

Minutes of the Horshader Community Development Trust AGM Tuesday 6 October 2020

Present:

From the HCDT Board

Flora Macleod (Chair); Mairi Maclean; Alisdair Wiseman; Ranald Fraser.

From HCDT Staff

Jordan Morrison (Admin Officer); Sarah Fraser (Projects Manager); Euan MacLeod (Development Manager).

HCDT Members

Donald Macleod; Andrew Macleod; Innes Macleod; Roddy Murray; Careen Murray; Iain Macarthur; Cathie Macdonald; Christina Mackay; Carole Miller; Colin Miller; Kathleen Murray; Angela Macleod; Ian Mackay.

HCDT Associate Members

Richard Greenslade

Non-Members

Domhnall Macdonald;

Apologies: Lindsay Bradley; Mark Bradley; Chrissie Macdonald; Gareth Watson; Di Hesketh; Dolanna Macleannan; Sheena Macleod; Derick Macleod; Fiona Knape;

Venue: Due to the COVID-19 social restrictions the AGM was held virtually using Microsoft Teams.

Opening Remarks from the Chair

Flora welcomed everyone to the meeting and acknowledged the unusual way the meeting was taking place virtually. The original date for the AGM was in Spring and the meeting had been postponed a number of times with the intention of waiting till a physical meeting could take place. When it became clear this may not be possible the decision was taken, somewhat reluctantly, to hold the meeting online using a video conference.

Flora spoke about some of the projects and services that have been run since the previous AGM. Blasta, Shop and Drop. She congratulated the staff for their work during Covid. Also, thanks to the many volunteers helping deliver the services.

Virtual Meeting Etiquette

Flora explained the method for voting, and that the meeting will be recorded for the purposes of the minutes. No one had an issue with the meeting being recorded.

Minutes of 2019 AGM

Sent out with the notice of the AGM, initially in March, with a further copy being sent out in August. Flora asked if there were any matters arising from the minutes. There were no matters arising.

Presentation and Adoption of Annual Report 2020

The 2020 Annual Report – covering activities across 2019 – was sent to all members in March and in August. The Report featured successful Trust projects and services delivered, with details of HCD Community Fund grant awards and short reports from the recipient groups. No comments or concerns were raised regarding the report. The adoption of the Annual Report was proposed by Alisdair Wiseman and seconded by Mary Maclean.

Appointment of Auditors

The auditors for 2019 were CIB Services. Flora praised CIB for providing an excellent service and proposed they are re-appointed as auditors until the next AGM. The proposal was seconded by Alisdair Wiseman. CIB Services were appointed as auditors for the Trust.

The Trust's Finances

Euan gave a presentation of the 2019 financial situation – with all figures relating to the period 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2019. Before starting Euan thanked all the directors for their outstanding contribution and continued support. Thanks also went to the staff and to the community for their encouragement and voluntary support.

Before looking at the figures, a brief summary of the Trust's activities was given. In 2019 Horshader:

- continued to operate and manage the community owned wind turbine through its subsidiary, Risort Power Generation Ltd;
- provided grants and goodwill donations to groups through the charity's community fund
- provided student bursary grants through the community fund;
- continued to support the relief of food and fuel poverty
- removed scrap vehicles and machinery from the community;
- refurbished the community space to provide a venue for community activities;
- launched a community events and activities programme, which provided increased opportunities for recreation and education;
- accessed external funding to continue existing services, and for new projects

The total funds (at 31 December 2019) were £1,004,446 – the figure includes unrestricted funds of £442,577, a decrease of 69k from the same time the previous year, and restricted funds of £436,556 - an increase of £8,304 from the previous year. Unrestricted funds are monies generated by the Trust that are used to meet the charitable objects, cover overheads and the HCD Community Fund. Restricted funds generally represent where funds have been spent and are mostly assets rather than liquid funds.

The RPG Turbine payments are the primary income source of the Trust. Additional income is raised as part of our community development activities - allotment rental, loom rentals, room rentals.

