

Board Meeting on 29 July 2021

Present

Flora Macleod (Chair), Innes Harrison, Domhnall MacDonald, Euan MacLeod (Development Manager), Sarah Fraser (Projects Manager)

Apologies

Fiona Jefferson

Welcome

Flora welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Approval of Previous Meeting Minutes

The Directors reviewed the June meeting minutes. The minutes for the June, and May, board meetings were approved.

Issues from the updates

Draft Accounts and AGM Prep

We plan to hold the meeting with Calum Macdonald CIB Services directly before the board meeting. In preparation of the AGM we must review and approve the final text for several sections of the 2020 Accounts. The sections are: Related Parties (p3); Audit report (p6-9); and Going concern (p12). I've drafted text for the sections, building on the text Calum had written as a starting point. I'll send round my text prior to the Finance meeting on Thursday.

The meeting with Calum Macdonald was held immediately prior to the July Board Meeting. Calum went over the accounts, explaining each section in detail and answering our questions. Some text in the sections of the accounts on Going Concern and Related Parties must be redrafted.

Turbine & Subsea Cable Failure Update (Euan)

There has been little change since the June Update.

Regarding the insurance claim, Jordan sends the requested data to Bakertilly monthly.

Cable repair is on track according to SSE. Due August 2021.

We've been informed by SSE of a further 12-day outage planned for September. This will allow SSE to carry out some repair work – replacing parts of two overhead lines between Skye and Fort Augustus. This is clearly unwelcome, as we will have only been generating at full capacity for 2 weeks before going offline again. Community Energy Scotland spoke out on behalf of the island generators, asking SSE to postpone the work till Summer 2021, by which point there may be a local storage battery, or other solution, in operation.

We continue to receive payment per month for the electricity generated in the local grid. Although we have only had payments for March and April through to date, our invoices to SSE are as follows:

March – £3,638.12 (Paid)

April – £4,863.88 (Paid)

May – £5,309.23 (Approved, awaiting payment)

June – £5,507.17 (Waiting for PO to be raised by SSE)

Total - £19,318.40

Power Purchase Agreement (Euan)

No change from June Update. We are waiting for the funds to be paid out by COOP bank. I've arranged to speak with Gillian Berry (Coop Bank - Relationship Manager) on Thursday so should have a further update for the meeting.

Gillian Berry updated us on the bank account and funds controlled by Coop Bank. At the end of March 2021, there was £376k in the account. £100k will be transferred to the Equity Cure account, this account will be drawn from if the turbine income is not enough to meet the twice-yearly loan repayments. RPG operational costs will then be deducted. £150k will be transferred to HCD as RPG gift aid payments, which is higher than our projection for 2021.

HR Audit Update (Euan)

I had the initial meeting with Phoenix Group Life HR staff in early July. We had a good discussion about the process and the benefits of conducting the audit. They requested various documents: staff structure + staff roles, 2021 Draft Development Plan, Governing Document. A follow up meeting was arranged for Tuesday 27th, however this week our contact at Phoenix got in touch asking to reschedule the meeting till the first week in August.

Development Plan Meeting 29 June Update (Euan)

The meeting provided an opportunity for the Directors to discuss the 2020 Development Plan file. We reviewed the objectives set out in the 2020 DP along with the listed key actions/projects. The majority of the 2020 actions had been completed, while it was acknowledged that some had been supplanted by other priorities that had arisen due to the Covid Lockdown and the sub-sea cable failure.

The 2020 DP was a good starting point for an updated plan. A new section on 'Projects/Activities' was added to the file, to which on-going projects like Support and Connect, and BAU activities like the Growing Site Allotments, were added to give a clearer picture of the Trust's work towards the DP aims.

The draft 2021 Development Plan was sent round by email after the meeting. New and Updated projects are grouped according to estimated timescale.

