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The Carse of Gowrie Orchards: Local Residents Forum Meeting

**Notes of Evening Meeting held on Wednesday 30th January 2008
at the Inchtute Hotel, Inchtute, Perthshire**

Paul McLennan - Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust

Gave a brief welcome to the evening. The evening would be a follow up from the 11th December meeting about how we are going to take things forward with Crispin Hayes' summary. The idea will be to form a Working Group or Carse of Gowrie Orchard Forum to discuss the range of interests and funding. The format will be open and friendly thus the large circle of seating! Thanks to Inchtute Hotel for catering and venue.

Dr Crispin Hayes - Hayes Eco Consultancy Ltd

Gave a brief reminder of the stage at which we have arrived. We know the extent and condition of the orchards in the Carse. We now need an Action Plan. However the evening will be about YOU - the residents. This is about handing over leadership to local people. Lets discuss WHAT WE WOULD LIKE TO HAPPEN - each idea / issue / theme (i.e. co-ordination, commercial aspect.), WHAT WE WOULD LIKE NOT TO HAPPEN - key points raised at the last meeting were the loss of the orchards; dangers of over commercialisation / usage; poor management and access; and perhaps too much emphasis on biodiversity. Please also see CHs Summary of the last meeting (attached).

CH then looked at the 10 year vision and timeline (please see attached for info). We need to plan WHEN things should happen. Different processes are needed with so many people participating: we didn't get through everything we needed to in the 11th December meeting. We have to remember the orbits of participation (see attachment). This brings us to tonight - let's consider how we can go forward.

We have Paul McLennan of the Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust project leading, supported by the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and Forestry Commission Scotland (Mike Strachan) who have been very supportive with funding and the surveys. The funding regime needs to be discussed together with the SRDP (Scottish Rural Development Programme) - there is a lot of funding available out there from local businesses. Let's get businesses connecting with communities. Syd House, the Conservator of the Forestry Commission in Perth, is a strong supporter - he says people need to be imaginative. We have historical landscapes, remedial work, education and rural business opportunities to get involved with.

Tonight is about bringing people together and organising a body to take the lead. There is a lot of support out there but in terms of leadership it is about local people taking it forward. The Carse of Gowrie is a close knit community. Let's have a round up of names, places and interests...

List of Attendees

	Name	Carse Resident? (Y - yes)	Carse Orchard Owner?	Additional Comments
1.	Dr Crispin Hayes	Cupar		C W Hayes Associates, Eco-Consultancy Undertook major orchard survey in 2003, Newburgh.
2.	David Imlay	Y	Y	FC(S)/ SGPID. Has a little orchard that has been left in poor state - keen to tidy
3.	Rod Neville	Abernyte	Garden orchard	discovered fruit trees - would like to rejuvenate and share
4.	Andrew Thompson	Strathearn		Community Woodlands Association (Dunning-based) wants to offer support
5.	Douglas Ritchie	Y (St Madoes)	?	Slow Food Perth interest in supporting / marketing
6.	June Nairn	Y Erroll		ScotHerbs - local business; here to learn
7.	Bill Wilson	Y Kinfauns	Y	Keen on historic varieties and added value through biodiversity.
8.	Roger Humphry	Y (Errol)	?	SCRI - wants to make ties. Keen to support apple festival
9.	Mike Strachan	Auchtermuchty		FC(S); Big Tree Country. Fife-based. Personal interest in orchards. Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Woodland sub-group leader. Has 5 fruit trees.
10.	Paul McLennan			P&KCT; Big Tree Country (BTC). Personal interest in orchards. Sees CoG as the 7th cluster of BTC. Has so much potential. Historic orchards and giant redwood specialist. Offering support and poss funding
11.	Robin Pilcher	Y (Longforgan)	Y - 10 acre pear/ apple orchard - 70 trees.	Owner of chestnut grove in Spain; experience of niche marketing. In the past remembered seeing lots of fruit trees. Sad to see loss. 12 trees in Longforgan (mixed).
12.	Michael Almond	Y	Y	
13.	Cllr Peter Mulheron	Y Errol		Grange Community Council. Apples and plums
14.	Liz Yorke	Y (Grange)	Garden orchard with new trees	Carse of Gowrie Paths Project Officer.
15.	Lawson Doe	Y Newhouses	8 acre orchard, mixed fruit	Damson, plum, apple. Would like to improve orchard and make profitable. Smallholding in Craigdallie - want to make viable.
16.	Elaine Whiteley	Y		Smallholder. Keen to plant new orchard. An interest in niche selling.
17.	Estelle Ward	Y (Ballindean)	Small orchard (new)	Keen on old varieties. Horticultural knowledge. Bees.
18.	Rachael Higgins			Tayside Biodiversity Partnership (Minute Taker).
19.	Catherine Lloyd			Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Co-ordinator. Personal interest in orchards. Hon. Chair of the Central Core Orchard Network (covering Central and Northern Scotland).