As for restricted income, during 2019 the Trust received project funding of 49k from the Scottish Govt to run the Support and Connect project (the project that runs the mini-bus, and grass-cutting services). 4k was also granted by the charity Food Train, as part of their Eat Well Age Well fund - the funds were used to establish the Blasta Lunch Club - which has been run as a ready meal delivery service since the lockdown began.

Turning to expenditure, firstly the unrestricted. The Community development figure of 181k is made up of overheads - running the Trust office, along with the community growing facilities - but the majority of this item of expenditure was used to employ a number of full-time and part-time staff – across 2019 the Trust has employed been between 5 and 8 FTE positions.

The second item - 129k of expenditure on the Community Space Refurb project, which came about based on the need for additional social spaces, as expressed in the community consultations held in 2018. In the 9 months from June 2016 to the beginning of the lockdown, a fantastic programme of social events, night classes, music lessons, 2 art exhibitions, a number of educational talks, and many coffee mornings, were held in the refurbished facility.

£52k was given out as grants, as part of the Horshader Community Fund. The grants provided funding for projects that brought benefit to the community such as a grant for the local Free Church of Scotland, and the Acair published book celebrating the work of westside artist Donald Smith ('Domhnall Safety'). The figure also includes just over £11k which was used for bursary awards to cover education and training costs.

The expenditure of restricted funds is the project costs of Support and Connect - which employs 2 FTE positions, and also, the Blasta Lunch club expenditure up to the end of 2019.

The Trust is extremely fortunate in that it is able to depend on gift aid payments from its subsidiary, Risort Power Generation Limited - the group which runs the turbine. These payments are, of course, entirely dependent on the amount of power generated each year but are substantial and enable the Trust to finance community projects that might not attract external funding.

Aside from the turbine income coming from RPG, the main source of income was provided by external funding. On starting in post in June 2019, the directors asked the team to focus on bringing in external funding, and I'm pleased to say in the total external funding brought in up to this point in 2020 will be reflected positively in the finances for 2020.

No questions were raised at this point.

An Insight into the Trust's Plans for 2021

Alisdair Wiseman gave a presentation on the phased plan covering the final quarter of 2020. Alisdair thanked the community for their support, the staff for their hard work, and to his fellow directors who had made his 2.5 years at the Trust a privilege.

Alisdair acknowledged the unusual nature of presenting the plan for the rest of the year in October, however this was due to the unusual events of 2019. Alisdair listed the projects that make up the phased plan:

An in-depth Community Consultation will be held to inform the Trust while planning projects for 2021. The aim is to engage with all members of the community. Feedback will be collated and will be used to update the Trust Development Plan.

The Beach Access and Facilities Consultation has been completed and the feedback will be used to plan a project that will improve the 3 beaches.

The Tree Ark Upgrade is also almost complete – Alisdair indicated that a presentation on the project would be given later in the meeting.

The Grinnivat Polycrub Investigation aims to implement standards that will make the site more user friendly and will open up more growing spaces for the community.

On the Horshader Woodland project, Alisdair indicated that a presentation on the project would be given later in the meeting.

The Gaelic Plan is currently being developed by the staff, this is in line with the charitable objects which aim to protect the local language and culture.

The original Westside Art Show was a super idea, but the social restrictions meant the exhibition was held virtually from around April. The physical exhibition will take place when it's possible to do so.

Covid Services will continue to run to the end of 2020, at which point there will be a review. Sarah will talk more about the continuation of the services about this later in the meeting.

The Development of a Covid Grant scheme is underway, aiming to aid the community in unprecedented times.

A project – Best Practice Financial Management - reviewing the Trust's Financial Management is also taking place. Alisdair stated the board had worked diligently to manage the finances in the best way possible, while acknowledging that this was not an area of expertise of any of the directors. Improvements had been made, for example the distribution of Trust funds across a number of bank accounts to ensure there would be no risk of losing funds in the event of a bank collapse. The current project aims to suitably update the budgets and to develop a deeper understanding of the financial management within the organisation.

The Dalmore/Dalbeg Mobile Mast project was devised due to the areas lacking mobile reception, which could pose a danger to residents and visitors alike.

