

Atholl Estates

Forward Plan 2015 – 2018



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Foreword

The Forward Plan has been written to enhance the understanding and knowledge of the estate for all who live and work here. It explains the estate policy and direction, how we aim to set about the work in hand and the principles that guide our decision making.

The revised management structure has now been in place for ten years, it reflects a more vertical line of responsibilities and continues to work well as we expand and refine it.

Recently three new hydro schemes have been built on the estate and two more will follow. The capital expenditure has been demanding, partly financed by some property sales plus a period of pay back, now in progress. Eventually it will allow the estate to have more resources to invest in its infrastructure and commercial projects.

The tourism industry becomes increasingly competitive, with visitors, quite rightly, expecting the best. Over the next three years there will be increased focus on the presentation of the castle and gardens, while continuing with the high standard of maintenance established over the last three years.

Numerous jobs and developments will take place on the estate, some planned others inevitably unforeseen, these will be tackled on a case by case basis with due consideration for the guiding principles explained in this document.

The plan covering the three years from 2015 should be read in conjunction with the estate induction pack, which contains the facts, figures and expectations that relate to the estate as it is today. The induction pack is updated annually.

I would like to thank the management team for all the hard work that has gone into this plan, I commend it to you and hope that from reading it you will gain a greater understanding

of the work on the estate. I would also like to thank everyone who works on the estate and makes the realisation of this plan possible.

The estate is committed to openly discussing current and future plans. Communication is a two way process and we are open to suggestions or questions where something is not clear. The door is always open.

Sarah Troughton

Head Trustee



Atholl Estates

Vision ...

A reputation for leading in everything we do.

Mission ...

To run a commercial enterprise which enables us to invest in the natural, built and social environment of the estate.

Our values ...

Integrity. Support. Commitment. Long term view.

Forward Plan ...

To provide clarity and direction on our plans for the future with detail for the next 3 years.

Operational Plans ...

Outline detailed targets and activity over a specific period to deliver the Forward Plan.

Policy Statements

Blair Charitable Trust

The trustees are Sarah Troughton (chair), Charles Kinnoull and the Dickinson Trust.

The aims of the trust are:

- The maintenance, preservation and presentation to the public of historic and architecturally outstanding buildings within its ownership, notably Blair Castle (Grade A listed) and its contents, the promotion of estate land-based interests, whilst providing a planned and structured approach to recreation management and adherence to good conservation practices.
- The protection and management of land within its ownership, encouragement of public enjoyment of the land, looking after the rural land uses of farming, forestry and field sports and promoting a harmonious balance between these uses, recreational pursuits and conservation ideals through discussion and assessment with local groups, users and national bodies, the provision and management of visitor facilities to a high standard and the increase of visitor understanding, thereby enhancing enjoyment. Building the brand around an authentic product is key to our aims.

The Blair Charitable Trust owns the Castle, its park, the home farm and the lands generally known as the West Hand, Glen Fender and Forest Lodge.

Family Estate

The rest of the estate is in family ownership that shares the aims of the Charitable Trust, although with less emphasis on historic buildings and more emphasis on promoting commercial opportunities.

We aim to bring a business focus to land management, creating opportunity, maintaining and creating jobs and providing accessible, high quality rural facilities.

Public Interest

Management of the estates will be governed by standards of responsibility for the well-being of our staff, customers, neighbouring communities and the built and natural heritage.

We place priority on the delivery of social and environmental benefits as part of our business objectives and we commit to operating in an open and transparent way.

Our public interest commitments over the period of this plan are detailed in Appendix A – Code of Practice.



General Administration

- No significant changes anticipated within the Accounts Department.
- Establish an effective and two way working relationship with our new firm of solicitors, Gillespie McAndrew and with our new firm of employment consultants, InvolveHR.
- Develop staff confidence and competence at self auditing safe working in line with agreed working practices and the use of near-miss experience.
- Work collaboratively with the company defined benefit pension scheme trustees and administrators to protect the scheme through the next actuarial report while minimising its impact on the company.
- Instigate a five yearly review of castle security against visitor and intruder theft.
- Continue to promote Investors in People Standard as blueprint for estate staff management, encouraging staff development and training where it aligns to business needs.
- Monitor development of land reform related policies and instruments and their implications on the running of our enterprises.



