**General meeting Feb 10th**

Present Paul, Garry, Steve, Howarth, Rachel

Julie from National Trust (NT)

**Lease** – we have signed and we are waiting for the NT to sign and return to us before we can send to woodland trust and for the planning application. Julie to try and hurry this up.

**Hard standing** - NT have received in principle agreement for £3,500 to contribute towards this. Great news and many thanks to NT. The value does not require 3 quotes and we do not need to use NT contractors, but Julie will check this. RTW and Guthrie’s are companies that NT have used for this kind of work. The figure of £3500 probably came from us.

**Invoice for the spend on shelves etc.** Mick W is not happy as does not think he can justify this expenditure. We explained the background and why the costs came about. Paul will discuss more with Mick W.

**Time frame for lease and social impact.** We us sent a letter with the signed lease to reminding the NT that there had been assurances made that rent could be offset by social impact. Julie explained that context has changed considerably and they are a charity which now overrides the previous conversations that have been had with us. Agreed that we needed a meeting with Mick to discuss social impact/value and what would be seen as valuable to defray the rent costs. We will put some ideas down and bring to the discussion. Julie to arrange this meeting.

**Registering the land** – the landlord (Julia on behalf of NT) has to do this before we can access the entitlements and then access the grants for farmers. 5.84 hectares in is the lease. Garry to send Julia his part of the registration process.

**Field boundaries**. North hedge is Alistair’s responsibility. We would like to plant more trees in this hedge and are happy to supply trees and to plant them but not to maintain them afterwards. Julie will discuss with Alistair.

East hedge – Mick M thinks highway agencies might cut hedges if they are overhanging the highway. H and R to ask Colin Huntingdon in Gateshead council if the council are responsible for this hedge. Julie said minor roads tend to be the responsibility of the landowner. Hedge needs to be cut when there are no nesting birds.

**Woodland Trust planting plan.** Julie is happy with the planting plan. She sent it to Julia and advisor for farming and asked if he was interested in coming to have a look. (no response)

**Composting toilet** Julie to check if this is ok with NT.

**Planning Permission** – Paul has talked to the planners and they advised us to put in application for what we are planning to do now, not what we want to do in the future, and then put in more applications later for revised plans. Looks as though we will only have money for one container, cladding and hard core at the moment, maybe build ourselves a lean to. Julie advised that we need to clarify the access to the field with the planners. Mick W had said he would pay for the planning application in the past. (Julie to check this?) NT view is that it is GCF to do the planning application.

**Visitor numbers to Gibside** – number 263,000 in one financial year – Julie to find how many were local and repeat local.

**Walled garden plan** – it has now been agreed that volunteers can see the proposed design for the walled garden. A meeting will be arranged soon and GCF will be invited to this. There are still lots of discussions about how to take the design concept to implementation stage. It is now proposed that there will be some trees in the new design but none of them will be where the trees are now. They don’t know if the young trees will be kept and re-used or not. We have to be business as usual for our plots as a lot of processes to go through yet. We have a lease until next Feb.

Rachel brought up whether GCF could be the vegetable element of Gibside site and to have a footpath up to the field so visitors can see what we are doing?

Julie left the meeting

**Budget** Garry to send the budgets out. Garry is working on the accounts for last year. Garry to work on it for another couple of days and then ask for help if he thinks it would be helpful. Got £6103.45 in bank. Unrestricted funds are £2082. 19 members currently with 3 more who have said they will join.

**Growers group** – Mick is doing the minutes for the last meeting. NT will do the training for us for the strimmers. Agreed to use sandbags. Going to get seeds from Tamar free. Steve has a green house and can do some modules. Agreed to prioritise one polytunnel (4m by 15m), water connection, flail for tractor and 2 wheel tractor. Paul to check with stables if ok to practise driving the tractor in their yard. Decided to put off moving the soft fruit to field because land not prepared, Rachel to review the plan for walled garden to see if they can stay there.

**Container** – Howarth would like clarification on which design we are now doing? 1 container with 2 lean to, or 2 containers with storage between? The application to woodland trust included accommodation in the container. We only have money for one container and no lean to. Need to think about how to do a phased development so we start with what we can afford (1 container) and then add on as we have the money. Howarth to do a re-think on the drawing/design to try and get the staging right and work out how much it might cost for a lean to rather than cladding.

**Robertson’s** – the builders have offered materials from 2 other sites – Whitley bay and Durham. Rachel to ask what sort of stuff it is.

**CSA National** – organising a national sign up day. Yes we are prepared to be part of it, can Mick M reply to them? Regional day – we would prefer another organisation to host this

**Wiggio** – we can share documents on the website so do not need to do wiggio.

**Bright ideas** – advisor is Debbie, and Paul has met her. Paul has sent loads of documents to her. Paul to send round the minutes of the meeting. 3 hr discussion. Can get architects fees from the fund. Will work out a timeline of what we are going to do.