20.	Phillip Rettie	Y (Ballindean)	Ex-orchard owner	Concerned about loss of orchards through development. Keen to identify heritage varieties.
21.	Diane Rettie	Ditto	ditto	Ditto
22.	Dorothy Eggleton	Y (Longforgan)	Garden orchard - 17 new trees	Beehives
23.	Will Stewart	Ex-Carse (now Dundee)		Very keen on heritage varieties. Brought up in Millhouse. Worked in horticulture and greenkeeping. Roots in CoG. Knowledgeable about the local heritage varieties. Recommended JJ Morrrows book.
24.	Christine Hall	Y (Pitroddie)	Y	Scottish Agricultural College Conservation Advisor - able to give SRDP workshop later in the year. Tayside Biodiversity Partnership Farmland sub-group leader (joint).
25.	Mike Sutton	Y (Waterybutts)	Small orchard	ScotHerbs; horticulturist. Keen to incorporate orchard/fruit ethos into local business. Noted that supermarket customers now wanting environmental improvements.
26.	Dr Trefor Woodford	Y Kinnaird		Ex-SCRI. Entomologist. Very keen to be involved, especially with biodiversity issues.
27.	Prue Dowie	Y (Kilspindie)	Y - old orchard with new plantings	Angus Council Economic Development; has barn she would like utilised (poss interest in being the "hub" requested at the Peelwalls presentation.
28.	Paul Eddy	Y (Flatfields)	Y - 1 hectare 54 trees; new plantings	Pear, apple orchard. Looking forward to being part of this.
29.	Liz Eddy	Ditto	Ditto	
30.	Liz Farquhar	Y (Glencarse)		Involved in Carse Continuing Education which helps bring people together.
31.	Alison Black	Y (St Madoes)		Carse of Gowrie Group (Minutes Secretary) has six of John Butterworth's fruit trees.
32.	Felicity Martin			Local journalist with an interest in orchards, Slow Food.

Open Meeting

CH then suggested we throw the meeting open - what kind of organisation will we form - who? how? what is the way forward? We have a great breadth of people here, in and outwith the Carse of Gowrie. Should the Forum be tagged onto the existing CoG Group or should it be a totally new organisation?

Lawson Doe - suggested it should be split into 2 groups - one made up of people who own an orchard (those who would have a strong hand in the commercial / preservation aspect), and one made up of those people in a garden / general interest situation.

Liz Yorke - Suggested it may be difficult to merge with the Carse of Gowrie Community Group as it is currently very small.

Dorothy Eggleton - suggested we keep it as one entity with sub groups.

Mike Strachan - noted the need for a business reference to apply for the SRDP. Further details available

from the Forestry Commission Scotland.

Crispin Hayes - As regards the SRDP, there is no need for constitution if the land is registered. We can collaborate - individuals can apply for assistance.

David Imlay - as it is community participation, can the community as a whole apply?

Mike Strachan - the funding leader has not been agreed yet.

Christine Hall - we would need the orchard owners' permission first - there is potential funding for practical work for the first 2/3 years.

Mike Strachan - 4 or 5 people with an orchard would be eligible for funding.

Crispin Hayes - there are other issues. If there is an owner, they may like groups of volunteers, students or school children to help (which would be organised). Things would be better co-ordinated as a whole organisation rather than a collection of individuals which may become piecemeal.

Robin Pilcher - Do we have a blueprint of an orchard project done before? England is ahead of the game with Common Ground. There must be others here that could demonstrate.

David Imlay - there is Newburgh.

Catherine Lloyd - the National Orchard Forum has a list of projects across the UK, there are also case studies on the Common Ground website. There is a lot of advice available.

Crispin Hayes - Yes, Newburgh established themselves as a small organisation and became constituted. There has always been a handful of people to take things forward (Historical Society). A voluntary management committee can run out of steam - it is great to employ a few people and someone to manage it either part of full time. The Carse of Gowrie Forum is a large undertaking but is quite fundable. We need to get someone to organise grant applications and co-ordination etc.

Douglas Ritchie - would there be a bank account set up to be paid into?

Mike Strachan - for the SRDP funding would need to go direct to the landowner.

Christine Hall - Individuals can't apply to the SRDP - unusual funding would mean there needs to be a constitution. A feasibility study would be easy funding. There is also the Lottery fund which could lead onto project officers and a more serious approach. We need a few folk to take the lead.

Estelle Ward - apologised for her husband's absence as he was unwell. However, he is on the CoGG Committee and his feeling is that if people got together as a group they would be welcome to join the already constituted CoGG which covers the whole of the Carse. The CoGG has employed members of staff. If we got a group together formed properly, they could approach the CoGG.

Cllr Peter Mullholland - The Forum could become a sub group of people that could go forward as a block - it may be a case of gardeners vs landowners.

