

## **Minutes of the Board Meeting on 28 January 2021**

### **Present**

Flora Macleod (Chair), Innes Harrison (Secretary), Fiona Jefferson, Ranald Fraser, Domhnall Macdonald, Sarah Fraser (Projects Manager), Euan MacLeod (Development Manager)

### **Welcome**

Flora welcomed all to the first meeting of 2021.

### **Approval of December Minutes**

The minutes were approved after being sent out by email at the start of January.

### **Updates and Proposals**

#### **AGM 2021 Process Proposal (Euan)**

The AGM is normally held around the end of March as the year being reviewed is the previous calendar year, in line with our Jan – Dec financial year. The 2020 AGM, discussing the group's activities over 2019, was postponed due to the lockdown, eventually taking place virtually in October 2020 once it became clear that no physical meeting would be possible.

I propose the AGM is planned, as normal, for the end of March, in the hope that we can hold a physical meeting. If it's not possible to hold the meeting at Raebhat House, we can run a virtual meeting.

Regardless on the decision on when to hold the AGM, I'll begin to prepare the Annual Report with guidance from Flora. The first draft will then be shared with all directors for review.

Everyone agreed to holding the AGM around the end of March, with a provisional date of Thursday 25 March. The preference is to hold a physical meeting but, if that's not

possible, a virtual meeting will be held instead. A decision will be made at the February Board Meeting as to how to hold the meeting. Euan will prepare a draft Annual Report, in time for the Feb meeting. A mini-newsletter will be sent out along with the Annual Report.

### **Insurance Claim Update (Euan)**

We're in regular contact with the loss adjusters/insurance providers, who are very good to deal with. The first part of the claim should arrive by the end of March, which will help us to pass the bank loan covenant test in Spring.

Enercon have failed to provide us with a date for the repair of the turbine Comms panel. We have been promised a date by today (Mon 25 Jan). The loss adjusters are able to prepare a model for the insurance claim without the Comms SCADA data, though this isn't the preferred approach. If Enercon haven't repaired the Comms soon, by the end of Jan, then we will have to develop the alternative insurance claim model.

*The Board were disappointed at the poor service provided by Enercon.*

### **Turbine & Subsea Cable (Euan)**

SSE have given August 2021 as the date for the sub-sea cable repair. Fortnightly meetings with SSE continue as a way of providing the community generators with updates. CES take the lead, in representing the community groups during the meetings. CES Manager Jamie Adam has been great in holding SSE to the timescales given in previous meetings, and generally representing the interests of the communities.

SSE are looking to increase the generation of the turbines to up to 10% of the total energy demand. As the electricity is staying on the island, rather than being transported to the mainland grid, SSE will pay the community generators a set fee per MW/h generated. Nothing yet has been confirmed, SSE have been slow in setting up the process, but they have all the info required from the groups and we should get confirmation soon.

SSE want to be able to remotely control all the turbines, so that turbine generation can be quickly curtailed or increased. We've supplied all the requested info. It's possible that an upgrade to the turbine communication panel will be needed. CPOH have assumed that any costs incurred will be met by SSE. I'll update when I hear more on this.

### **Community Consultation 2020 (Euan)**

The exercise is now complete, with all responses collated in the attached excel file. The 20 household responses are anonymous, you can see each answer by clicking into the relevant box. I've produced a short report on the responses, which you can find attached to my email. My aim was to keep the report objective and list the number of instances a particular comment, or type of comment, was mentioned.

I think we did well in difficult circumstances to get 20 household responses – 15-20% response rate. It's important to state that the very general nature of the 2020 Consultation – where we sought opinions on the charitable objectives that guide HCD – makes it more difficult as a consultation exercise. However, the wide-ranging and in-depth responses are of immense value and will guide the organisation's future, as well as being the basis of future funding applications for big projects.

It's also important to recognise the context of the 2020 Consultation, in that we also ran numerous specific consultations, e.g Shop and Drop, Gaelic Plan, Blasta Meals. The scale of the positive feedback from service users, and the community in general, as recorded in thank you cards, service questionnaires, social media comments, etc, is incredible. All in all, I'm really pleased with the consultation work done in 2020, and feel this gives a good grounding for future work.