Tourism

Blair Castle

- Increase seasonal exhibitions based on items from the collection, particularly Lady Evelyn's lace collection. Each year to have new or updated exhibition for WW1 room and Banvie cases.
- Consider seasonal themes in the Gardens, for example apple week, which are well co-ordinated and managed.
- Develop horticultural standards reflecting our 5 star venue status.
- Review customer flow from entry to departure, including the ticket office location.
- Update our approach to child friendly visits focussing on interaction and activities.
- Continue to maintain the fire evacuation plan and grab routine.
- Develop annual pass sales to encourage repeat visitors.
- Target the corporate events market with a focus on small, high value boardroom scale meetings and away-days.
- Make better use of charity day events.
- Implement energy monitoring data collection and analysis.
- Upgrade restaurant furniture.
- Determine viability of using restaurant terrace during all weather.
- Establish a 4 year replacement plan for kitchen catering equipment.
- Act on advice from appointed specialist advisor for the presentation and preservation of the collection.
- Start work on the next issue of the *Atholl Chronicles* 1957-2012 to complete by 2018.

Caravan Park

- Renewal of the water supply pipe network over a 7 year period.
- Renovation of shower blocks 2 & 4.
- Develop a new revenue stream from woodland pods.
- Progress phase 2 of the woodland lodge development.
- Standardise pitch sizes to 3 options from 5 and increase super pitch numbers.
- Establish park wide wi-fi.
- Establish viability of a loyalty scheme to encourage increased touring repeat visits.
- Continue to increase our share of the pet friendly holiday market, taking into account impacts and the requirement for specialised facilities.



Wider Estate Tourism

- Establish a blueprint for the development of holiday accommodation in the Dunkeld region.
- Pony trekking will aim to:
 - o Grow sales by 10% per annum, which in addition to the sale of youngstock should lead to the pony enterprise breaking even by the end of the plan.
 - o Offer a more inclusive package of treks to all age groups by the end of the plan.
 - o To have a core nucleus of 20-25 working ponies in the herd, capable of breeding, trekking and stalking.



Outdoor Events

- Recognise events that use the policy fields are limited by requirements of agriculture and existing horse trials.
- Encourage new events that have low or no impact on the fields and should benefit the castle through hospitality and catering.

Sales and Marketing

- Implement a new responsive website linked to effective social media promotion.
- Encourage all estate teams to feed in stories to improve our social media reach and customer engagement with the estate.
- Establish functional CRM (database marketing) for all key customer bases.
- Foster links with Great House, HHA, Discover Scotland's Gardens and other relevant groups.
- Link with Dundee Developments with V&A.
- Develop further links with the Cairngorms National Park marketing teams to highlight our National Park location.
- Strengthen effective account management with all major travel trade customers.

What 'Good' looks like ... in Tourism

- Memorable** Our guests leave with great memories and return with anticipation.
- Reliable** We do not let our guests or colleagues down.
- Personal** Our passion for the estate shows in the way that we work.
- Brilliant Basics**..... We deliver all basic tasks to a brilliant standard.

Horse Trials

Following on from hosting the FEI European Eventing Championships in 2015, the main objectives for the next three years are:

- To fully take advantage of the FEI Europeans legacy which are improved site infrastructure, revised arena layout and visitor flows, rejuvenated cross country course and grass management to maintain championship standards and preserve Blair as the leading Scottish equestrian event.
- To fully roll out and implement the 'All Roads lead to Blair Castle' plan across the many different equestrian classes.
- From 2016 retain a 20% increase from 2013/14 average in spectator numbers, this following a peak in 2015. This would amount to a figure in the region of 44,000 – 48,000.
- Continue to develop the event camp site to a consistent size of 275 pitch sales or £27,500 per annum.
- Build on 2015 sponsorship and business engagement links, aiming for net income from sponsorship and hospitality to be 15% - 20% of total running costs by 2018.
- In the face of anticipated market decline in trade stand operators over the next 10 years, continue to provide operators with a well serviced and profitable Scottish event aiming for a waiting list from which to maintain variety and quality for visitors.
- To return a secure minimum 10% profit on turnover annually, maintain standards to enable the event to be positioned favourably against the highest level competitors both within and outwith equestrian events.
- Retain a good working relationship with the farm team and retain Fields 1, 2 & 5 out of organic status and cattle out of 2nd Pony Field.



