

# Reforesting Scotland: Charting the Way Ahead

The remaining six active Directors of Reforesting Scotland met last Friday together with some of the key staff and members, in order to assess how RS is doing at present and to work out the best way forward.

The six active Directors are Dan, Donald, Laura, Ninian, Paul and Piers. We realise that we haven't been able to move RS forwards in the way we would have liked, largely due to our own busy jobs and other commitments. We are very grateful for the skilful work carried out by the talented people who do paid work for RS- Hugh, Anna, Ida, Karen, Emma and Robert. We are also very grateful for the volunteer time put in by a large number of people, without which there would be no RS.

All of our efforts combine to deliver the superb Blarbuie project (led by Hugh), the irreplaceable Journal (led by Ida and Karen), the constantly evolving website (thanks to Emma), the Annual Gathering and keeps the organisation going. Beyond the RS organisation is the heart blood of RS- you the members, turning the RS vision into reality through your thinking, discussing and, above all, doing. Your actions are the essence of RS and always have been.

However, RS- the organisation, is in peril. Nothing new in that, but it is at risk unless we take steps to protect and sustain what we value most about it. We had a model for the organisation- grow the projects and secure project funding, using a proportion of that to fund the essential administration and development of the organisation. Administration is done, very capably, by Anna but we have only one big project (Blarbuie) and we haven't had a Development or Executive Officer since Kristin. Without someone driving RS on a day by day basis, the organisation can only tick over and crucial things don't get done. In the long run, the organisation shrivels up and dies. Currently, we are trading on our reputation.

This can't go on. The Directors cannot act as unpaid executive officers for RS. Even if we wanted to, we don't have the time to.

So, we have a suggestion. We would like to abandon the project funded model for the time being. It hasn't worked and money is going to be scarcer for a few years. We would like to shrink the organisation down to one of its previous models- that of a campaigning journal. This means continuing to produce the flagship Journal and its associated communication vehicles - the Radical Rowan (revamped), the website, the Google groups and do some additional media work. We would also continue to organise the Annual Gathering of members and encourage local gatherings as part of our work to build the reforestation movement.

We would no longer have any large projects but we would support self-managed smaller projects, such as the Scottish Orchards Network or the RS Book. If a project becomes larger, we would encourage it to become autonomous, in the way the Community Woodlands Association did. From September 2011, we expect Blarbuie to become independent of RS.

In this way, we will be able to constantly renew RS without putting it at risk. Our projects will be your projects and we will use the Journal and other media to spotlight and support your work. We will grow the Journal circulation and the membership. We will continue to promote the RS vision and push for change at a pace which is appropriate to the very real global challenges which we face.

Land use, timber products, fuel wood, wild harvest, restoring a woodland culture- all our themes have become increasingly relevant. We're not at the end of a journey, from obscurity to the mainstream, but at the start of one. Never has RS been more needed. We need to make sure that the RS voice is heard.

We welcome your thoughts on where we are going. We welcome new Directors, new volunteers, new members. What can you do to get the RS message out there ?

Donald McPhillimy on behalf of the RS Directors, 11 June 2010