The final project is an Update of the Trust Development Plan. The Development Plan includes projects of different sizes that the Trust looks to carry out over a 3-5-year period. The Update will provide an opportunity to review progress and identify new projects to add to the plan.

No questions or comments were made by attendees regarding the projects.

Proposal to Adopt a New Bye-Law Relating to Directors' Benefits

Alisdair presented the proposal to adopt a new bye-law. The proposed bye-law was sent to all members prior to the AGM. The proposal in full was:

A Director may receive a benefit from the Trust where this benefit is one that is equally available to any other Member of the Trust and where no bias is involved in the decision to confer this benefit. Should a Director stand to be a beneficiary of an individual award, they must admit to a conflict of interest and refrain from participating in any related discussions or decisions, in line with the provisions of '5.05 Director conduct'. Should all Directors stand to be beneficiaries of an award to all Members, they (the Directors) should bear in mind the various provisions of the Governing Document and ensure compliance when making decisions.

Attendees were given an opportunity to study the proposal. Alisdair gave some background on the proposal, stating that the section in the Governing Document which prohibits any director –or their family – from receiving any benefit from the Trust's activities has made the recruitment of directors more challenging. Taken to the letter of the law, the rule would preclude any director from receiving benefits available to the whole community, which was not the intention of the rule. The proposal would allow directors to receive benefits that are available to all members of the community – though decision-making processes and conflict of interest procedures would, of course, be maintained.

There were no comments regarding the proposal.

Voting took place using the Microsoft Teams *Conversation* chat box and, for attendees who did not have access to this facility (due to using their mobile phone to access the meeting) were able to vote orally, or by selecting the 'raised hand' feature. It was acknowledged that this voting system was far from perfect, but it was deemed the best way for the virtual meeting.

Votes for the Proposal:

In favor of the proposal: Mary Maclean; Ian Mackay; Joan Mackay; Donald Macleod; Alisdair Wiseman; Lesley Wiseman; Di Hesketh; Gareth Watson; Iain Macarthur; Andrew Macleod; Flora Macleod; Roddy Murray; Careen Murray; Fiona Jefferson; Angela Macleod.

Votes against the Proposal: 0

The proposed Bye-Law will be adopted in due course.

Election of Directors

Flora led the appointment of Directors. Mary Maclean and Alisdair Wiseman resigned from their post as directors and did not stand for re-election. Flora thanked both outgoing directors. Flora and Ranald Fraser also resigned, as necessary, however both were happy to be considered for re-election.

Angela Macleod asked if those standing for election could tell the attendees a bit about themselves. Euan wasn't aware of this being part of the plan but thought it was a good idea. Alisdair agreed with Angela's point, though said that the Trust had had difficulty in attracting and retaining directors and that the proposed new directors all met the bill as far as the outgoing board were concerned. Alisdair suggested the appointed directors prepare a bio shortly after the AGM. Iain asked if some kind of introduction could be made for each of the proposed directors. Euan provided a bit of information on each proposed director, with information on their work experience and other skills which would be valuable to the Trust. More information will be available directly from each director in the newsletter to follow the AGM.

A vote was held to appoint Flora Macleod as a director.

Votes in favour of the appointment: Ian Mackay; Alisdair Wiseman; Donald Macleod; Lesley Wiseman; Di Hesketh; Gareth Watson; Mary Maclean; Ranald Fraser; Fiona Jefferson.

Votes against the appointment:

Flora proposed Ranald Fraser as a director, Ian Mackay seconded the proposal. A vote was held to appoint Ranald Fraser as a Director.

Votes in favour of the appointment: Alisdair Wiseman; Ian Mackay; Lesley Wiseman; Gareth Watson; Mary Maclean; Donald Macleod; Andrew Macleod; Flora Macleod; Roddy Murray; Careen Murray.

Votes against the appointment:

Donald Macleod proposed Innes Harrison as a director, Mary Maclean seconded the proposal. A vote was held to appoint Innes Harrison as a Director.