Rural Enterprises

Balanloan Farm

- The farm will remain a store cattle producing unit, but will move towards more of a Charolais / Simmental herd.
- Calving will be moved entirely to the spring with a herd of 140 / 150 cows and a tightened calving period of 10 weeks aiming for a calving percentage of 92%.
- We will continue to breed most of our own replacement heifers.
- Sheep stocking will remain stable at 1,300 blackface ewes and 500 cross ewes split between Texel and Llelyn cross. Our target lambing percentage will be 90% for the blackface flock and 140% for the cross ewes.
- Our aim for the cross ewes will be to sell 125 lambs per 100 ewes, with the majority being sold as finished lambs rather than store.
- The farm will remain organic until the end of the current plan which expires in 2018.
- We will continue to address the shortage of winter forage by continued improvement of the grassland. We will aim to improve the status of the core forage area of 300 hectares using annual N, P and K soil testing as an indicator for this improvement in order to go from a very low status to a moderate status.
- The core pony herd will reduce to 20-25 ponies with more focus on breeding and training so that at the end of the plan we will aim to sell two trained ponies per annum whilst retaining enough for our own replacements.
- Through the new SRDP we will identify opportunities to improve the ageing fence infrastructure on the holding, by planting hedges, which will provide benefit for shelter for livestock as well as wildlife corridors. Opportunities for riparian planting in Glen Tilt will also be considered.



Ballachallan Farm

- The farm will change to become a store cattle producing unit, remaining with terminal sires of Limousin (better quality store calves) and Simmental (replacement heifers). The better calves will be sold straight off their mothers at around 8 months old, with the remainder being overwintered.
- The herd will remain spring calving building up to a herd of 140 / 150 cows aiming for a calving percentage of 92%.
- Replacement heifers will continue to be mainly home bred.
- Sheep stocking will remain stable at 450 Blackface ewes and 1100 cross ewes split between Texel and Llelyn cross. The target for Blackface ewes will be 95% and cross ewes 145%
- All lambs will be sold as fat, finished on our own grown fodder crops with minimal bought in concentrates.
- We will manage the transition out of organics, but aim to continue the ethos of organic farming through the prevention rather than curing of disease.
- The farm will remain a three man unit with seasonal staff help at lambing and other times when required.
- The arable enterprise will be increased if suitable opportunities arise which results in Balachallan becoming more self sufficient.
- Recognising that the age range of buildings used at the three steadings are starting to become difficult to fully utilise for modern farming, through the course of this forward plan we will develop a blueprint for a single farm steading at the Milton.
- We will identify opportunities through the new SRDP programme which will improve the ageing fence infrastructure on the holding by planting hedges providing benefit for livestock shelter as well as wildlife corridors.



What 'Good' looks like ... in Farming

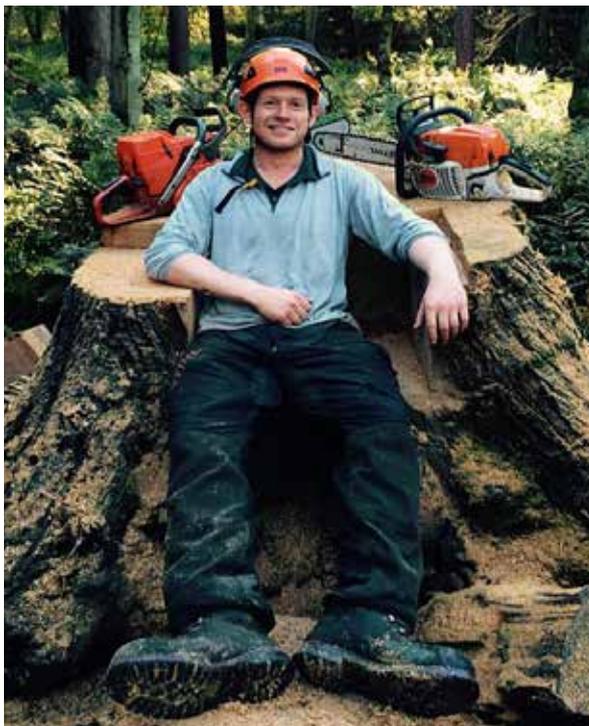
Technical efficiencyRecognising constraints but constantly striving to improve and enhance technical efficiency.

RespectFor other team members, other departments as part of a unified estate, the general public remembering that we are often seen as the face of the estate, farm livestock, wildlife and the land and our equipment

Best Practice Adherence to industry standards and estate policies.

