



## MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

19:00hrs on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024 - The Buccleuch Centre, Langholm

**Trustees attending:** Eileann Bloomer (EB), Barbara Kite (BK), Daniel Lacey (DL), Margaret Pool (MP), Sue Toon (ST), Mark Hallam (MH) and Mairi Telford Jammeh, Chair (MTJ)

**Staff attending:** Inigo Alcaniz (IA), Jenny Barlow (JB), Joyce Ireland (JI), Kat Mayer (KM), Angela Williams (AW), Yuliana Murray (YM)

The total number of attendees was 32, which included 19 Ordinary (voting) members and 1 Associate (non-voting) member.

### 1. Welcome, quorum and apologies

Chair MTJ welcomed all to the meeting and declared we had a quorum of ordinary members. Apologies from charity trustee Kevin Cumming, Vice Chair.

### 2. MoM of previous AGM held on 10<sup>th</sup> May 2023\* – matters arising

The minutes of the previous meeting were **approved** by Trustee member Margaret Pool and **seconded** by Trustee member Eileann Bloomer. No matters arising.

The 2023 MoM, are available here: <https://www.langholminitiative.org.uk/governance>

### 3. Report by the Chair, Mairi Telford Jammeh, on the Charity's activities

MTJ offered a summary of the work undertaken by the Langholm Initiative during a hugely significant year for the organisation- extract as follows:

The Langholm Initiative was now 30 years old, as it was founded in 1994. Many staff & volunteers have gone before us.

We are forever grateful to our volunteers, and donors, and how they helped make the community become one of the largest landowners in the South of Scotland.

We have seven staff and have a host of volunteers who help us daily with our activities. A special mention was given to Alison & Tom Hutton who manage The Langholm Initiative's membership list and newsletter.

MTJ introduced the staff and thanked them for their work over the past year, and informed that William Nixon our shepherd at Cooms, had just finished lambing.

Working with partners, MTJ spoke of working with other organisations in the community Xcel, the Langholm Alliance & tourism sub-group, Castle Craigs Club, Langholm Rotary and the Community Forum.

Also, MTJ spoke of working with CIC Creation Mill on the tapestry of the reserve which will be touring Scotland to celebrate Community Land Week.

MJT gave thanks to John Hanrahan, previous Chair and Campbell Scott previous Treasurer for all their hard work. Campbell continues to be a volunteer.



MTJ then invited projects leads to provide members with an overview of project activity.

#### 4. Project presentations

Extracts taken from presentations as follows:

**Langholm Information Hub** presented by MP.

- Expressed thanks to colleague Eileann Bloomer and all the volunteers who support the Rota – we have 18 regular volunteers and 4 casuals and are looking to initiate a new volunteer, 1 day a fortnight.
- Visitor numbers had seen a drop in previous figures, this was due to the position of the hub at the Kilngreen, and the inability to hold exhibits due to its size.
- A new coffee machine was installed last week, and it is hoped that this might help boost footfall.

**Townfoot Sports Centre** – presented by MTJ

- there has been low activity with project in the last year.
- further plans for a scaled down design facility were drawn up but flood risk issues remain with the project.
- there have been recent discussions with SEPA and D&G Flood risk management team to discuss flood risk concerns.
- we have requested a cost estimate for development of an FRA and preparation of a planning application.
- upon receipt of the cost estimate we will be in position to decide the way forward for the project.
- MJT mentioned that Campbell is with us this evening and can answer any specific questions if required.
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**Tarras Valley Nature Reserve** – an integrated presentation from members of the TVNR team and Project overview – presented by AW, JB KM & IA.

**JB-** We are all custodians of the land -it is a nature reserve, for the people who visit -live on the land-for people work on the land and for our history which is tied up in it with the Common Riding. We must balance all the interests, taking care of it for **People- Nature -and Climate** which are all underpinned by **Sustainability**.

**People -AW**

- The economic and social benefits of the reserve of growing and diversifying.
- Our use of local contractors keeps over £50,000 in the local economy
- Visiting organisations and groups continue to bring income and visitors into the town using local facilities
- Maintaining Cooms as working sheep farm, provides employment, a home (and income for the reserve)
- Our residential properties continue to provide homes for 5 families
- Future employment on the reserve-of a Woodland Ranger.
- Look to develop apprenticeship/intern opportunities for young people



#### **Nature -JB**

- The 36ha of Sitka Spruce plantation at lower Tarras had now been felled.
- We are looking to restore native woodlands in this area.
- Halo thinning at Longwood had taken place to allow the ancient oaks to thrive. This was carried out by local contractors.
- One thousand seven hundred native trees have already been planted on the reserve this year.
- A chainsaw course has been held at Longwood and was attended by a local contractor.
- We have applied for funding to clear 30ha of invasive Sitka Spruce regeneration on Whita Hill and Castle Craigs.
- A grazing assessment is to be carried out to look at a restorative grazing with cattle & horses as well as our sheep.