*There was a problem with the Consultation source file, with all responses record. Euan will send this around again after checking the formatting.*

*Flora asked if any issues stood out from the Consultation responses. Euan mentioned that the responses were mainly very positive, particularly about the Covid services. The questions were based on the 9 HCD charitable objects. One interesting set of responses came from the charitabl object relating to Housing, where there was a*

*roughly even split of respondents who strongly supported HCD taking an active role in developing housing, and those who felt this wasn't the role of the Trust. There was also broad support for job creation and environmental work and supporting the Green Economy/Recovery.*

### **External Funding (Euan)**

We received good news that our application to **CNES Crown Estate** was approved. The fund has awarded £9k for the recruitment of a Tree Nursery person – i.e. an assistant to develop the Tree Ark facility. The role will be part-time, 16hrs per week over 3 or 4 days, depending on the successful candidate's availability.

I'd like to advertise at the start of February, aiming to recruit by mid-Feb. The role will be a great help in establishing the upgraded Tree Ark facility in 2021. Achieving tree nursery accreditation, increasing income generated by the facility to £10,000, and producing 10k new trees in 2021 are the main objectives for the Tree Ark. The project application, with all relevant details on the project can be sent to anyone that is interested.

After the disappointment of all our requests for funding being rejected by the **Emergency Support Fund** (run by CNES), I've gone back to CNES with an appeal to review their decision. The basic argument here being that the rural communities have lost out massively due to CNES precluding the 'generators' from applying to the fund. The second point is that Horsham isn't a generator and therefore shouldn't be deemed ineligible – the generator is Risort Power Group.

The application to the **Islands Green Recovery Fund** has become confusing. Our application was for £49k in order to buy an electric van, and have a charge point installed at Raebhat. We received an email in January stating the application had been successful, and that £4,950 would be paid into the HCD bank account. After responding to the email seeking clarification, our contact at IGRF replied saying there had been a mix-up at their end and that they would be in touch to discuss things, asking if we could make use of the award, despite it being lower than anticipated. I'm hopeful that we will be able to repurpose the funds so that we can run an effective

project, however this depends on how strictly the funders want to stick to the original application plan.

We were successful in applying for £4k to distribute as part of the **STV/Scot. Gov's Winter Grants** for families. Grants of £100 will be awarded to eligible families, to help them meet food/travel/heating costs over winter.

I've applied to the **Bòrd na Gàidhlig Taic Freumhan** Coimhearsnachd fund, aiming to get funds to develop a map of the Horshader area. Lauren Matheson collected 250+ placenames of the area during her Gaelic student placement in 2020, this would form the starting point for the map project.

I'm also preparing applications to **Robertson Trust Community Vehicles** fund (for a new van), and **Foundation Scotland's Resilience Fund** (to continue the lunch club/ready meals service into 2021).

*Flora asked if the Crown Estate funded post was fully funded. Euan said that the project had been awarded only part of the funding sought in the original application. As such, the project will be adapted slightly – reducing the hours of work to part-time – and will not require HCD funds.*

### **Gaelic Plan (Euan)**

A version of the Gaelic Plan is attached to my email. It's based on the themes and actions approved at the December board meeting. The plan file will be printed A3 and made visible at Raebhat. English and Gaelic versions will be made available online, once the approved plan has gone out to the community in the next newsletter.

*Domhnall commended the Gaelic Plan. The plan will be published for the community in the next newsletter, and will then guide the Gaelic development work of HCD. A review will take place in November 2021, providing an opportunity to assess the impact of the plan, and make changes where required.*

### **Staff Update (Euan)**

All quarterly 1to1 meetings have been carried out, with objectives being set for the Jan-Mar quarter.

## **Shop & Drop (Sarah)**

The 'Shop & Drop' project has now come to a conclusion, after being of service to over 60 homes from Arnol – Dalbeg during the past 9 months. A total of 45 homes in Shawbost & Dalbeg, and 20 in Arnol & Bragar have benefited from the project.

Over the lifetime of the project almost £6000 was raised in donations which is fantastic and it meant that we could continue the project for a further month after the HIE funding was depleted. £1500 remains in the donations pot and will go towards any costs incurred in setting up the next phase of the project.

Plans are afoot to provide an adaptation of the service which aims to still deliver groceries to those in need, but at the full control and cost to the user rather than a standard shop and a suggested donation amount from us. T&C's of the service will state that no alcohol or cigarettes can be included in the shop.

The idea will be that community members call or email their shopping list in to Horshader at least 24 hours prior to the 'town run day' then a mixture of staff and volunteers will carry out the service.

We are still working on the finer details for example; how we will handle the payments and the criteria required to access the service. This will be agreed in the coming weeks and I hope to launch the project mid-end February. Detailed records will be held in order to gauge the demand for the continued service and an initial time frame of 3 months will be allocated and a review will be carried out thereafter.