Crispin Hayes - I think it should be made up of anyone with an interest - there is no point in dividing interest. There would be more invested interest from developers etc if it was part of the CoGG.

Cllr Peter Mullholland - there needs to be a driving force - would it not be the bigger key holders / owners who would go for the funding?

Crispin Hayes - why not get together with a common focus and policy, more people would make the group stronger. There are only a handful of big orchards left.

Lawson Doe - the SRDP - can this be related to a group?

Christine Hall - we can apply as individuals but as a joint application part of a group. Money would go to each individual as long as there is agreement to keep it as one entity.

Crispin Hayes - a single voice

Roger Humphrey - gave an example of the company Sustrans who promised planting along the cycle route. This was an example of something at quite a small scale working at a commercial level. There is no good separating the group - working groups can come later.

Crispin Hayes - eg, Community Woodland Groups - it is important not to get hung up on the SRDP for funding - there are other sources, huge benefit can come if the community as a whole are going to benefit. Community is a buzz word now. Let's get the overall umbrella set up first and pick off separate working groups from that.

Paul Eddy - noted the danger in opportunity costs that can become too powerful and the general loss of trees due to development of new housing. Orchards are a macro habitat and can be valued for all sorts of reasons. An Action Plan is needed for it if we are to be profitable (which would be a bonus). We need everyone to jump on the bandwagon and focus on the existing orchards that are left.

Owners who ultimately want to restore their orchards may or may not want to commit to anything now. He noted that they own a 20 acre plot with a dozen fruit trees and farmland / woodland. He has an interest in the SRDP and believes in the value of community benefit. But this is for landowners to demonstrate efficient use of funding. The larger individuals can use their buying power and commercial expertise to boost the muscle power for attracting more funding from various sources.

Mike Strachan - suggested the idea of a large umbrella organisation would work well - it would be a collaborative effort and would open doors to more support. We need a business plan approach with a network. Individuals should apply for funding separately but as part of a whole.

Elaine Whiteley - can understand the predicament herself. She owns a very small orchard but can't get it commercially viable. It is gardeners versus farmers and she is stuck in the middle. Her orchard is not large enough to be commercially viable (apples 5p per 1lb?). The only way to become commercially viable is to strengthen the relationship with the clientele and realising the potential. Personally she needs support from others. We need to stick together, we can't survive as individuals.

Dr Trefor Woodfor - noted that the CoG has priority orchards, 9 of them referred to in CH's survey. These are very old - can we get a commercial return from them? We can get funding from grants for preserving community and heritage. Orchards are not just a fruit crop - they have amenity value too. If we are going to lose historical local varieties we need to identify them, graft them: we could set up a heritage nursery.

Paul McLennan - yes that could be a beacon highlighting the historic orchards of the Carse of Gowrie - it could be marketed, there could be tourism opportunities and apple days for local community and kids. Everybody can benefit. It may become a kind of movement over the CoG where anybody can tap in.

Lawson Doe - we would be entitled to more funding if there is community involvement and interest as well. Who would be on the committee? The ownership is in our hands, we need to get the next move. He used to be on the CoGG - would be good to investigate the possibility of merging both groups. Need to agree to stick to a target and need to get ownership of the group NOW....

Crispin Hayes - decided to put names on the board of potential candidates to take forward the next move....

Robin Pilcher - Elaine Whiteley - Dr. John Hulbert - Cllr Peter Mullheron - Mark Sutton - Lawson Doe - Roger Humphry - Christine Hall - David Imlay - Crispin Hayes - Catherine Lloyd - Paul McLennan - Phyllis

McKay - Mike Strachan

Lawson Doe - suggested that someone from SCRI would be a huge help!

Roger Humphry - suggested someone from CoGG would be great

Liz Yorke - noted that the CoGG would be supportive but wouldn't be able to carry the group - they don't have the capacity. Please contact Phyllis McKay.

Robin Pilcher - said he was still unsure about things - he is interested in seeing how things were done historically, do we have a blueprint? who are the buyers? how will fruit be marketed? would it be a co-operative?

He shared that fact that he has a Sweet chestnut grove (organic) in Spain - it is not greatly commercial but it is successful. He works with co-operative markets - could it be a blueprint?

Noted there were speciality varieties in the Carse eg, Monorgan - we could convert a garden, could we use heritage varieties again?

Soil Association registration for organic produce?

Crispin Hayes - geodiversity / geographic identity, organic, soil quality - all add to the premium. There could be a Carse of Gowrie brand? There are success stories in food businesses that have come about along these lines.

Paul Eddy - suggested getting it commercial which would in turn allow for more support and therefore more financial aid.