#### **Climate-JB**

- Delivering nature-based carbon capture
- Enhancing our natural resilience to drought, wildfire and flood as the climate changes
- Contributing to local energy and food security
- Developing Peatland Restoration Phase 1 - 190ha ditch blocking with Crichton Carbon Centre
- Developing 38ha scheme native upland birch and scrub planting with Woodland Trust- there is a hold up with this project at present.
- Wildfire response plan with Scottish Fire and Rescue
- Joined Dumfries and Galloway Climate Hub
- Took part in citizens panel on climate change at Holyrood.

#### **Sustainability -AW**

- Working towards improved financial resilience for community land through the development of sustainable and diverse income streams
- Ongoing investment in administrative and financial systems of the Langholm Initiative to support our aspirations for the Reserve
- Maintaining our land and buildings to protect community owned assets
- Income generation - felling of lower Tarras strip, rents, farm sales and subsidies
- Day to day maintenance and management of the reserve – track and road repairs, fencing, tree works, property repairs
- Short term use of properties and land where compatible with the reserve
- Recruitment of additional financial resource in the team
- Ensuring continuity of staff posts, reducing reliance on grants
- Reinvesting income into revenue creating assets / activities
- Ongoing investment in day-to-day maintenance



#### **KM – Tarras Valley Education & Engagement Project**

- Engagement with Canonbie, Langholm & Hottshie primary schools- P6/P7's to attain their John Muir Awards.
- Rural work skills - working with Barony College and other training groups.
- Hosting and engaging with the University of Bangor and the University of Exeter, who were on their third visit to the reserve.
- Using the reserve as an outdoor classroom to educate local youngsters within the community.
- Engaging with research groups to help grow the Education and Engagement program - to increase engagement with 16–30-year-olds and help offer employment through apprenticeships and Rural Skills.
- Working with volunteers on drystone diking, and removal of Sitka
- Hosting corporate volunteering and as an income generator for the long-term sustainability of the project.
- Working with Xcel project to strengthen the voices of the youth within the community.

#### **IA -Sharing our Story**

- Promotion of our branding, our logo and our website IA asks please use and give us feedback.
- IA informed of the PBS U.S. series *A Brief History of the Future* in which Tarras Valley Nature Reserve appeared on an episode and it has reached a huge audience in the U.S.
- Managing our social media and trying to grow our audience – we always listen to all the comments
- Documenting and monitoring the reserve to compare in the future.
- Explained the different ways to digitally follow our wildlife – Barn Owls-tagging of the Hen Harriers and looking to set up shortly Kestrel and Kingfisher nest cams.

MTJ thanked the presenters for the presentations and sought any questions from the members – A member asked what the problem was with the Woodland Trust project JB- answered that NatureScot had said no to the planting, but we would challenge this and try to push back.

#### **5. Consideration of financial accounts for year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023\***

BK, before providing the 2022/23 accounts informed that presentation of next year's accounts would be more aligned with the timing of the AGM.

The turnover for the financial year was over £500,000.

The Langholm Initiative had changed its accountants and had sought external support from a Management Accountant, which would help do financial reporting in real time.

After the second buyout of £2.2m our accounts show assets of £6.7m. BK explained that this figure is nearly all tied up in assets and not cash.

The accounts were healthy and had been given a clean bill of health from OSCR.

A finance subcommittee within LI has been set up to help take things forward.

The accounts, are available here: <https://www.langholminitiative.org.uk/governance>



6. Resolutions

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**Resolution 1 – Retiral / Re-election of Charity Trustees**

In accordance with Clause 91 the following trustees are retiring this year:

Eileann Bloomer, Daniel Lacey, Sue Toon and Margaret E. Pool

The following are offering themselves for re-election as Member Trustees:

Eileann Bloomer, Daniel Lacey, Margaret E. Pool.

Members are asked to support the resolution to re-elect the afore mentioned as Member Trustees.

The Resolution was **adopted** by the members.

MTJ explained that in accordance with Clause 95 co-opt Trustees Kevin Cumming and Barbara Kite will retire at conclusion of the AGM.

7. **The Langholm Initiative Trading Company Ltd (Tarras Valley Nature Reserve™)**

MTJ informed members that in accordance with article 53 of the 'Articles of Agreement' the office-bearers of the subsidiary company will retire at conclusion of the AGM and office bearers shall subsequently be appointed at the next suitable Langholm Initiative Board meeting.

8. **Any other competent business**

MTJ extended thanks and appreciation to all attendees for their support and invited anyone who would be interested in joining as a charity trustee to get in touch.

There being no further business the meeting was closed.

Signed:

Mairi Telford Jammeh, Chair

Date: 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024