Forestry

- We will recruit a college student to form the forestry squad as two foresters, a deer ranger and a forestry student.
- The role of the deer ranger on the Dunkeld end of the estate will predominantly provide deer control on woodland restock sites by targetted population culling rather than fencing although each site will be reviewed to ensure that this is the best option for tree establishment.
- Road works will be undertaken in Kindrochet and Tulliemet wood to allow access for timber extraction.
- There will be restock works carried out at Baluain / Crieff Hill / Knockbarrie / Killiechangie and Tulliemet. The main sites will be stocked as commercial crops, but with no larch as part of a planned reduction in the amount of larch grown on the estate.
- There will be further fellings at Killiechangie / Tulliemet / Balachallan and Baluain. The majority of these will be clearfells apart from Baluain which will be selective thinnings.
- All of our forestry work will be carried out under certification through UKWAS, with the major felling contracts being carried out by a contractor.
- We will continue to sell our timber as a standing crop, with a market review scheduled for 2016.



- Tulliemet Wood will be subject to restructuring with broadleaves and commercial crops where appropriate to improve the visual amenity and suit the topography.
- The pine schemes that are outwith FCS contracts, will continue to be managed to support the growing trees but increasingly used for commercial activity, most significantly deer stalking.
- Auchlennie pine scheme will be monitored and if the trees are past the damage stage it will be opened up for deer wintering.
- We will continue to review sites where new planting may be considered in light of financial incentives but taking into account farming and stalking interests. There are no sites planned at this stage.
- We will prepare a planned reinstatement of the castle's designed landscape, with initial emphasis on Tullach Hill and softening the edges of Baluain Wood.



What 'Good' looks like ... in Forestry

Meeting the standardUnderstanding the standards which regulate our sector, most significantly UKWAS/FISA/Safe Working and placing them at the centre of our operating practices.

ResourcefulBeing organised and efficient with the use of available labour and equipment to meet operational targets.

RespectfulTo each other in the team, to other estate teams we work with, the public who we work around and to our vehicles and equipment.

Field Sports

- We will recruit an experienced full time pheasant keeper, who will be responsible for delivering the Tulliemet shoot expected bag of 7 driven days of 100 to 150 birds and 6 rough days throughout the season.
- Tulliemet Moor will be brought back into active management part funded through a collaborative SRDP application with our neighbours & tenant farmers, with the pheasant keeper taking a lead role in the phased and targeted burning of the moor. This will enable some small walked up days to be taken over pointers at the end of the plan.
- Tulliemet Hill will be opened up to more accompanied sport stalking for roe and fallow deer which will take in more of the hill ground around Rotmell. The aim would be to let 30 days bucks and 60 days does per season.
- On the Bruar Trust Beats we will aim to start to supplementary feed a group of deer in Glen Bruar to provide a nucleus herd of around 30-50 stags which will become an additional herd which aren't shot. Aim to increase the number of deer within this beat, which should enable a more commercial viable number of stags to shoot, through the use of feeding silage / hay in the glen, with the long-term plan to have them wintering in the wood behind the lodge.
- On the Blair Castle beats, we will improve the stag wintering habitat within Glenfender by selective thinning of Glenfender Wood and work to maintain the improvements in habitat on Benn a' Ghlo SSSI. We will complete the fence march with Monzie and Lude to prevent stags wandering onto the agricultural land whilst the improvements to habitat are undertaken.



- Over the whole of the red deer range, we will have a yearly count of deer and use this data to inform the estate deer management plan, based on the aspiration to shoot 350 stags over all beats.
- The count will enable us to clearly identify hind populations and how many are required to provide 350 stags annually. The hind cull will be adjusted accordingly. There will be an increased focus on shooting hinds with guests until Christmas each year, with the remaining weeks being used by the stalkers to achieve the cull target.
- The grouse will continue to be helped by the use of non-medicated grit. The numbers to be sold for sport will be agreed following yearly grouse counts in July each year. We will continue to deliver our existing muirburn regime and legal predator control to maintain a balanced moorland management policy.



What 'Good' looks like ... in Field Sports

TraditionalNeatly presented, respect for equipment and property, pride in the use of tweed and ponies on the hill.

EthicalMeeting and exceeding industry and estate codes of practice.

Resourceful ... Achieving productivity and cost efficiency through co-operation within the department and around the estate.