New Projects:

Short-term projects: Multi-purpose Community Hub (Research Stage), Housing Development (Research Stage), HR Audit, Research New Community Grant Schemes, Community Tree Planting Scheme*, Horshader Forest Feasibility Study*, HCDT Decarbonisation Study*, IT Workshops*, HCDT Staff Training Programme*, Community Energy Network Events*, Village Clean-up (Scrap, Machinery), Community Farmers Market at Raebhat House, Full Business Plan for Tree Ark, Horshader Map Project.

(Projects marked * are subject to external funding)

Medium-term projects:

Development of Outdoor Sites (e.g. Loch a' Bhaile)

Long-term projects:

Replacing the 900KW Turbine

With the news of Sarah's resignation, it was acknowledged that the remaining staff are not in a position to deliver all of the DP projects. We will meet to review the DP and discuss the best way forward.

External Funding Update (Euan)

I submitted 2 applications this month. First to Islands Green Recovery Fund looking for funds to purchase a new electric van. This is a big ask of £55k from the fund, by way of comparison we received only £4,950 for our project last year. Keeping fingers crossed.

I've already heard that the second application was unsuccessful. I applied for funding of £8k from the 2nd round of the most recent HIE Covid Recovery. My application was based on the fund's outcomes of strengthened partnerships between small local organisations and 'anchor groups'. This round of funding had only £80k available for the whole of the Western Isles.

We are waiting for a decision on the bid as part of the CNES application to UK Community Renewal Fund. I've been preparing for the project going live so that we can hit the ground running if successful.

In some welcome news, ICF – funders of the Support and Connect project – recently let us know that the current fund (originally in place till March 2022) will be extended by 12 months. We've been asked to submit a short application detailing that our project can continue till March 2023. Jordan and I are working on this at the moment. If successful, we'll receive a further £35k over the 12-month period.

Innes asked whether new machinery could be purchased for the Support and Connect project to enable the cutting of village roadside verges. Currently, safety signs must be erected before cutting can begin. A tractor with the right cutting equipment would make things much easier. Euan will explore the options, with a view to including the purchase of suitable machinery as part of the new application to ICF.

Staff Update (Euan)

Scott Mackay's role at HCD has come to an end following an investigation into his conduct. At an initial disciplinary meeting on 23 June, Scott agreed to provide his full driving licence and to stop driving to work until he could provide evidence. Having failed to provide the requested evidence within 2 weeks, and with the knowledge that Scott was regularly driving in the local area without a co-driver, Scott was suspended from work on full pay on 7 July. After allowing Scott an additional period to respond to the allegations, and after seeking advice from the funder SCVO and the local Job Centre, Scott's post was terminated on 22 July.

Ruairidh Maclennan has handed in his notice. Ruairidh has been a great addition to the team, working as the Tree Ark Nurseryperson since March, a position fully funded by CNES Crown Estate Fund. We have funding for the part time (25hrs per week) post until October 2021, I'd like to begin recruitment as soon as possible but will bring it up for discussion at the meeting.

We will begin recruitment for a short-term Tree Ark Nurseryperson post. The role is funded till end of October 2021.

Recruitment to replace the Horticultural Assistant position won't begin until we learn the outcome of the UK CRF funding application, as one of the aims of the UK CRF project is recruiting new Kickstart Scheme apprentices.

Slàn san Dachaigh (Healthy at Home) Update (Anna)

Derick, Billy, and Don helped with prescriptions while Anna was on holiday. HCD are now the only community group continuing this service with the Langabhat Medical Practice. Prescriptions continue every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon.

Monday 5th July - 20 children took part in Clann nan Ràimh on Loch a' Bhaile. We are grateful to An Eathar volunteers for their continued support with children's rowing. Christine Morrison filmed in the morning and interviewed the children taking part in Gaelic which will be shown as part of a documentary about the west side.

Immerse Hebrides has been running summer sea swimming for beginners every Friday evening from Shawbost beach and each session has been fully booked. The last swim will take place on Friday 30th July.

Kayaking led by the Scaladale centre will take place this Friday on Loch Raoinbhat. The two sessions in the morning for children are fully booked however, there is still space for the board in the afternoon adult session to explore the islands of Loch Raoinbhat.

