

Arran Community Council

Forestry Extraction Working Group.

Approved Minutes of 7th meeting held 25th Feb 2016 at Machrie Hall, 18.00 to 20.15 hrs

Present: R. McMaster (ACC and Chair), D. Price (Machrie resident and minutes), N. Arthur (ACC), W. Calderwood (ACC), H. Gardiner(ACC), J. Henderson (ACC), A. Walker & J. Lauder (Forestry Commission (FC)), G. McLeod (NAC) to 19.00 hrs.

In attendance Mr Neil Murray and Mr Alex Murray.

1. APOLOGIES L. Evans (ACC), L. Gunaydi (Machrie resident)

2. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Neil Murray is Area Operations Manager with the Forestry Commission and Alex Murray is Manager and Timber Buyer at A. Wilson`s of Troon.

3. CONFIRMATION OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

Corrections to the wording about Glaister were confirmed and the minutes approved. Proposed by H. Gardiner and seconded by J. Lauder.

3. PROGRESS OF FORESTRY COMMISSION STRATEGY FOR ARRAN

3.1 Sannox slip J. Lauder stated that they were applying for a permanent Marine licence (currently only temporary). The Sannox forest should be completely harvested by end May 2016. The slip will then be used to bring in equipment for forest regeneration. The next planned timber extraction is likely to be from a nearby private forest, but not for about 20 years.

W. Calderwood asked when the road from the picnic area to the main road would be returned to its pre-forestry condition. G McLeod agreed to liaise with NAC and the FC....**ACTION GM**

3.2 Springfield site This area of the coast is a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) with over 250 species of flora. There has been no further work pending assessment of this post May when the flowers will appear. The sea bed also needs assessment. If permission is granted from Scottish National Heritage (SNH) it could be at least two years before it came into use. N. Arthur enquired of R. McMaster whether there were other landowners involved in the site and access to the shore. He was advised that there were not.

3.3 Machrie There is no further clarification about funding for this project. The Marine licence is currently defined as being in draft, but the proposal is that the facility would be permanent. Reference to previous minutes confirmed that the private forest potential harvest via Machrie slip was 40kt (Machrie forest) and 60kt (Whitefarland forest) to commence within 10 years. Further debate followed regarding the local residents` opposition to Machrie and their preference for Brodick and that the £1.2 million needed to upgrade the Moor road would be better spent on the String road. It was reiterated by N. Murray that the timber fund was no longer in existence, but if money did become available again, its use to upgrade the Moor road would probably be more favourably looked upon. N. Arthur felt that the FC did not put enough back into the Arran community. This was disputed.

3.4 W. Calderwood stated that following the recent publicity in the Banner, some residents from Brodick , Lamblash, South End, Shiskine and Blackwaterfoot had expressed their concerns to him

over increased tonnages exported via Brodick and who felt that all opportunities to reduce traffic on the roads should be welcomed and examined.

He also stated that as about 50% of the tonnage could be exported from the south with more than half the remainder taken off the String road by shipping via a slip on the west coast, this was considered a factor which the ACC should not ignore. It was recognised that all factors needed to be taken into account.

3.5 In a spirit of compromise N. Arthur repeated a previous suggestion that the site just south of the Machrie golf course should be formally assessed. This would achieve the FC aims of reduced road miles and address the community concerns about the impact the Machrie site activities might have on tourism and the environment generally. It had the advantages of being away from the road and had the same landowner as the FC Machrie preferred site. D. Price felt that the coast road concerns were greater than the Moor road issue, citing the poor state of the Sannox slip area. A. Murray said the Machrie slip would not be as messy as Sannox because the timber at Sannox is being extracted directly on to the facility from the actual harvesting site. He also sited their own activities at Troon where transporters travel across public roads almost constantly. Residents were welcome to visit the site to see for themselves.

It was agreed that no one actually knew the landowners views about this alternative site, so this was speculation. The only site currently known to be available with a willing landowner was Machrie. A. Walker said the alternative site had been assessed and the tide range was too high. A. Murray stated that he had helped survey (visually) the coast for the Red Princess and would talk to the Captain to recall the assessment made...**ACTION A. MURRAY**

3.6 There followed a discussion about trailers and Calmac. A. Murray felt that the trailer issue was more complex than had been discussed previously. The Troon site of Wilson`s is open 6.00 to 23.00 hrs. This means that trailers coming off the last ferry would need to stay overnight at Ardrossan. He felt this would result in very poor utilisation of trailers and undermine the already low margins in the haulage industry. He stated that, in reality, the ferry was only used by local hauliers instead of the barge when a return load was booked.

3.7 A. Murray then outlined Wilson`s activities. They take 300kt per year from all over Scotland. The imminent change to standing sales on Arran was welcomed as it gave them better management control over forest activities, including `small wood`. The contract is for 5 years and for a similar tonnage as previously. He quoted estimated savings to be made if W. coast forest timber was extracted via Machrie compared to Brodick... The project was cost effective. D. Price asked about the depreciation of the cost of the slip and log store. N. Murray confirmed that the depreciation cost, picked up by the FC, was much less than the savings just highlighted, although the cost of the slip was an estimate at this stage.

3.8 N. Arthur asked if the Machrie slip could be used by other timber vessels or indeed any other vessels for business or leisure. N. Murray pointed out that he had spent fair bit of time researching the design specifications of other `bottom dwelling` vessels to ensure the facility could be used by vessels other than the Red Princess. A. Murray stated that the Red Princess also goes to Girvan harbour to deliver timber for the local biomass facility. In addition another local business that is non-forestry related has enquired about the Red Princess taking their product back up the west coast after the timber has been discharged at Girvan.

3.9 N. Arthur asked formally if the Machrie proposal was `the final position` as regards the FC extraction strategy for the W coast forests. N. Murray stated that pending any further outcome relating to A. Murray`s action in 3.5, it was the only option on the table and that they were preparing to submit a request to CEO of the FC to allow them to proceed with a planning application. The

outcome of this decision would be forwarded to D. Price as soon as it was made...**ACTION N. MURRAY**

D. Price quoted from a recent letter he had received from Mr R Soutar... *“we are not in a position to withdraw the proposals for Dougarie at this stage.”* which confirms this position. (secretary`s note: Dougarie is Machrie)

3.10 W. Calderwood asked for confirmation that wood chip supplies would still be made available to locals for biomass boilers. A. Murray confirmed it would.

3.11 As this would be his last meeting N. Murray and R. McMaster thanked Jim Lauder for his efforts on this group and wished him a happy retirement. Both N. Murray and A. Murray will attend future meetings.

4.0 DATE OF NEXT MEETING: Monday 25th April 2016, 6pm at Machrie Hall.