

Forth Valley and West Fife Smallholders Association Annual General Meeting

7.00pm 10th December 2008
Longcarse Farm Cottage, Alloa.

Present:

Rosemary (Chair) & Dan Champion, Carol (Secretary) & Graham Johnson, Gillian Mackay & David Campbell, Andrew (Treasurer) & Janis Sharpe, Clare Hebbert & Ali Hibbert, Anne Massie, Karen Evans.

Non-Members Present:

Sandra Foxon.

Apologies:

Jo Lennon, Jane Coull, Marius Kiemer.

Tabled Papers:

Agenda

AGM Notice

Statement Of Accounts 2008

Secretary's Annual Report 2008

Newsletter

Signed Proposals To Nominate Committee Members and Association Name Change

Awards For All Application

1. Constitutional Order.

The Secretary advised those present that members were informed in writing at least 21 days before this meeting, as well as a notice being posted on the Associations Website (electronic noticeboard). Two matters of business were received in writing within timescale, and these were included within the Agenda which was sent out not less than 10 days before this meeting. As all paperwork was in order and the group was quorate¹, the first AGM of the Forth Valley & West Fife AGM began.

2. Previous Minutes

- AGM minutes – none
- General meeting minutes since last AGM - none

3. Matters Arising

None

4. Treasurers Report 2008

The Treasurer gave a report on the year. The Association began in January 2008 with no funds. However, an Association account was opened with Executive Officers as signatories, and following an

¹ Present - 12 full members including 3 executive officers.

agreement to charge a fee for membership², payments received built up throughout the year to a total of £215. An income of £70 was derived from two visits (£5 per member charge), and the Association received 48 pence in interest. In total the Association income for the year was £285.48.

The Association incurred a total expenditure of £100.50 made up from costs associated with venue hire, gifts for visit hosts and speakers, and a table charge for Ashfield Fayre.

Balance remaining in Association account is £184.98.

There was a discussion about whether there is a need to have the 2008 accounts verified by an external auditor. It was agreed that the sums involved didn't merit it.

Other Funding Sources

Rosemary informed the members present that following discussions at previous meetings, an application has been completed for submission to Awards For All (AFA). The subgroup working on this application has asked for funding to help towards equipment, training etc. Andrew fed back about information he had received from the AFA funding Helpdesk. The group discussed the benefits of a successful application, such as, improved graphics and more professional presentation of the Association minutes and newsletter (using a laptop and graphics package). The Association could also attend local events and spread its green message and mission through display boards, leaflets and posters etc. Photos already collected would make a good basis for the display boards. The local horticultural show would be a good event to attend. Other resources could be used to purchase smallholding related books and DVD's to share amongst members.

A suggestion was made about an outing to the Royal Welsh Smallholder and Garden Show since there is no equivalent in Scotland. Opportunities exist to also visit the Centre For Alternative Technologies, or twin up with a local Smallholding Association and share experiences and information. Advantages around mutual hospitality would mean that we could then host the Association members if they wished to attend the Royal Highland Agricultural Show.

Carol and Rosemary have been to visit Oatridge College, (their costings were the most competitive) to provide training courses relevant to Association members – lambing, grassland management, welding, chainsaw/tractor maintenance etc. It was noted that much of the training will be bespoke and tailored to smallholding needs – as many of the existing courses are designed for large-scale agricultural enterprises. Suggestions are sought from members.

Approval was sought and given to proceed with this application.

Other alternatives to be explored should the application fail,

- Community Chest (a local fund)
- Scottish Country Foundation (groups must be constituted but do not need to be a charity).

² £10 per member per year, with new members paying only half price if they joined after June.

5. Secretary's Report.

Carol presented her report on development of the Association throughout 2008. Reminding the members that the Association began with a meeting attended by 14 people in January 2008, and highlighted from throughout the year, some of the issues discussed at meetings and themes presented by speakers. The Association was launched on the World Wide Web through the production of its own website www.smallholders.info, and has also produced its own Christmas Card and Newsletter. Learning events were well received by Members who visited local smallholding enterprises. Carol thanked the hosts and other members who had contributed to the Association's first Year!

6. Auditor

There followed a discussion about the need stated within the constitution to appoint an auditor. It was noted that there is no legal requirement to have one, and they don't need to be independent (concerns were expressed about the cost of this demand on Association funds). Financial good practice now refers to accounts being certified rather than audited.