RespectFor guests and the general public, for colleagues as part of a unified estate and for wildlife, the land, and the ponies.

Ranger Service

- Work in partnership with CNPA towards a volunteer group for the Park, which would help periodically with pathwork and biodiversity actions on the estate.
- Work with the COAT (Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust) in path repair on Beinn a' Ghlo and Glen Tilt.
- Continue with programmes for local youngsters with Nature Club and development of our Junior Rangers group for teenagers aiming to attract 60 teenagers through the programme by 2020.
- Continue to monitor presence and effects of beavers in Mill Dam area.
- Continue grey squirrel control at Dunkeld to prevent spread north and maintain Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels' frontier line.
- Continue to manage and promote countryside trails. Look at sources of funding, in particular for Glen Tilt Trail drainage and possible re-routing of Red Squirrel trail in reaction to impacts of greater tourism development.
- Tackle public impacts (dogs, wildlife disturbance, vehicles) by working in partnership with SNH and CNPA as well as active ranger services on the ground.
- Work with rural departments in wildlife conservation projects through SRDP, to investigate grassland wader projects and riparian improvement tree planting in Glen Tilt.



What 'Good' looks like ... in the Ranger Service

Helpful and Approachable ...Open and available to help other estate staff and members of the public.

Knowledgeable To have a good level of understanding of local nature, communities, business and recreational opportunities.

ReliableTo deliver what we have committed to the public, local community and estate in a thorough and professional manner.

Flexible.....To adapt to different roles and workloads throughout the year.

Let Property

- The Scottish Government's new legislation for residential leasing and minimum energy efficiency standards will be monitored against their impact on the viability of affordable let housing.
- Residential rents will be reviewed annually, aiming to do so in person once every four years. Rent value bands will be kept locally affordable with rent adjustments to take into account provision of water, foul drainage and secondary heating.
- Farm rent reviews will continue every three years but will be expanded to include a wider engagement over holding management to include property maintenance, mutual fixed equipment investment requirements and interest in the direction of the farm business. The next round of reviews to be complete by the end of 2015.
- Maintain full occupancy of commercial let units presuming in favour of tenants that provide full time local employment.



Properties

Estate

- Communication standards will be further improved, aiming to provide 14 days advance notice on major projects and 24 hours advance notice on minor repairs.
- The Agility database will be completed for each residential property, which will require condition surveys of roofs, walls, drains and water supplies.
- A cyclical preventative maintenance schedule for roofs and external timber and metalwork will be established.
- The five year structural check on all load bearing bridges will be continued and improved, to also identify those structures that have no historic relevance which are redundant and can be removed.
- Working with the rural manager and farm tenants, a maintenance plan for farm steadings will be established which guides annual maintenance between the parties and focuses investment.
- An in-house squad of 6 personnel will be maintained.
- The policy for hill roads will be to maintain the existing but presume against extensions or new hill roads.
- A one off sale of some surplus items from the castle collection will enable a more proactive approach to the Blair Castle Estate Ltd maintenance backlog to enable:
 - o Upgrading of remaining roofs at Garryside.
 - o Refurbishment of no 5 Blairuachdar.
 - o Replacement of Banvie, Balanloan and Blairuachdar water supplies.
- Delivery of work through sub-contractors will be developed via:
 - o Developing a long term relationship with an external firm to support planned renovations and spikes in reactive maintenance.
 - o Introducing annual performance reviews with contractors to ensure agreed service levels are maintained.



Castle

- For the purpose of this plan, consider objectives under the works manager to be maintenance and objectives under Jamie Troughton and Jonathan Gotelee to be repairs. Separate to these will be interiors and collection objectives under Sarah Troughton.
- Anticipated repairs will focus on the remaining section of roof from the Drawing Room to the south elevation, over the Atholl Highlander and furniture store rooms.



- A budget will be set aside for interiors and collection. The initial focus will be on replacement of worn carpet and druggets concurrent with a plan to review and improve room presentation with the help of external advice, part funded by sales, as is the extra focus on maintenance listed above under Estate.
- Planned repairs will be clustered annually and procured under a main contract, aiming to develop a long term relationship with a main contractor.
- The periodic maintenance plan surveys will be continued as a priority task for the estate squad, supported by a new photo reference system which numbers all windows, gutters and down-pipes.
- The new policy of annual surveys of external paintwork for cherry picker spot application will be applied.
- Current drawings of external elevations and internal services will be procured.

