

## MAC Open Woodland Meeting

18<sup>th</sup> January 2023 @ 7pm

Maryburgh Hall

### Attendance:

**MAC members:** Donald Stuart, Fiona Shand

**The Highland Council:** Cllr Sean Kennedy, Cllr Angela MacLean

**Others present:** Steph O'Connell, Jim Neil, Elsbeth Neil, Ewan McHardy, Ian Tolmie, Craig Evans, Rosie Macleod,

**Apologies:** Ian Fraser, Siobhan Fraser, Gillian Semple, Derek & Sally Ross, Megan, Paul Harrington

### Note of Meeting

Donald Stuart welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending. He explained that the woodland area between Birch Drive and Dunglass Road is now owned by MAC, the purpose of the meeting is to set up a Woodland Management Committee that will report to MAC.

Donald suggested that the committee should consult the local community to find out how they'd like to see the woods used and could also contact other community owned woodland groups for advice, guidance and potential uses.

Donald advised that MAC nor the Community Council had been made aware of the sale of the woods nor offered the opportunity to purchase them prior to the auction. He thanked Cllr Maclean for the immense amount of time she dedicated to providing support, guidance, and networking to assist in the purchase of the woods. Thanks were also given to Paul Harrington at HIE who advised on an appropriate purchase offer, form filling and also assistance with the reimbursement application. Nick Richards from Highland Council, Ewan McHardy, Craig Evans, John Bruce and MAC members were also thanked for their assistance in taking the purchase forward.

Craig Evans and Jim Neil thanked Donald Stuart for co-ordinating the efforts which lead to the successful purchase within such a tight timeframe.

The total cost of the woodland purchase was £11,104.20 – this included £1,170 for a detailed tree survey, legal fees of £1414.20 and the purchase cost of the woodland. Paul Harrington is assisting with an application from which we hope to recoup around 95% of the costs. The tree survey will be passed to the Woodland Committee.

Steph confirmed that the woodland would be covered under MAC's current Public Liability Insurance provided paths are kept clear and regular tree surveys and maintenance are carried out. She also suggested that the condition of tree swings should be monitored.

Ian Fraser, Craig Evans, Ewan McHardy, Elsbeth Neil, Jim Neil, Rosie Macleod, Siobhan Fraser and Megan agreed to form the Woodland Committee. Donald suggested that they should consider having a Chair

and a Secretary and he will arrange for there to be a representative from MAC and the Community Council on the committee too. Everyone was happy for their email addresses to be shared to enable them to arrange their first meeting, no preference was given to a particular day to hold meetings, Steph advised that they could use the hall for their meetings without charge.

Steph offered some suggestions from the local Guides and Scouts:

- Fire bowl with seating area
- Pump track
- Assault course
- Compost toilet

Gillian Semple is keen to offer some suggestions from an Early Years perspective.

It was suggested that signs should be erected to advise of the land ownership and to prevent illegal felling.

Craig Evans suggested that the committee should contact Brahan Estate as a courtesy as their new neighbours.

CLLr Maclean advised that Andy Rockall from the Community Woodlands Trust would be a useful contact as he could provide advice, sign posting to funding and would potentially facilitate meetings.

Fiona Cameron at Highland Council may also be able to assist with funding, email address to be passed to the Woodland Committee.

Ian Tolmie stated that the Men's Shed are looking forward to working in collaboration with the committee and assisting with practical jobs in the woodland.

The Committee hope to hold their first meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> January at 7pm in the Hall.