

Arboricultural Association - Scottish Branch

Minutes of the Scottish Branch Committee meeting held at The Hawes Inn, South Queensferry on 21st November 2017

Present: Donald Rodger (DR), Ken Harvey (KH), Fiona Melville (FM), Alan McDowall (AM), Robert Paterson (RP), Struan Dalgleish (SD), Will Hinchliffe (WH) and Stuart Leith (SL).

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies received from Jeremy Davies (JD) and Mike Charkow (MC).

2. Minutes from the last committee meeting.

Minutes of the committee meeting of 27th June were approved, and are up on the Scottish Branch page of the AA website.

3. Officers' reports.

3.1 Chair.

DR didn't have anything in particular to say, but said there were several points he would raise relating to certain agenda items during the meeting.

3.2 Secretary.

KH had nothing to mention.

3.3 Treasurer.

RP said the Branch's bank balance stands at £50.00. Expenses of £200.00 for catering for the Crathes Castle outing had yet to be reimbursed to our account. If this isn't reimbursed soon, we will run short. If the Branch needs to pay petty cash requirements for the AGM in January (catering, awards etc.) we'll need to let HQ know in advance so we don't run out of cash.

The Branch Manual hasn't been amended to reflect that "Opted-In" Branch accounts can now retain a balance of £250.00 (formerly £100.00) for petty cash items and will be reimbursed when funds fall below £50.00 - as per the 2017 'Branching Out' meeting agreement.

The branch will need to ensure AGM costs get covered and suppliers now need to invoice HQ directly assuming prompt payment of accounts.

HQ has confirmed that they will cover "reasonable costs".

Action: RP to raise the matter with the new financial controller at HQ.

4. "Hazardous Trees - A Practitioner's Guide" workshop with Chris Simpson on 26th & 27th September (FM).

FM reported that the event went very well and was fully booked with 26 attendees. Attendees came from as far afield as London and Inverness which was impressive. It was clearly a good value course. Catering and venue arrangements were satisfactory with no issues. The course content was excellent and covered a lot of ground with plenty of discussion. However, this was a pilot exercise and Chris found he wasn't able to go into as much detail as he would have liked in certain areas in order to get through all of the content but participants took home comprehensive support notes with presentations made available for download direct from his website for future reference. Cost to attendees had been kept as low as possible (largely due to Chris' generosity) and the income comfortably covered the expenses with a modest surplus.

A discussion followed about how we can help Chris develop the course further, and whether it could be under the AA umbrella or assisting Informed Tree Services Ltd (Chris' company) with this. All agreed that would be up to Chris, but that we will assist however we can.

DR thanked FM for all her efforts in organising the event.

Action: FM to speak to Chris on behalf of the Branch.

5. Excursion to Crathes Castle & Garden on 28th October (SD)

SD reported that 20 members and guests attended the excursion. Chris Wardle, Regional Manager for the National Trust gave an introductory talk about the venue. There was a good lunch, and then a tour of the gardens with the new head gardener, a horse demonstration and tree risk assessment discussions. All in all he felt it had gone very well and been well received. DR said we still need to donate a tree for planting. WH said he can supply a list of available species from RBGE, and SD said he can collect it in mid-December and take it to Crathes.

DR thanked SD for organising the event.

Action: WH to source a suitable specimen tree.

6. Climbing and Rigging Workshop on 11th November (AM).

AM reported that 27 people attended the course. The day went well with good sponsor support from Matt Cooper, Chris King and PETZL. SL said he attended and thought it had been beneficial to meet other contractors outside of a work environment to exchange ideas and techniques. Attendees came from as far as Halifax in Yorkshire. AM confirmed that the costs had been covered. All agreed that this is proving to be a popular type of course (particularly as the cost to attendees is very attractive compared to similar courses being run elsewhere) and the branch should provide more.

DR thanked AM for his efforts in organising the event.

7. Arrangements for 2017 AGM

DR outlined the background to the Branch's approach to the AGM event and that we like to have a range of appropriate venues and interesting speakers etc., so it's not just the AGM itself.

7.1 Venue SL said he has been in contact with Dumfries House and discussions are going well. They have a suitable room available on the day at £300, with catering available at £2.95 for tea/coffee and baking, and £12.95 per head for lunch. RP noted that we have a budget of £500 all in, but we can have a sponsor to cover extra costs.

7.2 Speakers FM confirmed that Phil Tomlinson from Infragreen has confirmed his availability along with a Dutch colleague to speak about green roofs.

WH mentioned his colleagues at RBGE Sally Eaton (who is doing work on re-integrating fungi on trees into the landscape) and Martin Gardner (from conifer conservation) as possible speakers.

7.3 Dr. Tom Hall Literary Prize and Ken Martin Memorial Award

Suggestions were made on a possible recipient for the Ken Martin Memorial Award, which were duly noted. KH will send an email around the membership seeking further nominations and the committee will make a decision in due course. A turned bowl is the usual prize and this will need to be ordered in good time.

All agreed that due to a paucity of articles for the "In Scotland" section of the ARB Magazine over the year, there were few possible recipients for the Dr. Tom Hall Prize. The last edition of the year has not yet been published so we will have to wait until then to see if it carries any worthy articles. DR will review the matter once the Winter edition is published.

7.4 Office bearers/committee members

DR asked if all present were prepared to continue serving on the committee for another year - all confirmed they would. DR has been informed by MC (who was not present) that he wishes to stand down at the AGM.

DR noted that we need to give at least 28 days notice of the AGM, so we'll need to get a flyer prepared and sent out shortly.

Action: SL to progress and confirm arrangements with Dumfries House. WH to speak to Sally Eaton and Martin Gardner. KH to email members seeking nominations for the Ken Martin Memorial Award. DR to organise the bowl and review possible recipients for the Dr. Tom Hall Literary Prize.

8. Branching Out meeting on 5th March 2018.

DR gave a brief outline of the event and asked who would like to attend on behalf of the Branch. He and Eric Hamilton attended last year, FM and KH attended this year. Both WH and SD confirmed they would like to attend next year's event.

Action: KH to email Emma Hall (event organiser) at HQ to let her know who will be attending on behalf of the Branch.

9. Calendar of proposed events

KH noted that a course on Tree Preservation Orders for Local Authority officers has been run in Lancashire and we could try to organise it in Scotland, but we would need a sponsor prepared to donate up to £5,000 which most felt was unrealistic. All agreed that the climbing workshop had been worthwhile and we should consider repeating this. DR asked all to think about venues for excursions for next year.

10. ARB Magazine articles.

MC (editor of contributions) was not present, but AM reported that he has prepared a write-up on the climbing workshop for publication.

11. Any other competent business.

It was mentioned that there is to be a TDAG event in Glasgow.

12. Date & venue of next meeting.

The AGM on 27th January at Dumfries House, East Ayrshire.