

Minutes to the first Virtual Board Meeting : 31 March 2020

Participating: Flora Macleod (Chair); Jimina Macleod; Mairi Maclean; Domhnall Alan Macleod; Alisdair Wiseman; Euan Macleod (Development Manager).

Vote of thanks from Flora Macleod

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow directors, the staff and volunteers for all their hard work and dedication during these difficult times. Rest assured that we will do whatever we can to help the entire community to find a way through these challenging times.

Guidance from OSCR regarding holding important meetings virtually

During the current challenging times, it is no longer possible for the Board to meet in person. Guidance was sought from OSCR, the Scottish Charities regulator. This is the information they provide on the Covid-19 Updates part of their website: "Where it isn't going to be possible to get together face-to-face, holding meetings virtually could be a good option. Some charities have specific provisions in their governing documents to allow meetings to take place over the phone or using digital solutions. However, in the current situation, we are happy that charities hold their meetings in this way even if the governing document doesn't say anything about this. This will allow charity trustees to have important discussions and to take decisions at this difficult time. Where you decide to take this virtual route, you should record that they have done this, thus demonstrating good governance of your charity."

With this guidance in mind, the Board has implemented a process of providing updates (reports on existing activity) and proposals (recommendations for new activity) by e-mail. These are circulated, responded to and then consolidated to form the minutes of the virtual Board meeting.

Update: Covid-19 Activities (Euan)

Staff

The office was closed on Monday 23 March in line with the recommendations from the Scottish Government. Jordan, as always, is keeping on top of reports (Support and Connect due 31st April), and turbine readings. He can continue with his regular work uninhibited. Taking charge of the HCD Members Telephone Survey - to be completed by Wednesday 1st. Don is completing bits of reporting (user numbers for Support and Connect) and has his quarterly objectives to work on, which I am sure he is making great progress with. Otherwise, hopefully staying safe and virus free. Chris has put in a lot of work to get things ready for lockdown. He is on top of goings-on at the community growing sites and Tree Ark, see pics attached. Although he will continue to check in on each site regularly, he will mainly be managing everything remotely. He is project managing the Tree Ark Expansion, so plenty to do there. Billy assisted in delivering the prescriptions for Shawbost. He will receive a list of jobs to complete at Grinnivat and Dalmore sites. Although the sites are closed to the public, there is still a huge amount of tidying up and preparation work to do at both sites. Grinnivat Road looks slightly less chaotic than late last year but there's still plenty to do. Regardless of whether the sites open to the public after our initial 3 week lockdown, (almost) all the outdoor and indoor beds need to be prepared for the season. Due to the lateness of the new Support and Connect funding announcement, we built up around 3 months of Assistant Gardener wages. ICF (the funder) advised us to use this for pre-approved project activities over our next project quarter. Some of this was used for a new lawnmower and some has been used to give Sam more hours. He delivered Community Support leaflets to the HCD area. He will get a list of jobs to complete at the Tree Ark.

Sarah Fraser, our new Projects Manager, was open to starting her post at HCD early, and was keen to help out, but has no internet or phone at her house and so wouldn't have been able to start on the telephone survey. Her start date remains 6th April.

Update: Polycrubs (Euan)

All the polycrubs were initially shut down on 23 March for the 3-week period of the initial lockdown announced by the Scottish Government. During this period, the staff will be preparing all the plots and outdoor beds so they are ready for use once we reopen. We received guidance from Scottish Government indicating that closure of sites is at our discretion, with use of sites then at the discretion of each user. We will confirm future access to the polycrubs shortly.

Telephone Survey

This was carried out during the week commencing 23 March. The info gathered will give us a steer on projects/services that may be needed. It can also be used when providing feedback (to Scot Gov., CNES, etc) on Covid-19 issues and problems. We will also have a record of self-identified vulnerable people. The questions asked were:

- How old are you/What age bracket do the members of your household come under?
- Do you have underlying health conditions? / Do you consider yourself to be particularly vulnerable at this time? (if so, do you have any underlying health conditions that you'd like to tell us about?)
- What specific needs do you have that might be challenging to satisfy in the current circumstances?
- What is the best way to stay in touch with you? (Confirm phone numbers and e-mail addresses)
- Do you have access to the internet? (and is it fast enough to stream/videoconference?)
- How would you feel about participating in community activities that enabled us to stay in touch without seeing each other face-to-face?
- What sorts of things would you like to do to remain in touch safely over the coming weeks?
- Would you be interested in joining HCD Food Delivery scheme?

Food Delivery Scheme

After being given instruction by Eat Well Age Well to repurpose the Blasta Lunch Club funding (£1500 remaining) for something more lockdown suitable, Euan spoke with Anne Campbell at 40 North Food about setting up a food delivery scheme, in place of the lunch club, with all food being prepared at 40 North's kitchen by Anne. Food will be delivered by HCD bus, and by volunteers.