The next series of walks will be advertised through Facebook and posters at local sites. A 4-week block of community walks around Shawbost is planned for August, after the previous block was well attended and enjoyed by all.

I'm working with Euan and Derick to plan the re-start of the coffee mornings at Raebhat House – due in August/September once the social restrictions allow. The bus will provide transport to users who wish to attend.

More videos for social media are being produced. The themes are cooking, exercise, and education, at home.

Covid Services Update (Euan)

Services continue. Horshader Shopper will be redesigned to encourage more users to access the service. Community Support has been used a few times this month, providing help with skip runs and small outdoor household jobs.

Horshader Map/ Mapa Sgìre Thorsiadar Update (Euan)

The Map exhibition which will open at Raebhat House in September. Meeting regarding the map design are on-going, with the finished design, once additional names and information are collected during the exhibition, anticipated by December 2021.

Christine Morrison of Corcodail Productions would like to film the exhibition opening evening as part of a BBC Alba documentary on the Westside. This has yet to be formally arranged but may provide good publicity for the Bord na Gàidhlig funded project. Christine has also filmed some of the Slàn san Dachaigh events (as per Anna's update).

Security Review – HCD Facilities Update (Euan)

The barn is now secure and locked when not in use.

Finding a solution to Tree Ark security has been more difficult as we require a system that doesn't rely on fast wi-fi to store footage. As such the best option seems to be floodlight cameras which store footage on an SD card. I've budgeted the Tree Ark security work at £1419 - 4x Floodlight Security Camera - £769, 5x Motion-sensor Safety Lights - £250, Installation - £400.

The Directors approved the installation of the cameras and safety lights at the proposed cost.

Policies and Procedures Update (Euan)

Copies of the Document Control Register were given to the Directors at the June meeting. An annual review of the documents is planned for November.

Governance Review Update (Euan)

Laura MacLeod of Third Sector Hebrides responded to 3 questions we sent, all relating to the Trust's powers to operate, own assets, and seek funding for projects, specifically when these activities may be located outwith the Horshader area. Answers copied below.

Laura picked up on an issue with our Governing Document, that there is no allowance for decisions being made virtually – e.g. during a zoom meeting or by email. Info was provided on how to make this change should we want to.

1. Can HCD seek funding from external funding bodies to run projects which include activities taking place outwith the Horshader area, or would this contravene the HCD Governing Document and charity law?

The governing document does state the charitable aim as "to promote the benefit of the people of the Western Isles in general" giving provision that the trust should benefit the Horshader area defined "as the townships of South Shawbost, Dalmore and Dalbeg in particular"

Therefore, as long as the board are satisfied that the needs of the Horshader area are met - they can undertake projects in other areas.

2. Can HCD own assets which are located out with the Horshader area, or would this contravene the HCD Governing Document and charity law?

The governing document gives the trust the power to purchase assets - as long as they satisfy the charitable aims of the organisation.

There is no limitation stated on the area of these assets

3. Can HCD seek capital funding to develop facilities located outwith the Horshader area, or would this contravene the HCD Governing Document and charity law?

Again, as long as existing commitments to the local area are met, and the board agree that the proposed facility meets the charitable purposes of the organisation:

- *Develop the community in a sustainable manner*
- *Support disadvantaged people in the community*
- *Support the advancement of all forms of education in the community*
- *Provide housing or affordable housing plots to those in need*
- *Support our arts, culture, and heritage, including Gaelic language and culture and protect local buildings and sites of architectural or historic importance*
- *Provide recreational activities for the community*
- *Protect physical resources and amenities including the local environment*
- *Relieve poverty and hardship in the community and Regenerate the local economy*

We discussed the feedback and agreed that in most cases the community should be consulted before projects/activities that will take place outside the HCD area are planned. This is particularly important for any major projects.

HCD Community Fund Update (Euan)

The strips bought by Western Thistle Youth Football Club have now been produced. The club sent the Trust a thank you message along with photos of the new strips, with Horshader as sponsor.