It was noted (by Mike Strachan or David Imlay) that over 20 years the FCS has trebled the amount of woodland in Scotland. There was a lot of work put in to restore remnant native woodland. Now there is a niche market with people making a living from it. Critical mass - it was realised that the trick was to look after existing woodland and allow it to expand naturally rather than put fences around such remnant woodland.

Orchards have a huge biodiversity and heritage value - a real value that can become commercial. But we need to get them established better and expand around them.

Willie Stewart - noted that Willie Duncan is an expert in fruit tree grafting.

Crispin Hayes - noted that Ken Cox of Glendoick Garden Centre would be a potential help in seeking out a nursery for keeping heritage varieties. Mr Cox had already offered the Glendoick Food Hall and Garden Centre as a potential venue for the proposed Carse Apple Day in October.

Roger Humphry - asked how many different varieties there were in the Carse.

Willie Stewart - mentioned the book by Storrie and the amount of information within it. He noted varieties that date back to the Union of the Crown. The best and most beautiful variety is the Lass O' Gowrie.

Roger Humphrey - suggested that WS's list of heritage varieties be posted on the website (www.taysidebiodiversity.co.uk).

Crispin Hayes - noted that Brogdale refers to the Lass o' Gowrie and that there is a lot of background and national interest in this variety. Said that we need to identify where the important orchards are located and discover how varied they actually are.

Estelle Ward - agreed - no one knows how many historic varieties there are still around. Dr. John Hulbert didn't manage in rounding up all the old varieties. There isn't a national collection yet but CoG would be

well sited for this.

Crispin Hayes - there are some pears in Newburgh that are solely from that area. There are some varieties in the Carse which are historic but we just don't have the research for it.

Paul McLennan - the most frustrating thing for orchard owners is not knowing what they've got. The PKCT is currently looking into a grant for researching historical varieties. Rarities and varieties - we can sell on this, it may be good grounding for investment.

Cllr Peter Mullheron - advised that Willie Duncan and John Butterworth are good contacts for identifying apples and pears.

Willie Stewart - agreed that Willie Duncan (ex SCRI) is a specialist in fruit trees - by looking at the seeds in a cut pear he can identify the variety.

Estelle Ward - who would approach him - it is a long way from Largo, Fife.

Catherine Lloyd - both Willie and John have been invited, with Will Stewart, to take part in the proposed Apple Day event this autumn.

Crispin Hayes - suggested to get 3 or 4 people to become office bearers.

Cllr Peter Mullheron - agreed .Get 3 or 4 people to define the group and decide on whether we go forward as a subgroup of the existing CoGG or as an individual forum. CoGG is constituted - can we fly under their banner? Let's get an open discussion with them.

Liz Yorke - suggested the CoGG committee be approached perhaps on 12th February when they next meet.

Liz Eddy - we could put something in writing to CoGG to enquire about the possibility of becoming a subgroup connected to the CoGG.

Roger Humphry - agreed - ask for advice from CoGG and get their opinions.

Crispin Hayes - we need to see if their constitution fits with what we need.

David Imlay - suggested a member of the Forestry Commission to be part of the Forum Group.

Mike Strachan - suggested Hazel McLean from the FCS.

Crispin Hayes - mentioned Mike Stockley (Port Allan) and Andrew Threipland who were not at the meeting but would be good contacts. Also key owners such as Catherine Herdman of Megginch should be involved.

Crispin Hayes - let's get a date for this group to meet again.

David Imlay - would need to be after negotiations with CoGG.

Cllr Peter Mullholland - reminded that it would revolve around residents only and would NOT be political.

Crispin Hayes - where can the meeting be held?

Liz Yorke - suggested the SCRI Living Field Centre. The CoGG Paths Project met there, it was a great venue and free to small groups.

Roger Humphrey - noted that if constitution is required it would be better to have as many people there as possible.

Dr Trefor Woodford - asked if all the information could go onto the Abernyte and Inchtute website - so

that it can become widely known to people.

Crispin Hayes - 7:00pm on 5th March at the Living Field Centre, SCRI, Invergowrie. Roger Humphrey to communicate via Rachael Higgins. Cllr Peter Mullheron to talk to Prov. John Hulbert about constitution and the idea of becoming a subgroup of CoGG.

Cllr Peter Mullheron - referred to a TV programme set in Cuba on how people were forced to live on their front door steps - every space, rooftop, has been cultivated in order for them to grow food.

Catherine Lloyd - gave a quick rundown on all orchard related events that are ahead. The Tayside Biodiversity Partnership would be organising the early ones to ensure the events went ahead. There is to be a School & Community Orchard Workshop in Errol on 23rd February, a Pollination course mid-May and a Summer Pruning/Grafting course in August. Contacts were being put in place for a Carse Apple Day (or Festival Weekend) in October - identification of fruit, cookery demonstrations, a cider-making course. This event should be run by local people so could be discussed at the next meeting.

Crispin Hayes - rounded up the night and thanked all for coming along.