

Blairmore Village Trust
Annual General Meeting

Blairmore Hall, Sunday 5th June 2016 at 2pm

Present: Agnes Harvey, Pat Lynn, Carolyn Stewart, Bill McKinnon, Anne Garrod, Catherine Rae, David McKenzie, Chris Armitage, Isobel Brown. In attendance: Becky Hothersall (minutes).

1) Introductions

Everyone around the table introduced themselves.

1) Apologies

Lorraine Whitton and Jim King

2) Declarations of conflict of interest

None

3) Minutes of the 2015 AGM

The minutes of the AGM held on the 7th June 2015 were approved by the board and signed by the chair.

4) Chair's report

The chair gave a verbal report, with contributions from the other board members. Activity in 2015-16 had centred on the 'creative stage' development of the field/green. The community had been involved in creating a landscaping plan, resulting in a design that suits all audiences and allows space for wildlife, with interactive elements spread around and space to relax. We have now begun the 'technical stage', with issues to address regarding sewerage, drainage, environmental concerns such as Japanese Knotweed, and planning permission for parking and the planned holiday lets. Plans are required to address all of these, and it has been estimated that these will cost around £25-30,000. We must now consider how to raise these funds.

The BVT board has remained diverse and stable with good attendance. Relationships with the Hall Trust have been strengthened, with regular co-representation at each other's meetings. Catherine mentioned that BVT is pleased to have strengthened links with Strone Primary School, working on various small projects together. These included the Christmas Lunch, where the pupils participated magnificently, and which was a very pleasant day for the local community. For the first time, BVT took on some paid help (Becky Hothersall) with administration and publicity, and this has been helpful.

David highlighted work on Hamilton's Brae, where vegetation removal and Japanese knotweed treatment has been carried out. This was facilitated by a generous donation for this specific site. He noted that BVT had chosen to engage professionals to deal with the knotweed to avoid problems with its spread under adjacent (listed) walls. Good progress has been made but the eradication is a 3 year process, at the end of which the site will hopefully become accessible. Agnes reported that knotweed treatment of the field/green (not including the triangle) is now in its third year and appears to be working.

Going forward, the focus will be on progression of plans for the field/green, along with Hamilton's Brae and the roads. In addition to fundraising, it is possible that BVT could dispose of some assets to help with the costs involved. The community consultation work to date always separated the two smaller plots (the triangular plot above White's Brae and the wooded area adjacent to the Old Ticket Office) from the field/green. No plans have been made to date, but BVT is now discussing the possibility of developing these sites and is currently making various enquiries with the statutory agencies. This includes finding out the value of the land to inform choices and make the best use out of it. Agnes noted that BVT's organisational structure may place restrictions on how we dispose of land, and emphasised that any profit generated would be ploughed back into community benefit.

5) Accounts/Treasurer's report

BVT employs an accountant in lieu of a treasurer. The accounts were circulated. Income was lower this year as the annual Santa event was not held. Two raffles were held but there was no major income. The balance sheet is healthy due to the land assets. Currently cash in the bank is a bit lower because money has recently been spent on design work. Most of the balance is ring-fenced to progress the landscaping plans. There may be a sum of around £1000 to recover from a loan to the High Road North residents' association. (**Action: ??** to check).

6) Election of Directors

Lorraine Whitton stood down from the board and was thanked (in absentia) for all her hard work. David explained that he will shortly be moving away from the area; he will stand down when this happens but in the meantime BVT is grateful for his continued service on the board. The remaining member of the board were willing to remain in office for another year.

Chris and Helen Armitage were appointed, and will take turns to attend meetings. Pat expressed that she was pleased to have a younger family represented on the board.

7) Any other business

None.