The test run will go ahead on Thursday 9th April, with all orders being placed by Wed 1st. Criteria remains the same as BLC - over 65s from Dalmore to Arnol. Though estimates on uptake have been made, we won't know till Wednesday. Costs will almost certainly be significantly lower than a regular BLC, as Anne is taking no fee, therefore, if the trial is successful, the scheme will be run twice a month. There is potential for developing the scheme - perhaps a pizza night for all the families with children would be a treat and not too costly.

It's been great to get so much feedback from the community, a lot have e-mailed or left messages to say they appreciate the delivery of prescriptions, and the recent food packs. Between Jordan's e-mail and Euan's phone, we have taken over 40 orders for the first Food Delivery Scheme run.

We've applied to STV Community Wellbeing Fund for £2000 in order to expand the food delivery scheme to include families with children. This way we could run family nights with pizza/curries/etc, which should go down well.

Food Packs

Eilean Siar Food Bank gifted a range of perishable food items (as they only deal with long life stuff) which was then distributed to vulnerable members of our community. The food pack contained potatoes, onions, eggs and smoked salmon and was distributed to 10 households in HCD area, as well as 1 in Carnan, and 1 in Arnol - the latter two had phoned HCD office to request assistance as they had not heard of any support in their own area. The ES Food Bank suggested that individual and family food boxes could be prepared in town and then distributed in the HCD area by us, if there is demand. Euan put a message on Facebook along these lines and will include something in the next newsletter.

Prescriptions

HCD delivered meds for the Westside on Wednesday, Thurs, and Friday. There was a lot over the first two days but it eased off on Friday. More deliveries are scheduled and will likely continue beyond that. It's a great service to provide to the HCD, and wider community, and it gets the HCD bus out and about!

Community Support Leaflets

Distributed to all houses in HCD area. Each village has a few listed volunteers who are happy to be contacted with requests for assistance. I've talked to all but 1 of the volunteers, they are all happy and trying to help as best they can. Contacts for Arnol and Bragar were removed from the leaflets as the Trust for the area had already put something similar out.

Update: Volunteers (Euan)

We received quite a few offers of assistance, Horshader residents offering to volunteer – I've got a spreadsheet of names. Ally Williamson started a Community Help WhatsApp group with around 35 young people from the area involved, this was the main source of names for the Community Support leaflet contacts. Many other people have helped out in different ways. There is no shortage of support to call on when we need it. Volunteers will assist with Food Delivery Scheme – especially in the case of family/friends delivering meals to housebound older people.

Update: Annual Return

Everything has been sent to CIB - Trustees Report and the Annual Report. Calum MacDonald has confirmed that everything will be submitted on time. A copy of the Annual Accounts will be signed off by Flora and Alisdair during the week commencing 31 March for inclusion in our Annual Return. The Annual Report will be printed and posted, along with the newsletter, to all members shortly.

Update: Greis Gnìomhachais (summer placement) (Euan)

There are three candidates for the Greis Gnìomhachais position. Interviews will be carried out in Gaelic using Skype with interview notes in English. Dates will be arranged in due course to see who is available to take part. Information on the candidates will be sent round in advance of the interviews. All are based locally but none in the HCD area. Euan has worked with them all and thinks any of them would be great.

Update: Westside Art Show (Anna Mackenzie)

EVENTS ran a ½ page ad in their March edition requesting expressions of interest from artists (Garynahine – Borve). We have had commitment from 13 artists, and the local children's' Art Lab, all of whom would be delighted to be involved. A further 2 have yet to confirm their submission, but seemed keen. The style of 2D art is varied, and the standard very high. A number of events had been provisionally arranged as part of the project:

- Murdo MacDonald (Professor of History of Scottish Art, University of Dundee) is to do a talk on 'Highland Art in Context', on Friday 15th May at 7pm.
- Alisdair Wiseman is to run a drawing class on 21 May at 7.00pm.
- Anna is still in discussion with Mairi Coxon (West Side artist in residence) who wants to run an art class in Gaelic.

Next steps – Anna did not submit the EVENTS article in time for the April edition as originally planned due to the Covid-19 uncertainty. This article will provide details on the events, the exhibition hours, format and the like. EVENTS let me know that they can publish the article online at any time, and it would then be included in the next paper edition. The Board will make a decision shortly on whether or not to postpone the art show.

Proposal: Community project ideas during the Covid-19 pandemic (Euan)

Euan came up with the idea to run a virtual book club only to find that CNES library had stolen his thunder! The library sent instruction on ways to run a virtual book club, using their free e-books. If we think this is fine, he can get planning straight away.

Virtual music lessons are another possibility.

Ainmean-àite (placenames) of Horshader is a project that the summer student could work on. Information could be gathered by phone so that it could continue despite Covid-19.