What 'Good' looks like ... in the Works Department

- Organised To carry out our tasks in an efficient and productive way, communicating expectations effectively.
- Supportive To mutually support fellow team members in all tasks and to assist other departments when required.
- Dedicated To offer the best service, taking into account constraints, stepping up at time of need.
- Constructive Attitude There are no problems only solutions.
- Safe working Adopt, Adapt and Improve.

Property Development

- Develop land that has been zoned for housing under the 2014-18 local authority development plan in partnership with developers and housing associations.
- Engage with Perth and Kinross Council as the next Local Development Plan consultation begins in 2016.
- Be fully engaged with the A9 Dualling Project which will progress from design to compulsory purchase during the period of this plan. The main objectives during this period will be to ensure the estate's long term transport and access requirements are met by the design outcomes, that our professional and consequential costs are fully recovered and that we obtain optimum land values under the CPO process.
- Maintain a watching brief on the Blair Atholl Information Centre Retail Unit site which is fully consented but unviable to build out without significant funding support.



Energy

- Build and commission Tullimet Hydro and Loch Broom Storage.
- Work with Glenhydro to develop Banvie Scheme under lease.
- Thereafter, there is no expectation of further investment in hydro energy for the foreseeable future.
- The main priority for the period of this plan is to learn how to run the four schemes built during the last plan, fine tuning performance based on growing operational experience and data.
- Reacting to long term trend for energy cost inflation, affordability and climate change impacts, the correct approach to improve energy efficiency in our housing stock will be established, recognising limitations presented by listed building regulations, vernacular construction and affordable rental income.



Appendix A:

Atholl Estates Code of Practice 2015-2018

Working together

- Demonstrate an effective model of an integrated approach to rural estate management.
- Play a full and active part in any collaborations whether with local interest groups, government or non-government agencies.

Working with our commercial and farming tenants

- Be open and transparent in our dealings and regard the landlord/tenant relationship as a business partnership.
- Recognise landlord responsibilities and carry them out in a timely manner.

Working with our housing tenants

- Give priority under our allocations system to applicants who are locally employed.
- Maintain rents at levels that are locally affordable.
- Ensure all arrangements are in plain English and that we are easily accessible and accountable to our tenants.
- Recognise landlord responsibilities and carry them out in a timely manner.

Working for the environment

- Exercise good environmental stewardship.
- Recognise the value of natural and built heritage, sustainable development and show commitment to working with others to enhance these.