Tree Ark Update (Chris)

The alder and birch are now being put into cells for growing on ready for sales this winter, alder have not germinated as well as I would have liked so possible only 1000 approximately for sale, birch will be in the region of 4 thousand.

We are currently working on saving selected trees for growing on for the specimen market. Aspen shoots are now being processed and this continue for the next few months.

Growing Sites Update (Chris)

Grinnivat

Over the past month crops are growing on and most crub holders have already been harvesting some produce.

However, some holders are not using there outside beds and I will look into the reasons why and report back in next month's update.

Also, I have had to ask Mr J Hyland for his allotment back, as he has not been all season and having given him 2 warnings and maintaining the beds for him.

Dalmore

Weed killer applied to the Mares tail weed

Community Gardening Update (Chris)

Community tubs are out in Shawbost, with water and feed applied weekly.

Work at Shawbost mill completed and will maintain until we have a reply as to the maintenance quote submitted.

HCD Welcome Packs Update (Jordan)

Welcome packs were delivered to:

Each pack contained a copy of the Governing Document, the most recent newsletter, a welcome letter, and a membership form. The packs also included a bottle of wine and box of biscuits.

The Directors had more names to be added to the Welcome Pack list: All 4 new houses in the new housing development (Cnoc a' Chàrnain).

Raebhat Community Space

A meeting was held on Thursday 15th July with Mark from O'Mac and Malcolm Crate. I led the meeting and Chris came along for support. There was a little back and forth on a couple of points, but all parties were keen to get things tied up and ready for the inspection from Building Control. We agreed O'Mac were responsible for re-hanging the disabled WC doors, securing the loft hatches, tidying up the surrounds of the fire door and window to the rear and tidying up in the loft space around the light fittings. Horshader would then take responsibility for the hand rail at the cost of £350. The exit path which we thought may need to be made into a ramp for disabled access, in fact does not need to be ramped. The building is of an age where the door frame itself is too narrow to have a wheelchair through it, plus there are two other exit points for disabled use. All work has been completed and we are now chasing Building Control for an inspection.

One item required for the completion certificate which has not yet been completed is to replace the existing in-swinging toilet doors (in the male and female toilets) which out-swinging doors. This item had been discussed during Sarah's meeting with O'Mac and Malcolm Crate, however they had concluded not to replace the doors in line with the guidance by CNES Building Control.

Horshader Shopper

The service continues to run smoothly each week.

Summer Raffle

Tickets are selling well. Available from Raebhat, the Post Office and Jackie's. We have also given a book of tickets to sell at the mill and Derick will help sell tickets around the village. We are building up more and more prizes. Contributors so far include; Charles Macleod Butcher, Macaskill Fuels, Shawbost Mill, Alisdair and Lesley Wiseman, MacGregors and the Crofters.

Village Clean Up

Project Charter attached. I have spoken with McLaughlin's and they have said they would be happy to provide the skip free of charge if we were to run the clean up over a weekend. Otherwise they could look at a discount if we needed it for longer than a week.

The project charter doesn't include plans to collect old scrap and machinery, as per the original proposal. This element of the project must still be planned.

Actions from June Meeting

Flora was satisfied that the actions from the June meeting had been achieved.

Funding Applications

A bursary application from Innes Macleod was received. Flora declared an interest and left the meeting. The remaining Directors discussed the application and agreed to approve a £2,000 award, subject to approval from the other Directors, Ranald, and Fiona.

Membership Applications

No new applications

Any other business

There was no other business.

Actions from the Board Meeting on 29 July 2021

Be vigilant regarding Covid rules: All Staff

Keep on top of annual leave: All Staff

Arrange HCD Welcome Packs for new residents: Jordan

Redraft text for 2020 Accounts: Euan

Review 2021 budget and prepare 2022 draft budget: Euan

Manage return to office following the end of the social restrictions: Euan

Progress applications for external funding: Euan