

Minutes of the HCDT Board Meeting on 03 November 2021

Present: Carole Miller, Fiona Jefferson, Innes Harrison, John Gordon, Euan MacLeod (Development Manager)

Venue: Raebhat House.

- **Appointment of Office Bearers:** Innes proposed John as the chair. Carole seconded the proposal. John was appointed chair. John proposed Fiona as vice-chair/secretary. Innes seconded the proposal. Fiona was appointed vice-chair/secretary.
- **Communications:**
 - * The directors discussed the email from Neen Mackay, received in September, regarding the project expenditure as part of the Coastal Walk Upgrade project (2020). The email included accusations of misconduct against the Trust and former HCDT director Alisdair Wiseman. The directors agreed that the issue seemed to be a personal matter between members of the Trust and, as agreed by members at a previous AGM, this is not something that the directors of HCDT should become involved with. A response will be drafted and sent to Neen and Alisdair.
 - * The directors discussed a formal complaint made by Alisdair Wiseman regarding the conduct of the Trust's recent AGM (26 October). John will respond to Alisdair. Alisdair's complaint and John's response will be attached to the minutes of the November meeting.
 - * In response to the communications received regarding beach safety at Dalbeg (email sent by Alisdair Wiseman in August) the directors decided to investigate an appropriate way to erect suitable safety signage.
 - * John asked how Alisdair Wiseman became aware of the complaint from Neen Mackay as this has not been published as a board minute or in any other format. John stressed that information discussed by the board should only be via the published minutes or other approved communication. We, therefore, need to investigate this with a view to establishing how Mr Wiseman became aware of this complaint.
- **Funding Applications:**
 - * A grant of £4,000 to Lewis Crofters was approved. The award was originally made towards Lewis Crofters IT/website upgrade, in August 2020. The full funding package for the project is now in place.
 - * A grant of £10,000 to Lewis and Harris Mountain Rescue Team was approved. The original award was made in October 2020 and will help the MRT build a new base. The full funding package is now in place.
 - * The bursary application by Alisdair Wiseman was approved. Alisdair will receive a bursary of £1,000.
 - * The 2021 bursary recipients who are still studying (in November 2021) and living away from home will receive an additional £1,000 each. Innes Macleod, Daniel Harrison, and Dan Macleod will receive this additional amount. The directors agreed this amount as a one-off gesture pending a review of the criteria and levels of educational grants.
 - * The Trust will sponsor one place open to someone living between Shawbost and Dalmore on the CNES-run lifeguard course. The course costs £250. The directors noted their disappointment that the Shawbost pool remains closed due to local lifeguards being redeployed to the Stornoway pool.
- **Finance Update**
 - * In October £150k was transferred to the Trust by RPG. The Cooperative bank has indicated another £100k will be transferred before the end of 2021. The board noted the total income is more than projected in the 2021 budget.
 - * John and Fiona will be added as signatories to the Trust bank accounts. At present the signatories are Euan MacLeod and Flora Macleod. Flora will be removed as a signatory.

- * The board will conduct a review of financial management to ensure that the Trust meets a best practice approach.
- **Staff:**
 - * No decision was made on the recruitment of a Projects Manager. The board will review the projects plan.
 - * The remaining £2,000 of the CNES Crown Estate Fund grant will be used to recruit support staff for the Tree Ark.
 - * A performance review for Euan will be carried out by the board as soon as possible. Euan should provide a selection of dates and the directors will ensure that a review is held in a timely manner.
- **Projects:**
 - * The Winter Fuel Scheme will be expanded to include each household at which an Ordinary Member resides - including households outwith the Horshader area. The voucher will be increased to £350 per household.
 - * The induction plan for new directors will consist of an introduction to using the shared drive. Any additional training will be provided as and when identified.
 - * The board agreed to participate in the newly-established Hebrides Community Hydrogen company. The company aims to secure a part for the community sector in the production of hydrogen as a carbon friendly energy source.
 - * The board are happy to be part of the Fireworks event, run in partnership with The Old School Trust. The cost of fireworks was covered from the HCD events budget.
 - * A donation of £500 will be made to Elsa McTaggart and Gary Lister towards a welcome drink for attendees at the events on 18 and 31 December - both to be held at Ionad na Seann Sgoil. Horshader will also provide transport to and from both events using the Support and Connect minibus, with vulnerable residents being given priority.
 - * The board will discuss sponsoring a series of dinner events for the community, run in partnership with TOST, at the December meeting. All agreed in principle with the proposal.
 - * The project aiming to provide better internet and mobile reception for Dalmore and Dalbeg will be removed from the Development Plan. The directors agreed it is not the role of the Trust to develop infrastructure of this kind. This is a matter for central government in the developed administration.
 - * Decisions on funding applications are expected before the end of the year. An application to Calmac Community Fund seeks funding to run the Blasta Lunch Club in 2022. An application to the Health Islands Fund seeks funding to purchase equipment (paddleboards, kayaks, safety gear) that can be used to run outdoor sessions, and to upskill staff so that sessions can be delivered by HCD. An application to the Community Land Scotland's Coimhearsnachd Chleachdaidh Fund seeks funding to employ a Slàn san Dachaigh officer in 2022 - the funding for the current post ends at the end of 2021 - after the success of the project.
 - * A Christmas party for children will be arranged at the Old School on December 11.
 - * An IT Upgrade plan will be put together. Items considered are: new PCs for the office, a smartscreen/digital info screen for the community space. Any old hardware will be offered to good causes one drives have been sanitised. Laptops will be purchased for the use of directors. A laptop will be bought for Innes, as at present no other director requires one. The directors decided that a code of practice for use of HCDT IT equipment by staff and directors should be agreed and documented.
 - * The application submitted to UK Community Renewal Fund in July was successful, with £71,033 being awarded. The project, Horshader Community Asset Development, was one of only 2 successful bids from Na h-Eileannan an Iar, and only 56 across the whole country. No direct contact from CNES or Uk Gov has yet been received. The project includes a number of activities that aim to develop skills of local people and local development workers, as well as the development of green projects. The original timeframe for delivery