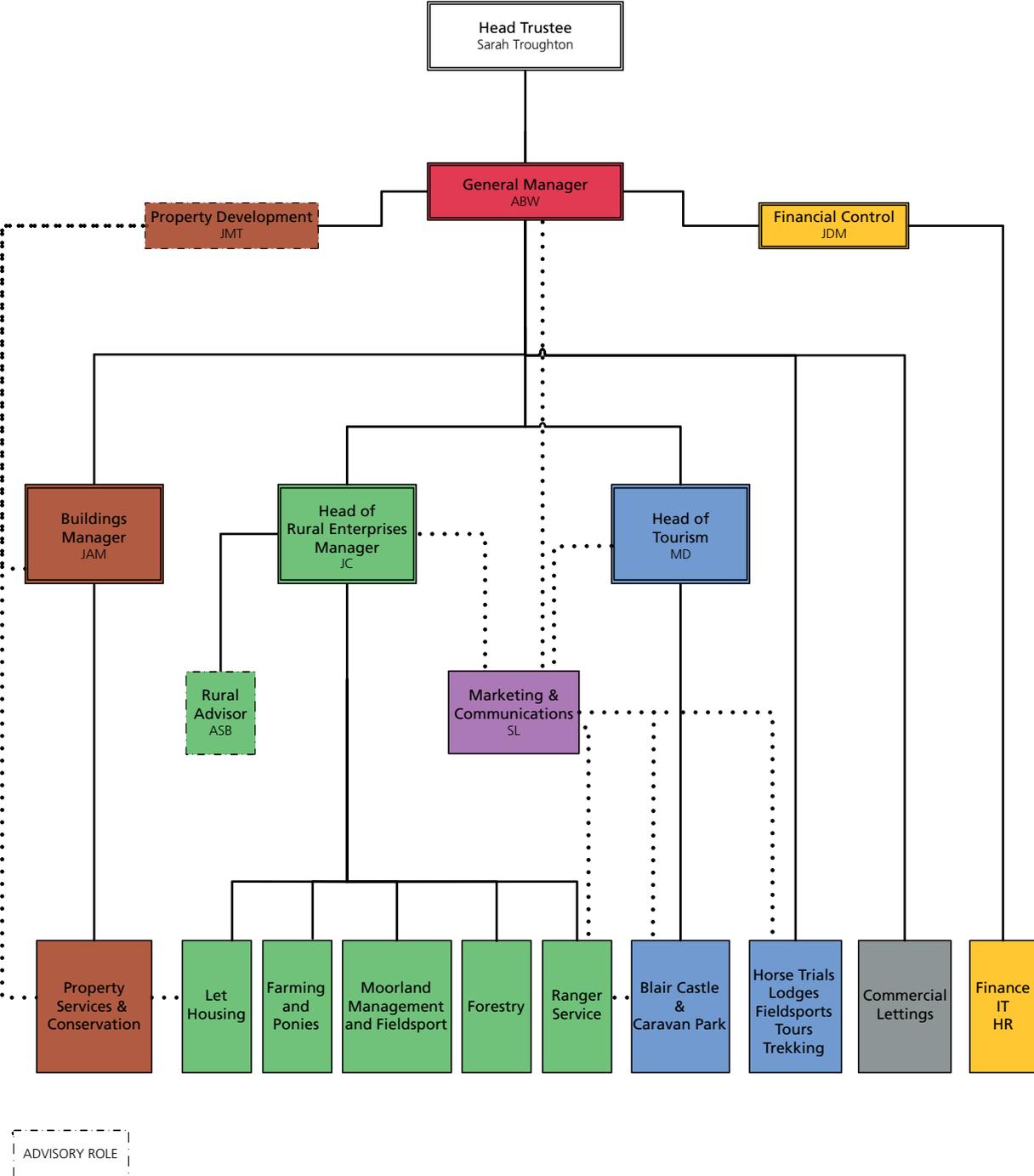
Working with our staff

- Acknowledge the immense value of staff and promote employee development, support and long-term benefits.
- Ensure clear lines of communication within our staffing structure to maintain clarity in roles and objectives while encouraging feedback and staff input to the direction of our business.
- Recognise exceptional personal and group achievement and performance.