However, the Treasurer felt that it would be useful to also have someone else to check things over and a volunteer was sought from within the membership. Anne Massie agreed to undertake this job and was proposed (Dan Champion) and seconded (Graham Johnson).

7. Election Of Executive Officers

Confirmation of written nomination of the Association officers was received on 20th November by the Secretary and was proposed by Dan Champion and seconded by Janice Sharpe who are both full members.

- Chairperson– Rosemary Champion (full member)
- Treasurer – Andrew Sharpe (full member)
- Secretary – Carol Johnson (full member)

There were no other nominations, and Clare summed up the approval of the members present for the continuation of existing postholders, she thanked Rosemary, Andrew, and Carol for all their work in the last year. It was much appreciated by the members.

8. Review Of Membership Fees 2009

Current fee structure is £10 per member or £5 per member after June. There followed a discussion around the merits of changing these charges. It was felt that in the current financial climate that this charge was appropriate and within the reach of existing members, and attractive to new members. There was a unanimous show of hands to retain the 2008 fee structure.

Other opportunities to raise funds were suggested, such as selling on training places to non-members, advertising for new members on the website, and sponsorship of the newsletter. Anne suggested that the Association register with Easy Fundraising to buy bird food for example. Online purchase means that a donation is made to Association funds. Members can check out the Brittany Spaniel website to see how it works.

9. Amendments To Constitution

Carol referred to a proposal she had received in writing 14 days prior to the AGM, that the Association change its name to Central Scotland Smallholders Association. It was acknowledged that perhaps the existing name was too restrictive as a description, and that we already had members who did not live

within Forth Valley and West Fife. Despite the name, there were never any geographic restrictions on who could join and this should be reflected in the name change. Proposer Graham Johnson, Seconder Anne Massie who are both full members. There was a unanimous show of hands for a name change to Central Scotland Smallholders Association. Action – Website details and paperwork to be changed accordingly. Carol & Dan.

10. 2009 Programme

Rosemary presented the draft 2009 programme. It was felt by members setting the first 2008 programme that perhaps meetings through the busy summer season would be too onerous, and that this time would be better used for visits. However, following discussion it was felt that this was too long a period without a committee meeting. Suggestions from members present for speakers/visits include:

- Planning Consultants – Warrens, an independent planning consultancy who have experience of doing things in the rural community.
- Business Consultants – paying tax, business start up etc.
- Rare Breed Survival Trust – e.g. Kate Sankey
- Beekeeping – it was noted that there are various members who have connections in this area.
- FWAG, RSPB, Biodiversity Officers.
- Bat walk with rangers.
- Paths For All – explanation about what it is and the Countryside Access Code.
- Animal First Aid – welfare, medications etc.

Visits

- West Mossie – Kate Sankey. Rosemary distributed fliers advertising Organic Shetland Beef and Craft Courses.
- Grovehill Dog Whisperers – dog behaviourist.

11. AOB

- There was discussion about Data Protection and whether the Association was registered. Action – Dan to discuss with Carol.
- Could members swap seeds in the spring?
- Advertising the Association in national smallholder magazines would cost approximately £95, Rosemary suggested doing an article to put into the magazine. It was agreed that some of the carry forward be used to advertise the Association. It was noted that the Association publicity officer Caroline Brown was no longer able to undertake this duty. Rosemary and Clare volunteered to look at this issue. Action – Rosemary & Clare to prepare an article.
- Newsletter. Carol distributed copies of the latest newsletter and there were discussions around how this could be used to generate income (sponsorship and adverts etc). It was noted that this was a valuable piece of work and it was agreed that a newsletter should be produced at least quarterly, Anne offered to help Carol with this task. Action – Carol to distribute the newsletter to Agricultural Suppliers, Vets and members.

- **Christmas Card.** Carol thanked Clare for her drawing that has been adopted as the 2008 Christmas Card. Resources have been donated to produce the card and members will receive one shortly.
- **Calendar.** Carol distributed the photos that she had received from members. There was a discussion around the cost and merit of producing a 2009 calendar, it was felt that perhaps at this time a comprehensive calendar might not be feasible due to time and funding restrictions . **Action –** Carol to explore alternatives. However it was agreed that work should go on throughout the 2009 year to collect photographs for each month and a sub-group meet to produce a calendar for 2010. It was felt that this might be a good source of income for the Association.

Rosemary brought the AGM to a close and thanked everyone for their contribution. She invited those present to enjoy the buffet that members had brought. A good time was had by all.