was 1 August to 31 March. A revision of the original timeframe is expected. The directors thanked Euan for his work in submitting the successful application.

○ **AOCB:**

- * The board will conduct a review of the Bursary and Training grant scheme, focusing on: the geographical area; the amount awarded to each applicant; and the criteria for eligibility.
- * The board will review the relationship between the Trust and its subsidiary RPG. There are 2 directors of RPG at present. HCDDT board has the power to appoint and remove RPG directors.
- * Fiona gave a correction to the draft 2020 AGM minutes. Once the correction has been made the minutes will be posted on the website. They won't be approved till the next AGM.
- * The Directors section of the website will be updated with bios for the new directors. Fiona provided an update to her bio.

Next meeting: Board Meeting, 7.00pm, 14 December 2021
The Board of the Horshader Community Development Trust

Additional Documents:

Copy of formal complaint made against the Trust by Member Alisdair Wiseman

Alisdair Wiseman
The Beach House
Dalbeg
Isle of Lewis
HS2 9AE

The Board of the HCD Trust
Raebhat House
North Shawbost
Isle of Lewis
HS2 9BD

27 October 2021

COMPLAINT REGARDING THE CONDUCT OF THE HCDT AGM ON 26 OCTOBER 2021

I write to register a formal complaint regarding the conduct of the Trust's AGM on 26 October 2021.

I will not speculate as to the reasons why the bursary awarded to me by Horshader Community Development Trust was used to illustrate the dangers of operating with a small number of Directors. However, the fact of the matter is that the use of this example, in a public forum, insinuated serious wrongdoing on my part:

- It was stated that the bye-law had been passed in August 2020 without the community being able to review, comment, or vote on it;
- It insinuated that I had prepared the bye-law with the aim of legitimising my receipt of a bursary; and
- It insinuated that I was present when my bursary application was approved.

Furthermore, it seemed to insinuate collusion on the part of the other Directors. Despite an apparent desire to avoid naming names, there was only one ex-Director who was in receipt of a bursary and this is a matter of record in the Annual Report. So, those present either knew, or would have worked out, the identity of the person being alluded to. I know I have acted with propriety at all times and was entirely happy to confirm that it was indeed me to whom the described situation related.

A selective approach was used to present evidence that omitted relevant information that would have rendered the attack on my reputation baseless. For the record, here is the timeline for the adoption of the bye-law whose aim was always to eliminate a clear and unjust disincentive to being a Director of the Trust:

- 17 September 2018: The Board accepted Sharon Macleod's resignation since she was returning to university to complete her final honours year and could not be in receipt of a bursary whilst still a Director, as per the governing document at that time;
- 31 March 2020: AGM scheduled for this date was postponed due to the Scottish Government's Covid restrictions;
- 31 March 2020: Board meeting where the need for a bye-law regarding Directors' benefit was discussed;
- 02 April 2020: Board paper regarding bye-law 2020-01 drafted and circulated to all Directors for comment;
- 28 April 2020: AGM scheduled for this date was postponed due to the Scottish Government's Covid restrictions;
- 20 June 2020: I presented my resignation as a Director to the Chair. However, I offered to stay on as a Director to enable the Board to remain quorate until new Directors could be recruited. I stipulated that I would attend

Board meetings but take no active part in decision-making, project proposals, or protocol changes other than to complete the work in which I was currently involved;