Votes in favour of the appointment: Mary Maclean; Ian Mackay; Donald Macleod; Andrew Macleod; Flora Macleod; Alisdair Wiseman; Lesley Wiseman; Roddy Murray; Careen Murray; Ranald Fraser; Gareth Watson.

Votes against the appointment:

Flora proposed Fiona Jefferson as a director, this was seconded by Lesley Wiseman. A vote was held to appoint Fiona Jefferson as a Director.

Votes in favour of the appointment: Mary Maclean; Donald Macleod; Alisdair Wiseman; Andrew Macleod; Lesley Wiseman; Di Hesketh; Gareth Watson; Roddy Murray; Careen Murray.

Votes against the appointment:

There were no further proposals for directorship.

Iain asked what the minimum number of directors was. Flora stated the minimum was 4.

Recital – Carole Miller and Jennifer Speirs

There was an interval featuring a recording of Tàladh nan Eilean by Carole Miller (Clàrsach) and Jennifer Speirs (Voice), which the two members had kindly prepared for the AGM. Euan thanked Carole and Jennifer for their thoughtful contribution which will be archived by HCDDT.

Other Business:

Our New Projects Manager: Sarah Fraser

Sarah greeted the attendees and welcomed the new directors. Sarah thanked the outgoing directors for their contribution. Sarah spoke about her working background prior to joining the Trust in April 2020, emphasising the far from ideal time she took up the post – a week after the national lockdown began. Despite the changes to work that everyone faced throughout 2020, Sarah enjoyed working out new ways to engage the community and get to know colleagues in her first few weeks in the role. Sarah spoke of her approach to the role being guided by her passion for Green Energy and global efforts to counter climate change.

Sarah's approach to project management is to work with a hands-on, flexible attitude, keeping projects in line with Trust objectives, from inception to completion. Projects should create employment, be future-proof, and sustainable. Being a manager involves being involved in the project work directly and leading by example. Sarah will prioritise projects that celebrate that preserve and celebrate the islands' history and culture, and it's future in renewable energy.

Sarah spoke of her participation in Community Energy Scotland interactive workshops that are running to January 2021. She is also taking Gaelic lessons and encouraged residents to speak to her in Gaelic if they have any.

Beach Access & Facilities Update

Euan spoke about the consultation work that had started in June 2020 and the next steps. The objective is to improve the 3 beautiful beaches – Dalmore, Dalbeg and Shawbost – in terms of accessibility and facilities.

All responses received before the deadline in early August were viewed and discussed by the directors, with comments being categorised under broader headings - Access, Cleanliness and Upkeep, Existing Infrastructure, New infrastructure, and Safety. Similar comments were tallied up in order to get a better understanding of the priorities for the areas commonly held by residents.

Based on the feedback, action plans were created for each beach. Actions were split into short and medium term. Short term actions are those that had the full support of respondents, more or less, and are in line with our wider aims as a charity. These are easily implemented actions such as: the Trust taking responsibility for arranging a regular beach clean-up; and adding the access points to the areas to the Support and Connect grass-cutting programme. Short term actions will be carried out in the final quarter of 2020 and will continue henceforth.

Medium term actions will also begin in the final quarter of 2020, but until research is carried out, we won't have a definitive timescale. It's important to build an understanding within the organisation of the local environment, the threats and opportunities that may come from local natural sites - this will be part of the medium-term work.

Horshader woodland project update

Alisdair provided an update on the project. No concrete steps, beyond putting a broad proposal together, will be taken before a community consultation is possible. The initial idea was to identify some potential locations, to think about how extensive community participation might be encouraged – e.g. family activities, community planting – as part of the project, which would also likely have educational and employment opportunities.

Extensive research for the project has been carried out already. Alisdair and Mark Bradley visited Scottish Natural Heritage to discuss the idea and suitable environments for planting. A working group of local community members and experts in tree propagation was established at an early stage. The project has received great support from Viv Halcrow of the Woodland Trust.

