

Arboricultural Association - Scottish Branch

Minutes of the Scottish Branch Committee meeting held at The Hawes Inn, Queensferry on 25th April 2017

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

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies received from Stuart Leith (SL) and Jeremy Davies (JD)

2. Minutes from the last committee meeting.

Minutes of the committee meeting of 28th February were approved, and are up on the Scottish Branch page of the AA website.

3. Officers' reports.

3.1 Chair.

DR has presented Eric Hamilton with an AA award in recognition of over 20 years service on the Branch committee. He also presented Eric with a cheque sent from HQ. He will write an article for the ARB Magazine. DR said there were several topics from the last meeting he would like to discuss, but that these could be covered later in the meeting.

3.2 Secretary.

KH said he has received the 2017 Scottish Branch members list from HQ. This year there are 66 individual members and 10 corporate members. In 2016 there were 95 individual members and 17 corporate members. If the lists supplied by HQ are correct, individual membership has therefore declined by around 30% in the past year and corporate membership has declined by around 40%.

KH said that there had been no response to the call for a Branch social media co-ordinator, despite the requests from elements of the membership for a social media presence.

3.3 Treasurer.

RP said the Branch's bank balance stands at £1629.40. Expenditure in the quarter was £1127.22, with income of £1533.50 from HQ. The AGM in Dundee cost £831.12, and expenses for attendance at the Branching Out event was £296.10.

4. Spring Excursion to Castle Kennedy on 8th April - feedback.

KH gave a brief outline of the day. There was a fair attendance given the geographical location of the venue. Five Branch members attended (two with partner or guest), along with two Royal Scottish Forestry Society members (both with partners). All attendees felt it had been one of the most enjoyable events of recent years. KH has prepared an article with photographs for the ARB Magazine. KH has emailed Tom Christian to thank him for organising the visit and ask him to pass on our thanks to the Earl and Countess of Stair for their generous hospitality.

Action: None required.

5. Scottish Branch - should we be opted In or Out from HQ ?

Scottish Branch has been Opted Out from HQ management for many years, along with Ireland Branch and South-East Branch - all other AA Branches are Opted In. This has meant that Scottish Branch have been responsible for much of their own organisation and event management, accounting etc.. While this has certain benefits, it also has drawbacks both for the Branch and HQ.

RP noted that all branches are part of AA which is a charity, and all funds held by branches are AA funds. Opted In branches transfer funds raised to HQ leaving £100 for petty cash, which is topped up by HQ when it gets down to £50. Opted Out branches hold funds (but still AA funds) locally with an operating balance. RP then ran through a brief summary of branch requirements as per the Branch Manual noting requirements to have an AGM, committees, etc.. It was also noted that AA insurance is limited to 3 climbing events per year. Discussion followed on various points of the In/Out benefits and drawbacks as well as how Scottish Branch has been operating in recent years.

DR then proposed that the committee take a vote on whether we remain Opted Out or Opt In. There was a unanimous show of hands to Opt In with no abstentions.

Action: FM to email round details and contact HQ.

6 "Hazardous Trees - A Practitioner's Guide" workshop with Chris Simpson - venue, arrangements and progress updates.

FM started with the venue: Costs for Stirling Campus will be £32.75 per person per day with catering. The proposed dates are 26th & 27th September. Day 1 would be taken up with practical site work and tree assessment, and Day 2 would be more office based covering maps/reports etc..

Chris Simpson is not charging for his time (as he will use the event to promote his business) so no fees will be incurred for his involvement, and as the Branch has Opted In, HQ should cover the insurance.

The proposed cost to attendees was discussed and agreed at £95 for one day's attendance or £150 for both days (inclusive of VAT). This would generate a fair profit if we get full booking.

Action : FM to proceed with booking venue and arrangements.

7. David Evans and Frank Rinn - VALID Roadshow to Scotland in July (KH).

KH gave a brief outline of an event being organised and promoted by HQ as part of a nationwide five-venue tour scheduled for 10th July in Edinburgh. David Evans was for many years one of the principal trainers of the Quantified Tree Risk Assessment system and is currently developing a new approach to tree risk management called VALID (an acronym for Vitality, Anatomy, Load, Identity, and Defect). He will be presenting the event along with Frank Rinn of Rinntech, who develops and markets technology for tree and wood analysis. As planning and preparation for the tour are in the early stages, this is just giving advance notice that this is being organised. All agreed we will assist HQ where we can and help promote the event.

Action: None required at present.

8. AASB participation in Dundee Flower Show.

The Branch has had a presence at the Show for many years. However, there was general agreement that it takes a considerable amount of Branch members' time and effort for negligible return. As there is little perceived value in our presence, it was agreed that we would not participate this year.

Action: None required.

9. Interest and support/sponsorship for various events.

This Item was proposed by JD who was not in attendance. The subject will therefore be held over until the next committee meeting.

Action: KH to add to agenda for next meeting.

10 Possible excursion to North East.

SD has suggested an outing to Crathes Castle & Garden, a National Trust property near Banchory in Aberdeenshire. The property has a good tree collection and a new arboretum. The Head Gardener has been approached and is keen for Scottish Branch to visit. SD suggested a date at the end of October. There would be no free lunch unfortunately, but they have a cafe. 28th October was suggested as preliminary date. DR thought we should plant a tree as our donation to the property. WH may be able to source a suitable tree.

Action: SD to take further.

11. ARBmagazine articles.

Three articles have been submitted; one by DR on Eric Hamilton, one by KH on the Castle Kennedy visit, and one by MC on air-spade use.

12. Any other competent business

Re: Item 4.1 from last meeting - First Aid and Aerial Rescue Course. This is to be carried over until next meeting when JD present.

Action: KH to add to agenda for next meeting.

Re: Item 4.2 from last meeting - Climbing and Rigging Workshop - AM has spoken to Matt Cooper who is agreeable. A one day event is proposed, which would be best on a Saturday. All agreed this would be a good event to support. Timing was discussed and early or late September (early is better) using Stirling University campus as the venue (tying in with the event with Chris Simpson - see Item 6 above) would be good. No instructor supervision would be needed as the event is aimed at certificated climbers.

Action: AM to progress matters.

AM suggested we have a presence at Royal Highland Show at the end of June, tying in with the forestry and pole-climbing demonstrations. All agreed there is insufficient time to organise for this year but we should consider a presence next year.

MC has circulated an email to gauge interest in running further Bat Awareness Courses following last year's successful event and as per SL's suggestion at the last meeting (see minutes). MC received responses that only 8 were interested in Part 1 and 7 were interested in Part 2. This is not enough to run the courses.

WH advised that a new AA bio-security statement is in preparation and will be out for consultation.

WH said the the next Forestry Advisory Committee meeting in Inverness will be in October, and that he will attend on behalf of the branch.

13. Date & venue of next meeting.

27th June at The Hawes Inn