- 20 August 2020: AW bursary application e-mailed to the Development Manager with a statement that I would recuse myself from any subsequent discussions to consider my application, should they take place whilst I was still a Director. I knew that I could not receive a bursary whilst still a Director of the Trust, as per the governing documents at that time. However, I wished to submit my application knowing that I intended to step down as a Director as soon as an AGM could be convened;
- 25 August 2020: AGM scheduled for this date was postponed due to the Scottish Government's Covid restrictions;
- 31 August 2020: Board meeting convened to make various decisions, one of which was the AW bursary application. The minutes state that I withdrew from the decision due to a declared conflict of interest and the other Directors were all aware of my intention to resign as a Director as soon as an AGM could be convened. The bursary was approved.
- 09 September 2020: I e-mailed the Development Manager requesting that payment of bursary funds should be delayed until after the AGM so that I was not in receipt of Trust funds whilst still a Director.
- 15 September 2020: AGM scheduled for this date was postponed due to the Scottish Government's Covid restrictions;
- 06 October 2020: AGM finally convened virtually; bye-law 2020-01 presented, explained, proposed, seconded and voted in at the virtual AGM;
- 06 October 2020: I formally resigned as a Director at the AGM;
- 12 October 2020: bursary funds paid into my bank account; and
- 13 October 2020: confirmation e-mail from Jordan re payment of bursary funds.

I have copies of all these documents, including my personal bank account statements, should you require them. It is clear from this timeline that I was not in receipt of any bursary funds whilst still a serving Director of the Trust and therefore did not act in contravention of the governing document.

Again, for the record, the bye-law and my bursary application were not in any way related. The aim of the former was to eliminate the disincentive for all future applicants to volunteering as a Director and applied regardless of anything I intended to do on a personal basis.

I take any attack on my reputation very seriously. I feel especially injured as I served unflinchingly for over 2 years as a Director of the Trust, first as an Associate Director and then as an Elected Director. During this time, I helped to get the Trust back onto a firm footing following the induction of a totally new Board. I indicated my desire to resign as a Director later that year on the basis that my aim had always only been to help the new Board manage the transition – however, the other members of the Board requested that I stay on as a Director. I worked tirelessly on many projects that have been brought to a successful conclusion. I tightened many of the protocols associated with running Board meetings and communicating with the community. I took on the larger majority of the work to create a plain language version of the Governing Document and ensured that every member of the community had their own physical copy. And I played my own part in attempting to make the Trust a great place to be.

I do not seek an apology. However, I request that you confirm receipt of this complaint and that the Board makes a public statement which recognises the inaccuracy of the information provided to the AGM and confirms that I was not responsible for any of the wrongdoing insinuated at the AGM.

Yours faithfully,

Alisdair Wiseman

Alisdair Wiseman.

Copy of formal Trust Response to Member Alisdair Wiseman



Alisdair Wiseman
Beach House Gallery
Dalbeg
HS2 9AE

Horshader Community Development
Raebhat House
North Shawbost
Isle of Lewis HS2 9BD

Email: admin@horshader.com
Web: www.horshader.com
Phone: 01851 701225
Company number: SC277276
Charity number: SC041092

15/11/21

Dear Alisdair,

Thank you for your letter of 27th October regarding the Annual General Meeting of HCDT. I and the Board acknowledge your concerns and I hope that this response will prove helpful.

As the person who initially raised the issue, I can assure you that I had one purpose only. That was, as I stated clearly at the meeting, to illustrate the challenges and issues that had plagued the Board of HCDT over a prolonged period. Personally I still believe that the example I used served its stated purpose very well.

You will recall, although you fail to acknowledge this in your letter, that when you articulated the additional pertinent details at the AGM, I clearly stated that these shed a new light on matters. You may also remember that I stated that this was clearly a case of the relevant minutes not adequately reflecting the situation. Rather than this being a selective approach, I presented only evidence that was available to the general membership from the minutes I had read. I also categorically refute any insinuation of collusion. Nothing could be further from the truth. I made no attack on your reputation and find it disappointing that you take this view.

I appreciate that matters took an unfortunate turn when you chose to make the meeting aware that this related to you. As I said to you at the close of the meeting, I would have preferred that no names had been mentioned although I do concede your point about members being able to determine such matters themselves.

On the one hand you state that you do not wish for an apology but then ask that the Board makes, what would in effect be, a public apology.

I and the Board feel that in this instance matters are best served by appending your letter and the Board's response to the minutes of the meeting of the Board of Directors of HCDT held on 3rd November 2021. This enables the membership to be fully apprised of your views and the response of the Board. I would hope that you see this as a satisfactory conclusion to the matter and that you welcome the transparency with which the Board will always endeavour to operate under my Chairmanship.

Yours sincerely

John Gordon

(for the Board of Directors of HCDT)