

Minutes of the inaugural meeting of Friends of Glen Goyle
4th Feb 2021

Present

Ed Dolphin
Richard Eley
Brian Golding
Nigel Hyman

Phil Lee
Peter Murphy
Mary Walden-Till
Jeremy Woodward

This meeting was to establish some starting points and set the scene. There was discussion about flora and fauna within Glen Goyle, the water, fencing, and seating. The ownership of the property and the consequences of that were considered. There was also mention about the History Group discussions about the history of Glen Goyle. We decided to adopt the name Friends of Glen Goyle.

We then thought about the group coming under the umbrella of an established group such as the Sid Vale Association. It was explained that the SVA had been approached but didn't feel they could take on any more work at the moment, so it was agreed that the group would be supported by the Vision Group for Sidmouth structure, with a website created and the VGS providing secretarial and publicity services.

It was considered that we should delay the public launch until we had a better idea of what we were trying to achieve, but that when we launched it could be branded as a Jubilee project because of the link to Victoria & Duke of Kent. The Duke of Kent died in Sidmouth after catching a chill from getting his boots wet. Did he get his feet wet in Glen Goyle, did she get pushed round it in her perambulator?

The consensus was that before we decided anything we had to know exactly what was there, and how it was used; but that while that information was being collected it would be a good idea to start work on uncontroversial aspects such as pulling up Three Cornered Leek (*Allium triquetrum*) or cutting the leaves off it where it wouldn't pull up, and cutting back brambles. Those members familiar with the the wild leek offered to introduce those who weren't to the joys of trying to deal with it! As it comes up early now is a good time to start working on it. If it doesn't pull up easily it is best to cut back wild onion, and you can then see what grows up around it. It is important not to dig out other things which are mixed in with it.

We agreed we would proceed with simple clearing during lock-down, with informal working groups. Other people who may be interested in joining in are Sally Blythe and her husband, but it was felt that once the project was announced many other people would be eager to join in and would take it to their hearts.

Nigel volunteered his wife to start putting together a list of plants to be found there. Ed has already compiled a list of the important trees and it has been put on the web site www.glen-goyle.vgsidmouth.co.uk . We agreed all information would go on the website.

Richard explained that EDDC had been approached about us doing work, they knew that he had previously planted daffodils in the Goyle, and were happy with that; he could not see that they would object to us pulling up three cornered leek. For insurance purposes we should make them aware of what we are doing.

He then said he thought they might be willing to hand over some sort of lease to a community group but that is something to be pursued later. The STC and SVA have not shown interest in taking this forward, but there might be some money available from the SVA Keith Owen Fund.

At the moment it appears that EDDC work in the Goyle is restricted to clearing up things which have been broken such as removing seats and broken fences. They do not appear to be replacing things.

In discussion about what we were aiming for we agreed we were not wanting it to become a 'municipal garden' but somewhere that took full advantage of the various areas and micro-climates and gave the opportunity for education, for example by labelling trees. It was pointed out that the Museum Walks already go through the Goyle, which is relatively unknown and is a surprise to even some local people. Tree species are pointed out to people on this walk.

When considering the subject of a certain amount of 'wildness' being appropriate the three badger setts in the Goyle were mentioned. Badgers can be an attraction but they can also be a pest, rooting up plantings but leaving the three-cornered leeks alone, they also will leave excrement and urine traces which might possibly pass on disease to other animals or humans. They will need to be considered in whatever plans are drawn up.

The lower part of Glen Goyle is owned by the Belmont but they are not keen on public access. This means our endeavours will be restricted to the upper part which is public. However, it was commented on that the Belmont seem to have been neglecting their portion recently and there may be an opportunity for us to work with them on this lower part. Discussion raised the possibilities that there may be an opportunity to separate public and private areas, or arrange access if you spent a certain amount in the Hotel. It is never seen in use by hotel residents as you pass by so may not be very important to the Hotel. Richard knows the manager of Brend Sidmouth hotels and will discuss things with him.

Looking at what we need to be doing next, discussion brought up the following points.

- We need to create a garden design. The project could perhaps attract a well-known designer, or students at an Horticultural College, perhaps Bicton. Perhaps we could get sponsorship for it?
- Phil said we need to walk it, look for damage, and what hardware and signage are present.. We also need a diversity record before we can approach anyone. This was agreed by all.
- Ed pointed out that we have to work out what we want in the area, there was some lighthearted sarcasm about turning it into a playground.
- Ed said we need to get someone to write a vision statement and the the rest of us to pull it apart. Richard said he had done it already and would circulate for discussion. This would set the broad aims. We also need to then decide the general feel we want to have for the area, but this is stage two.
- The open area of grass needs to perform several functions, people use it for picnics, and take toddlers there. Long grass is a problem for people with children as they worry what may be hidden within it but daisies, field buttercups and dandelions are always enjoyed by children.
- The area around the grass is gorgeous in autumn, with the tree colour, and this needs to be maintained or enhanced.
- We do not want to try to restore it to its Victorian glory because we don't know what that was.
- We don't want to hamstring the future by having an overly prescriptive set of aims but need some sort of vision to attract people, biodiversity is a word which will attract people especially youngsters.
- Need for signage to make people aware of it and travel from the Esplanade to visit it.
- Ed said that considering the Victorian links, we could focus planting on Veitch introductions. The [Veitch connection with plant hunters](#) would be a natural foil for our local architect Sampson. There were then discussions about famous people who may have visited Glen Goyle and if the link was significant enough to be mentioned.

Peter summed up that Richard would circulate the wording for our Aims and we would then have a meeting with a more specific agenda.

Mary explained that parts of the website could be made private if required, forums could be set up or anything else that was wanted. She would make sure any requirement happened.

The meeting closed