

Arboricultural Association - Scottish Branch

Minutes of the Scottish Branch 2017 AGM held at Dumfries House on 27th January 2018.

Present: Eamonn Wall, Andrew Jenkins, Julian Morris, Ormungandr Melchizedek, Catriona Kent, Iain Hannah, Paul Hanson, Brenda Hanson, Eric Hamilton, Chris Simpson, Alan Marks, Simon Stuart, Iona Hyde, Angus McKay, Matthew Cooper, Jane Begg, Tim Craig, Amy Knowles, Nick Porter, Donald Rodger, Ken Harvey, Fiona Melville, Robert Paterson, Will Hinchliffe, Allan McDowall, Struan Dalgleish, Stewart Wardrop (AA CEO) and Keith Sacre (AA Chairman).

1. Apologies for absence:

Apologies were received from Mike Charkow, Jeremy Davies and Stuart Leith.

2. Approval of 2016 AGM Minutes:

Donald Rodger said that the Minutes were up on the Scottish Branch page of the Association's website and that copies were available if anyone wanted to see them. There were no comments, and the minutes were accepted.

3. Matters arising from the 2016 AGM Minutes

None.

4. Officer's reports:

4.1 Chair:

Donald Rodger thanked everyone for coming and said he was grateful for members' support for the event. Many attendees had travelled a long way to be there.

He said that it has been a good year for the Branch, with four well-attended events;

- The April visit to Castle Kennedy Gardens near Stranraer, which had been a splendid visit with good hosts.
- In September there was the Hazard Tree Inspection course, a two-day event run by Chris Simpson which was instigated and organised by Fiona Melville. This had proven to be exceedingly popular and was over-subscribed. There is clearly a demand for this training and the Branch will be looking at repeating it in the near future if possible.
- In October there was an outing to Crathes Castle in Aberdeenshire. Donald thanked Struan Dalgleish for his efforts organising the event.
- In November there was the Climbing and Rigging workshop organised by Alan McDowall with assistance from Matt Cooper. It too had been over-subscribed, showing that there is a strong demand for such training.

Donald thanked the committee members and officers for their hard work over the year. He also reminded everyone that the Branch is always open to new ideas, and while the committee try, they serve the members so please raise any issues they may have, and let him know of any events they want to see organised.

4.2. Secretary:

Ken Harvey gave an update on the Association's current membership numbers for the Scottish Branch. There were 92 individual members, 8 corporate members, and in addition there were five firms of Approved Contractors and one Registered Consultant. The number of individual members had risen over the past year (up 7), but the number of corporate members had dropped slightly (down 6). There had been one new Approved Contractor firm.

4.3. Treasurer:

Robert Paterson started by explaining that in the past year, the Branch has transitioned from being 'Opted Out' to 'Opted In', which refers to the financial and organisational relationship of the Branch to HQ. He gave a brief explanation of the difference between the two. We had been persuaded by HQ that it would benefit the Branch he said, even though it meant losing a degree of independence in how the Branch operates. Robert said there were benefits, but that there have been some issues over financing. Instead of holding our own funds, most expenses are now met directly by HQ and we maintain a 'float' of £250 which we can use for smaller expenses. This is then 'topped up' as necessary from HQ. Robert's main difficulty as treasurer has been in being able to pay expenses quickly which we used to be able to do easily. He said that it has taken the Committee some time to get used to the new system.

Robert then gave a summary of the various costs incurred by the Branch over the year and the income received from events. Income had exceeded expenditure and the excess had been transferred to HQ leaving us with a closing balance of £250, as per the 'Opted In' arrangement.

Stewart Wardrop spoke up to say that some of the confusion Robert had referred to was caused by the way funds were divided out at HQ. He said there was no separation of Branch/HQ organisation, so funds were going into, and out of, the same 'pot'. There are legal requirements for charities and their financing he said, and that before 'Opting In', the Scottish Branch finances were not transparent. This had caused considerable accounting difficulties for HQ.

5. Appointment of Committee

Donald Rodger read out the names of the current committee members, and announced that Mike Charkow was stepping down after many years' sterling service. Although Mike was not present, Donald thanked him for all his efforts and work on behalf of the Branch and said that the Committee were sorry to see him go.

Donald then asked if anyone wished to join the Committee:-

Will Hinchliffe proposed Nick Porter, and Simon Stuart seconded the nomination. There was a show of hands in support, and Nick was therefore elected to join the Branch Committee for the coming year.

Donald then asked if everyone agreed to re-elect the remaining existing Committee members, all of whom were willing to continue to serve for another year. There was a unanimous show of hands to re-elect all.

6. Election of Officers

Donald then turned to the election of Branch Officers for the coming year. He said that all the existing officers were willing to serve for another term. The matter was put to a vote and there was unanimous agreement to the re-election of the proposed officers.

6.1 Chair

Donald Rodger was re-elected as Chair for the next year.

6.2 Vice Chair

Fiona Melville was re-elected as Vice Chair for the next year.

6.3 Secretary

Ken Harvey was re-elected as Secretary for the next year.

6.4 Treasurer

Robert Paterson was re-elected as Treasurer for the next year.

7. Any other competent business.

Amy Knowles mentioned that there had been an error in the calendar of training events publicised by HQ, and asked that clarification be sent out. Stewart Wardrop responded to say that the reason the training programme went out as it did is because it was last year's programme. He apologised for the mistake, and reiterated the commitment to run courses in Scotland for which there was a clear demand. He said that contrary to the widely-held belief, courses didn't have to make profit - if the demand was there and they were clearly beneficial, a loss could be absorbed.

Fiona Melville mentioned that the Branch needs closer communication with HQ and the membership.

There then followed a discussion about courses in Scotland and the involvement of the Scottish School of Forestry which runs arboricultural training courses. This concluded with Stewart Wardrop promising that HQ would work more closely with the colleges in the future.

There was no other competent business.

Donald Rodger thanked everyone for coming and the meeting was closed.

Ken Harvey
AA Scottish Branch Secretary