Research to date indicates that the original vision of a large woodland may not be feasible and that smaller areas, that could ultimately join up to some extent, may be a better option – though nothing is set in stone at this stage. A land survey was carried out by an island consultant, though unfortunately the report suggests that none of the preferred sites are suitable for tree planting.

For the moment, the project has been put on pause until it's possible to present the ideas developed to date in front of the community. The window for planting trees in 2020 has been missed, so thoughts will be pulled together with a view to holding a proper consultation as soon as possible.

Tree ark expansion project update

Sarah described the challenges faced by the project as a result of the lockdown. Shipments of materials were significantly delayed, and contractors had to shut down mid-way through the works. Completed works include the new netted tunnel behind the existing 2 crubs. The completion date was scheduled for the start of October but a few things are still to be completed. An opening event will be arranged when restrictions ease.

Angela Macleod asked what the purpose of the project was.

Euan said the project had been initiated as a result of the demand for native trees. The Woodland Trust have approved many thousands of trees as part of the Woodland Croft Scheme, similar numbers are expected for the next 5 years at least. Aside from purchases by grantees, there has been a great demand from individuals across the islands. Additionally there are social and local benefits that can be gained from planting trees in the community – with evidence for this contained in a Windbreak Report prepared a few years ago by Mark Bradley on behalf of the Trust. Ultimately, the upgrade is with a view to generating income.

Alisdair added that the project will generate employment, and that, if the Horshader Woodland gets going, there will be an additional demand.

Covid-19 services

Sarah talked about the Covid Services provided by HCDDT. These started in March and will run to the end of 2020. The Shop and Drop service has been running since April and has provided over 500 deliveries of food and other essentials to over 60 households – this service is open to the most at-risk in our community. The Blasta Ready Meals service has delivered over 900 meals to residents. Medication deliveries started in March, a daily service for the first 3 months, and now a 3-times-weekly service. The Community Support service was coordinated by HCDDT but led by volunteers who would assist locals with shopping and other tasks. The Virtual Engagement Programme is on-going and has provided a number of online events for residents during the lockdown – James Mackenzie Piping Recital, talks by Medical Herbalist Natasha Lloyd, a concert by Elsa MacTaggart, and more.

The services were largely funded by the HIE administered Scottish Government Covid Response Fund. The funded period ran from 1 May to 21 September. HCDT was the recipient of one of the largest grants in the Western Isles, which allowed us to employ a Covid Coordinator.

A number of the services (Shop and Drop, Blasta Ready Meals and Medication Deliveries) were delivered from Dalmore to Arnol, in partnership with Urras Coimhearsnachd Bhràdhagair agus Àrnoil – this came about due to UCBA having no staff at the start of the lockdown. The services to Arnol and Bragar came to an end at the end of the funded period in September. Blasta Ready Meals was run using funding from Food Train; the project was designed for Over-65s living Dalmore to Arnol. Additional funding was granted by STV Childrens Appeal to extend some of the services.

In the absence of significant funding to run the services, the team has put in a lot of work in budgeting for the remainder of 2020. After generating sufficient income through donations, the services will continue (in the Horshader area only) without using any Trust reserves.

Angela Macleod asked how residents could access the Covid services. Euan explained that there is an application process for the Shop and Drop service – this ensures that applicants are eligible for the service, which is intended for the most at risk in the community, while providing the Trust office with the necessary contact details. Urras Coimhearsnachd Bhràdhagair agus Àrnoil assisted with communication in the Bragar/Arnol area. The medication delivery service is free and open to all. Blasta Ready Meals (not funded with the Scot Gov Covid Response grant) is free and open to over-65s from Dalmore to Arnol, details are posted on social media and the service can be accessed by phoning or emailing the Trust office.

The Community Support service was established with a leafletting campaign at the start of the lockdown, leaflets were delivered at each house in Dalmore, Dalbeg and Shawbost (UCBA elected to run their own community support service and not take part in the HCDT run service. The service provided residents with mobile phone numbers for volunteers in their village that were happy to help with shopping or other tasks.

Any other business from the Members

There was no other business.

Closing Remarks

Flora thanked everyone for attending the meeting.