Proposal: Community Consultation 2020 (Euan)

Euan brought this up at the November/December board meeting, as a project for 2020. The aim is to conduct an extensive consultation that engages as many Horshader residents HCD members and local partners/groups as possible. It is a good number of years since the last consultation of this kind. Once we get to planning for bigger projects, where may look for a lot of external funding, we will need a lot more evidence of support from the community. A lot of preparation would go into designing something suitable – scope of consultation could include: getting opinion on current HCD projects (e.g. HCD Forest, Support and Connect) and services (e.g. Community allotments); opinion on the administration of the HCD Community Fund; gauging support for proposed projects; and beyond. It's always important to consult the community on projects we want to run to increase the input of good ideas. Moreover, it's a great chance to engage with Horshader residents and groups, hopefully leading to increased participation in activities and uptake of services. Sarah and Euan could work together to design a suitable process that the Board could review. It's a good job for Sarah's starting months as Projects Manager, helping her to get to know the community, and vice versa. Ultimately, delegation of work will depend on the scale of the consultation.

Proposal: Ongoing communication with the community (Euan/Alisdair)

A newsletter is due out shortly. More regular communications could be useful in keeping residents abreast of changes to our services.

Update: Tree Ark Expansion (Chris)

The Tree Ark expansion is progressing well although completion of the work is uncertain at the moment. We are awaiting word from Angus Mackay Coll as to when they will be able to concrete second Crub and will update as and when we get confirmation. Work to date includes:

- Hot tunnel now concreted with overhead sprinkler in place (running of a hose pipe);
- 15 boxes of Aspen root cuttings in waiting for the suckers to emerge;
- 2000 Rowen seeds in pots;
- 60 willow slips in outside beds;
- 320 birch to be potted on (remainder of last year stock);
- aspen being kept back for Norse mill;
- 200 holly seeds in (germination expected 2022);
- 40 honeysuckle cuttings in propagator.

Update: Coastal Walk Upgrade (Jordan)

We were expecting three quotes back which were Angus Mackay's, AMK and Mitch Thompson. Mitch Thompson has come back with a quote of £11,886.96 including VAT for materials & labour. Angus Mackay's have come back with a quote for £7,500 excluding VAT for the labour only - material costs are approximately £2,800.00 which means these two quotes are within £500 of each other. We have no confirmation as to whether or not the contractors would be willing to undertake the work straight away given Covid-19.

Update: Community space and Building Standards (Alisdair)

The disagreement with Building Standards over what is reasonable to expect us to do regarding the refurbishment of the Community Space continues. There seems to be a slight softening of the approach. The Building Warrant has now been approved but we have yet to come to some agreement on the final standard of the work undertaken. The next step is a face-to-face meeting which is clearly impossible at the moment. So, we will put this on hold until things return to normal.

Update: Horshader Forest (Alisdair)

We've had two very good meetings so far. Iain Mackay has joined the group to represent the interests of the South Shawbost Grazings Committee. Three potential locations for the first phase of planting were identified. Mark Bradley and Alisdair Wiseman went to see Mark MacDonald at SNH to confirm that they had no objections to the proposed forest. Mark M was incredibly helpful, pointing out a series of things that we might need to take into account and confirming that we're not mad to be considering a forest. His primary recommendation was that we involve Viv Halcrow from the Woodlands Trust as soon as possible. So, that's the immediate next step. The next meeting of the group was due to be held on 26 March 2020 but has been called off in line with government guidance. We have yet to agree how to continue moving forward under these circumstance - so this is the other immediate next step.

Proposal: HCDT Aims for 2020 (Alisdair)

The objective here is that we agree a series of shorter-term goals, in line with the Trust Development Plan, that we intend to deliver during the course of the current year. This will be undertaken over the next few weeks.

Proposal: Bye-law regarding Directors benefit (Alisdair)

Currently, our Governing Document prohibits a Director of gaining any benefit from the Trust. This is set out in sections '5.03 Director benefit' and '1.04 Application of Trust income and property'.

5.03 No Director can be in receipt of a salary, fee or any other type of remuneration or benefit in money (or its equivalent). The exceptions to this rule are laid out in '1.04: Application of Trust income and property'. The exceptions from 1.04 are: the Board can direct a suitably qualified Member or employee to undertake professional, technical or other activities that are deemed to be of use to the Trust and then pay for these services - this exception does not apply to Directors; the Trust can pay interest to any Member or Director who has lent money to the Trust; the Trust can make reasonable payments to any Member or Director who has been properly authorised to provide premises or land for rent; and the Trust can pay a Director reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in the business of the Trust.

The current wording of our Governing Document means that anyone serving as a Director should not receive any assistance from the Trust that might be offered to other Members of the Trust during the Covid-19 pandemic. This is a clear disincentive to becoming a Director and cannot have been the spirit of what was intended in the law. We therefore intend frame and put up for adoption a bye-law that permits a Director to receive a benefit where this is something that is offered equally to all other Members of the Trust. A draft bye-law will be drafted shortly and we can work out how it might be enacted, given the current constraints.

Proposal: How the Board operates during the Covid-19 pandemic (Alisdair)

This set of minutes is evidence of the fact that the Board has changed the way will operate during the Covid-19 crisis. We will continue to adapt the way that we work in line with future developments and guidance.

Next virtual Board meeting: 30 April 2020 (although we will continue working activities, projects and proposals in the interim).

The Board of the Horshader Community Development Trust