.

The Convenor thanked Jane Meek for setting up the AGM on Zoom and fielding questions from members in advance of the meeting.

The meeting then moved on to consider the points noted on the agenda.

Attendance and Apologies

Present: Tim Ambrose, Grant Cornwallis, Pete Ewing, James Fenton, Beryl Leatherland, Jane Meek, Andrew Painting and several other members who could not be readily identified by the system.

[NB: the present constitution does not specify any minimum number as a quorum at an AGM, and the only requirement for passing a resolution (other than a special resolution) is a vote in favour by a majority of those present and voting. To pass a special resolution requires a two-thirds majority of those present and voting – none of the resolutions to be put to the meeting were special resolutions.]

Apologies had been received from Keith Griffiths, Tom Leatherland, Bill Stephens, Peter Willimott.

Draft Minutes of the 2019 AGM, adoption of minutes

James Fenton proposed the 2019 Minutes be accepted as a true record and this was seconded by Jane Meek. The motion was carried by a show of hands from those present on Zoom.

Matters arising from the 2019 AGM:

Item 4: Conversion From Registered Scottish Charity To Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO)

No progress was made on this issue in 2020. A member has come forward with an offer of help and it is hoped that progress can be made towards conversion to SCIO status in 2021. Beryl Leatherland and Tim Ambrose had proposed to meet with SWLG's solicitor in Pitlochry for initial discussions but there has been little scope for face-to-face meetings since the last AGM due to the Covid pandemic.

AOCB – 1 – new membership leaflet

The draft membership leaflet produced by James Fenton and circulated at the last AGM has not been finalised for various reasons, one of these being the lack of progress towards becoming a SCIO. Having the leaflet printed while SWLG is still an unincorporated association means it would have to be reprinted once the Group's status changes, at considerable expense. The Convenor expressed the hope that progress could nonetheless be made on producing the new leaflet as soon as possible for distribution to various outlets.

AOCB – 2 – Scottish Landscape Alliance

A member had inquired about the activities of the Scottish Landscape Alliance. The Convenor explained that although this is not really relevant to the present AGM and the running of SWLG, she could provide some details for the information of SWLG members. The SLA website is operational and, despite the difficulties caused by the Covid pandemic, the group has had Zoom meetings throughout the year. There is plentiful information on the SLA website for those interested and work is progressing well despite the lack of funding.

Convenor's Report and Remarks

This was briefly summarised as a full report had been produced and posted on the website.

The Convenor noted that the **Werrity Report** had now been considered by the Scottish Government and there was a proposal to introduce licensing of grouse moors, although not until after the Holyrood elections in May 2021 and probably after a consultation period. SWLG's work on this issue was clearly by no means finished. SWLG had made a significant contribution in this area, both through its work on hill tracks - Beryl had presented on the impact of hill tracks alongside Helen Todd of the Scottish Ramblers, including hill tracks built on grouse moors - and through organisations such as Revive Alliance and the LINK Wildlife Crime Group.

The Cairngorm Funicular was to be repaired at huge cost, to the detriment of funding for other organisations and tourist businesses in the area. The consultation on National Planning Framework 4 (i.e. Scottish Planning Policy) was on-going and very time-consuming. Correspondence with members highlighted continuing concerns over wind farm development. As stated at previous AGMs, we do not have the resources to deal thoroughly with the many wind farm applications that are notified to us. We do, however, need to devise a system for screening applications, if only to identify those that we should be objecting to because of their impact on wild land.

The Convenor noted that SWLG was founded as a campaigning organisation and must continue to campaign actively on issues affecting wild land and landscapes in Scotland. SWLG had contributed to many campaigns over the past year, details of which had been posted on the website and/or been mentioned in Wild Land News. These included equal right of appeal and many LINK campaigns, most notably with regard to hill tracks and grouse moors. Members might not be aware that SWLG is also involved in nature and wildlife campaigning through LINK.

The Convenor noted that this would be her last AGM as Chair, having decided to step down both as Convenor and as a member of the Committee. She would, however, continue as LINK representative and would produce regular reports on LINK activities for circulation to Steering Group members.

No questions were raised by those present regarding the work of SWLG.

The Convenor thanked all Steering Committee for their hard work. James had once again done an excellent job of editing Wild Land News; Tim had continued his sterling work as treasurer, a post he has held since 1988; Grant had ensured WLN was distributed across a wide area; various Committee members had contributed excellent articles to WLN, including some outstanding contributions by Andrew Painting; Jane was thanked for organising the AGM on Zoom.

Two members of SWLG had recently volunteered their services. One of these was present at the AGM and asked for details of what might be involved. The Convenor explained that volunteers could consider sitting on the Committee for a trial period of one year and be co-opted the following year if they so wished. They would attend Committee meetings and be invited to join outings or site visits once or twice a year. (It was noted that a planned trip to the site of the hydro schemes in Glen Etive earlier in the year had had to be cancelled due to bad weather.) There followed a discussion about whether regular Steering Group meetings might continue to be held via Zoom, as had been the case during the pandemic, supplemented by occasional face-to-face meetings (e.g. annually in the form of a day trip or site visit). James, Pete and Jane spoke in favour of this or a similar arrangement. It was agreed that the question of real versus online meetings be discussed at a forthcoming Committee Meeting.

Beryl thanked the members of SWLG for their support, including their financial contribution via membership fees. Although membership numbers had been declining in recent years there were plenty of members who participated actively in debate by e-mailing her to raise matters of concern or to brief on development proposals such as the Coul Links golf course.

James proposed a vote of thanks to Beryl for her hard work as Convenor which was unanimously endorsed by the meeting.

Treasurer's Report and Accounts

These were briefly summarised by Tim Ambrose as a copy of the accounts was available on the website in the traditional format. Income had declined slightly to £4,175, but costs had also reduced to £2,234, leaving a surplus for the year of £1,941 and a balance on Group funds of £18,021 at 31 March 2020. This was sufficient to finance a substantial piece of work or project.

The Independent Examiner (full disclosure - Tim noted that Martin George is his nephew, as well as being a Chartered accountant and Senior manager with PwC) had given an unqualified report to the Trustees.

The meeting voted unanimously to:

- 1 Approve formal adoption of the Accounts for the year to 31 March 2020, and
- 2 Approve the re-appointment of Martin George ACA as Independent Examiner. Martin receives no remuneration or reward for his services, and the meeting expressed its thanks and gratitude to him.

Election of Steering Committee:

Apart from Beryl Leatherland who was standing down from the Committee, all the other members were prepared to be re-elected, and by unanimous votes all were re-elected:

Tim Ambrose

Grant Cornwallis

Dr Pete Ewing

Dr James Fenton

Jane Meek

Andrew Painting

Peter Willimott

No others wished to be nominated.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 15.45.