Working with the community

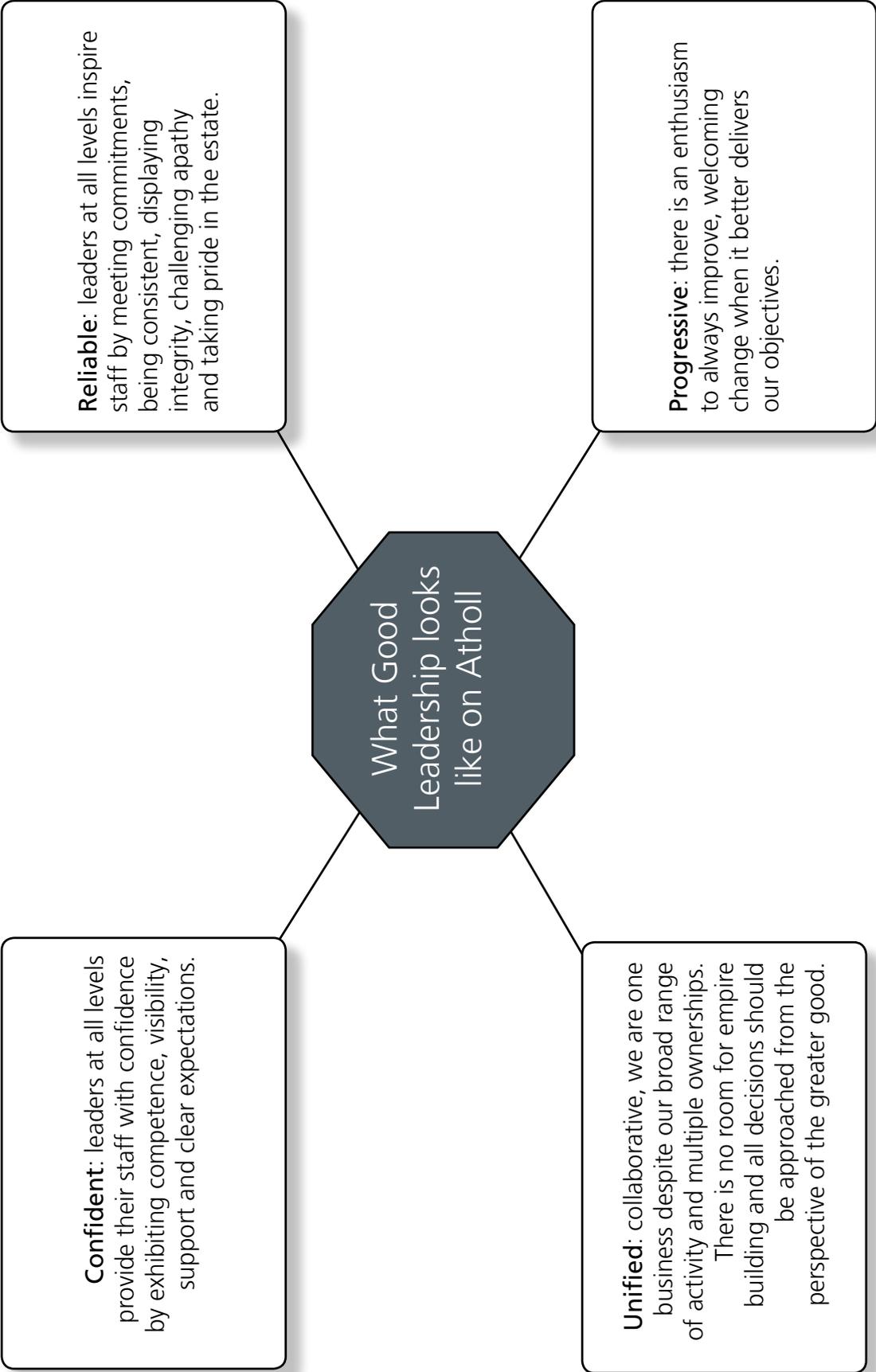
- Maintain clearly identifiable and accessible local representation.
- Play our part in and support local development initiatives.
- Be committed to informing and, where appropriate, consulting with communities in relation to land use decisions.
- Support local jobs when possible.

Appendix B: Atholl Estates Management Structure Diagram



Atholl Estates Organisational Structure

Appendix C:



Appendix D:

Atholl Estates Communication Policy 2015-18

Atholl Estates aims to communicate openly with our staff, local community and the wider public both to inform and receive feedback about the work that we do.

We aim to achieve this through informal daily interaction but also through a number of managed actions.

General	Purpose	When
Publication of a bi-annual newsletter	Distribute information on estate news	Winter & Summer
Website (www.atholl-estates.co.uk)	Becoming our primary 'shop window' for customers and the general public	Ongoing
Open Day held every other spring	Mainly for primary school audience but open to the general public	Spring 2016 & 2018
Ranger Service events and Information Centre	Recreational access support	Ongoing
e-Newsletter	Distribution of visitor services news to customers in our database	Monthly
Social media	Provides an update of what's happening around the estate.	Daily

External	Purpose	When
Attendance at local community meetings	Maintain links with local representatives and support local initiatives	Ongoing
Involvement with Local Authority policy forums	Ensure the best interests of the estate and the local area are being taken into account at regional government level.	Ongoing
Personal and informal interaction with local and regional representatives	Promotion of good relations and open communication.	Ongoing
Estate visits for Local Authority and Scottish Parliament representatives	Exchange of ideas and opinions, development of better mutual understanding.	Ongoing
Publication of events and news in regional/local media	Delivery of information about changes or news items to the general public to benefit public relations and promote the business.	Ongoing

Internal	Purpose	When
Staff bulletins	Distribution of up to the minute information and news to staff	Monthly
Management meetings	To discuss and present relevant issues that can then be cascaded through departments	Quarterly
Department team meetings held at least 4 times each year and attended by senior management	To allow a two way information exchange between management and employees on issues relating to their operations	Various
Provision and annual updating of individual staff induction packs	General information on estate business and operations	April
Annual individual staff development reviews with 6 month reviews where necessary	Opportunity for every member of staff to discuss their role, objectives and development with their line manager at least once each year.	January to March
Estate visits	Opportunity for operating groups to show colleagues what they do and their contribution to the business	September to June
Memorandums	Statements of policy and important news for placing on the record	Ongoing