

## Arran Community Council

### Forestry Extraction Working Group.

#### Minutes of fifth meeting held 29th Oct 2015 at Machrie Hall, 18.00 to 19.10

Present: R McMaster (ACC and Chair), D Price (Machrie resident and minutes), L Gunaydi (Machrie resident), N Arthur (ACC), G McLeod (NAC). W Calderwood (ACC), H Gardiner(ACC), L Evans (ACC), J Henderson (ACC), P Randell (ACC), A Walker & J Lauder (Forestry Commission (FC))

**1. APOLOGIES** none

#### **2. NEW MEMBERS**

Jim Henderson (ACC Lamlash) and Peter Randell (ACC Whiting Bay) were introduced.

#### **3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES**

Some minor changes were discussed and approved. Proposed by N Arthur and seconded by W Calderwood.

#### **4. ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING**

**4.1 Update on marine licence application** N Arthur said he had spoken to John Bruce, North Ayrshire Councillor who was of the opinion that as the slipway extended up to the coast road, NAC planning permission was required. W Calderwood agreed to confirm with Jim Miller of NAC....**ACTION W Calderwood**

**4.2 FC Arran Project Board** J Lauder summarised Neil Murray's response to D Price's email requesting clarification. He confirmed that there was no funding available for capital projects for at least 2016 and 2017 due to the current high level of timber imports and the strength of the £ relative to the €. The FC still wanted to carry on with preparation/planning for the Machrie proposal to make it 'shovel ready' should some capital suddenly become available. The Arran Project Board was not standing down and was next meeting on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> when J Lauder and A Walker would update them on discussions at tonight's meeting. He stated that work was under way to formalise the agreement relating to the Machrie forest link road and that a consultant had been appointed to look into landscaping aspects of the proposed Machrie timber storage area. (FCS would not propose to start construction of the link road until planning permission for the Dougarie facility had been granted).

H Gardiner asked for clarification of slipway requirements. J Lauder summarised previous details; namely a suitable sea bed to allow the vessel to ground while loading took place. Loading of 750 tonnes took about 8 hours then the vessel then floated free at high tide.

N Arthur suggested that the area south of Machrie Water would be suitable as both the slip and storage area would be away from the road there. J Lauder stated that this had been looked at and deemed unsuitable. There was no formal report on this.

D Price's email 'Timber extraction costs on Arran and environmental impact- preliminary cost exercise' which had been circulated earlier that day was then raised. This had been produced because financial figures had not been made available by the FC for reasons of commercial confidentiality, so he had attempted to calculate costs of forest operations based on some known data and estimates. Two key points from it were that his figures indicated Machrie was uneconomic and less environmentally attractive re: CO<sub>2</sub> compared to the status quo. J Lauder said the FC could not respond at this meeting due to insufficient time. He would not be able to address all the points anyway due to commercial confidentiality of some of the data, but agreed to respond in due course... **ACTION J Lauder**

There followed discussions about various aspects of the FC strategy, D Price's memo and related topics. N Arthur was firmly of the view that the Working Group should not keep going over old ground and had hoped that the Machrie proposal had been shelved and suggested that Arran residents would be far happier if the £1.2 million proposed spend to upgrade the Machrie Moor road for timber lorries was spent on keeping the String road well maintained.

J Lauder reiterated that the FC strategy of reducing road miles was from the point of view of visitors and reducing the likelihood of traffic accidents. L Gunaydi stated that 'Visit Arran' were very much in favour of continuing with use of the String road to Brodick, citing significantly increased vehicle traffic on the W. coast of the Island resulting from RET.

W Calderwood queried the FC concerns over traffic in Brodick, and stated that there had been no complaints, no incidents and no near misses relating to timber traffic. G McLeod pointed out that whilst there had been no incidents in Brodick, there had been one in Whiting Bay and suggested that logic dictated that the likelihood of an incident would be increased with more traffic. It was re-stressed by N Arthur/ D Price that the incident rate was already effectively zero and suggested that the effect of an extra 22 vehicles per week was unmeasurable. N Arthur also pointed out that the most likely source of an accident was during timber loading and unloading, hence the potential additional benefit (as well as cost reduction) over using the Calmac ferry route with only two load/unloads instead of six via the barge and Red Princess routes.

N Arthur raised a point from D Price's memo about the benefits of using the Calmac ferry route and return loads which helps to reduce the overall cost to hauliers and hence Arran residents generally on imported goods. J Lauder and G McLeod queried the real benefits of this and G McLeod suggested that the Red Princess could possibly import fertilisers. R McMaster stated that we did not have enough data on the proportion of return loads. N Arthur offered to try and obtain data from hauliers ... **ACTION N Arthur**

W Calderwood asked for clarification on the cost effectiveness of the road mile reduction proposals and the FC Strategy. J Lauder reiterated that the estimated 20% payback was correct and that the group should take this figure on trust. N Arthur and D Price pointed out that D Price's calculations did not support this and until we received hard data, we could not accept the FC figure. N Arthur reminded the group that as the local community councillor he had a duty to the 44 residents who objected to the Machrie proposal to require the FC to properly justify the project.

D Price asked for clarification about current timber extraction at Kilpatrick, one of the proposed forests to be exported via Machrie. A Walker said that extraction had commenced and was planned for 15,000 tonnes per year via the String to Brodick. Even though prices were low, felling had to continue as, over time, some trees fell over in storms and, generally, if they grew too large, timber sale price further reduced.

## **5. AOB**

N Arthur and G McLeod queried the status of the 'site prioritisation' document as discussed at the last meeting and subsequently forwarded to members. It was agreed that this was the FC view on site priorities and that others may well have other opinions, and that a consensus would not be reached here. G McLeod asked about other potential sites not on the list. J Lauder confirmed that the Springfield site (owned by R McMaster) was under consideration. D Price confirmed that the site prioritisation document was still considered confidential and was not available on the ACC website. An update was requested... **ACTION A Walker**

**6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING:** 21st Jan 2016, 6pm at Machrie Hall.