A mention must go to our kind volunteers for donating their valuable time to help make this project run – thank you!

*The Board praised Sarah's work on the Shop and Drop since May 2020. The service made a massive difference in the community and the feedback from residents was fantastic, all positive. A replacement service will be established to ensure that Shop and Drop users, and other vulnerable residents, are supported as the lockdown continues. Sarah is looking into the best approach, with a delivery service being the*

*preferred method. Residents could order shopping, which would be collected from town by HCD staff, before being delivered. This method would be cost-effective, an important factor considering there is no funding to continue the Shop and Drop service in the same format.*

### **Shop & Drop Community Consultation (Sarah)**

A short questionnaire was sent out to users of the service and the responses are attached. This questionnaire was a basic feedback form, in order to gain public opinion on the service up until now and gain insight from community members as to whether or not they would like to see a similar service continue.

Although the feedback implies a physical local shop would be the preferred choice going forward – this requires a much larger scale project. For the moment an interim service for essentials is sufficient. With a view to gathering information and data to put forward a case for a local shop.

*The feedback was all positive. More than just being effective in developing appropriate and effective services, the Shop and Drop consultation, along with others carried out during 2020, will be essential to HCD when planning future projects and writing funding applications.*

### **Mobile Masts – Dalmore/Dalbeg (Sarah)**

I am keeping abreast of developments in the SRN programme which is being initiated this year.

The three main mobile phone providers (BT, EE and O2) have been funded by the government to maximise rural network coverage across the UK. They say they will build 222 new masts during the project.

After discussions with Donnie Morrison, Angus Macniel and EE it seems that the project is being consulted to the council and there are areas already ear-marked for the upgrades – see email below;

*“Hi Sarah and a Happy New Year to you as well*

*It was somewhat of a non event in that they aren't able to share details with us yet so just an overview. They are still waiting on State Aid approval and they also seem to not want to share much until they go out to tender. We (HIE) have a similar meeting with them on Friday.*

*I have mentioned to them that we have areas like your own which we would want to feed in but it's just too early. They seem to be working to a pre-agreed list of sites which have been agreed with Ofcom and the industry but we don't know where they are.*

*Regards*

*Donnie"*

This programme would greatly benefit the Horshader area – it may be useful to carry out a survey to gather the community voice to help push the issue.

### **Shawbost Old Church (Sarah)**

Not a great deal to update here, just that a consultation will be carried out with the Horshader community to gauge interest, and whether or not folk wish to see HCDDT take ownership of the building with a view to upgrading and subsequently what they would like to see the building be used for.

*Innes felt that a Business Plan for the site should be developed before a decision is made on acquiring the Old Church. Domhnall suggested that a Business Plan could be developed over time. The Board agreed with Sarah's suggestion of asking UDS to arrange an up-to-date building survey.*

*Sarah is planning a consultation around the site but will hold off so that the community isn't overloaded with the various recent consultations. Euan said that Donna Smith (Tighean Innse Gall) would have relevant project files, including consultations with the community regarding the Old Church. Euan recommended discussing the site with Donna. Domhnall thought that David Macleay, Senior Manager in Economic Development at CNES, would have a good idea of the development of the UDS project, and would likely offer good advice.*

### **Tree Ark - UKISG Accreditation (Sarah)**



As part of the Tree Ark Project, it is important that we gain UKISG (United Kingdom Sourced and Grown) accreditation in order to sell trees to the Woodland Trust amongst other groups. The stamp of approval is to show we take every precaution to reduce and eradicate the possibility of incoming pathogens and disease we must ensure the Tree Ark is managed in a certain way and processes put in place to show good practice in what we do. The initial audit is to be done remotely and we hope to have this by the Summer.

I am assisting Chris in the implementation of the processes as one of my objectives for the first quarter of 2021. There is a bit of work to be done to bring us up to standard, but the Woodland Trust has advised as it is our first audit, we will not be prosecuted too badly for any issues arising – they will advise and assist us to ensure we are on track.

#### **Funding applications:**

The application by the Norse Mill Committee was approved. The funds were requested to cover the loss of regular income over 2020/21 (e.g. donations by visitors).

Two bursary applications were approved. Both applicants will receive £2000.

#### **Actions from the last meeting**

The Board were satisfied that the actions had been progressed where possible.

#### **Membership applications**

There were no membership applications to review.