

Minutes of the Horshader Community Development Trust Annual General Meeting

Date: Tuesday 7th November 2023

Location: Raebhat House Community Space

Present: 17 members and 1 associate member were noted to be present

HCDT Board: Carole Miller (Chair); Fiona Jefferson; Jimima Macleod; Flora Macleod; and Donald Murray

HCDT Staff: Donna Maclennan (General Manager); Gordon Matheson (Development Officer, non-member)

HCDT Members: Donald Macleod; Lesley Wiseman; Alisdair Wiseman; Fiona Knape; Christina Finlayson; Mary Maclean; Ian Mackay; Kathleen Murray; Colin Miller; Ruth Hazell, Ian Hazell.

HCDT Associate Members: DJ Macaulay

Apologies: Innes Harrison, Di Hesketh, Gareth Watson; Catherine Anne Macleod

Proxy Notes: Willian H. Jefferson; Innes Harrison;

Opening Remarks: The Chairperson (Carole Miller) welcomed attendees to the meeting and noted that it was quorate.

Minutes: The Chair noted that an audio recording the meeting was being taken to assist with taking the minute. This recording would be deleted after the minutes were agreed by the Board.

The minutes of the previous AGM, 11th May 2022, and the EGM, 9th August 2022 were noted to have been available online. There were no corrections to the minutes. It was moved, seconded, and agreed to approve the minutes of these meetings.

Presentation and Adoption of Annual Report: The chair gave a brief presentation about the work of the Trust in the last 12 months:

- Blasta Lunches
- The use of the community space at Raebhat House
- Coffee mornings
- Risort Power Generation
- Support & Connect Minibus
- Hebridean Tree Ark
- Grants paid to support assorted projects.

There was time for questions.

- Bursaries – what are the criteria for qualifying applicants? The bursary criteria were outlined as in the Trust’s articles and constitution.

It was moved, seconded, and agreed to approve the Annual Report.

Plans for late 2023 & Beyond: The Development Officer made a presentation on the work of the DO outlining his rationale for the post:

- Community developed in three key areas:

- Accommodation
- Amenity
- Opportunity
- Plans for the coming months:
 - Community Big Survey – to gain hard data on fuel poverty in the community, as well as other background information to contribute to future funding bids.
 - The Old School Centre – The Trustees at Shawbost Old School Trust (SOST) have approached us to investigate taking over the building.
 - A provisional SWOT analysis had been carried out, suggesting it was worth exploring by way of community consultation.
 - A survey of grant funders had suggested the UK Government Community Ownership Fund would be a route to keep the building in community ownership.
 - Proposed to carry out a feasibility study, and report to a future special general meeting once costs had been identified, and a business plan was fleshed out.

There was time for questions:

- The invitation from SOST – Had they followed the right process coming to us without first asking the community? Gordon answered that the process WE now envisaged would give the community ample opportunity to have input to future plans. The choice whether to proceed to pursuing funding would need the agreement of our membership, but as this group isn't the whole Shawbost community, it would be prudent for SOST to consult the wider community of Shawbost at their AGM. This was envisaged as the way to making a decision on going ahead to seek funding.
- Raebhat House – What happens to RH, e.g. sold? Was the membership asked to make a decision without solid information? Gordon answered that if we moved HCDT to work from offices at TOSC, we would have to look at the future use of RH. However, the future of RH was complicated by other factors: e.g. the boundary issue, the presence of the Tree Ark and Grass cutting base at the barn. The Board weren't asking for a decision on that future tonight – it would be subject to its own future feasibility study.
- Raebhat House – Could the development of TOSC plans go hand in hand with developing a future for RH? Gordon answered that trying to do two large scale projects like this simultaneously would be a big stretch for the Trust's staff. Safer to deliver them consecutively.
- Cost – Was there an indication of costs for TOSC renovation at this stage? Gordon answered early estimates were in the region of £100k for repairs – largely connected to wind turbine replacement.
- Newsletter – Would the newsletter be used to consult on plans for TOSC? We will use many avenues to gather views, but yes, the newsletter is one way we could consult.
- Capacity – Would the DO have the capacity to run the TOSC feasibility study and do the DO job? The DO felt project investigation and funding bids was the job, so, yes.
- Postpone Decision Process – Would there be merit in postponing the TOSC decision to another General Meeting? The AGM was the correct context to bring general matters to the membership, so seeking the memberships' support to move forward with an investigative process, rather than a final decision, was felt correct at this stage. Future membership meetings would be used to consult on the next steps.
- Timeframe – How long will preparing a business case take? Probably a month or so to gather the necessary data about the TOSC operating costs, but there are challenges that

will add delay, e.g. getting a non-domestic Energy Performance Certificate, as a gateway to taking some energy efficiency aspects forward.

The Chair indicated that the Board would take a more detailed plan to the membership via a Special General Meeting in due course. At that point the membership would have an opportunity to decide to go ahead to pursue funding. There were no countermotions.

Presentation of Financial Report and Accounts: John Moffat of Mann Judd Gordon Chartered Accountants presented a report on the Trust's Accounts and Financial Statement. He highlighted:

- The upturn in trading activities – the income of £1.2m at Risort Power Generation, £600k up on the previous year, had been due to the volatility driving up prices in the energy market.
- Expenditure was up connected to rising prices:
 - the energy market forcing unit prices for electricity up.
 - Wages rising
 - Repair costs
 - Professional Fees
- Expenditure had also risen in grants, particularly fuel poverty assistance.
- Net Assets – the value of properties, particularly Raebhat House and the windfarm, were holding up.

There was time for questions:

- Cash Reserves – Is the level of cash reserve appropriate? The level of cash balance has to be understood in terms of loans, and the limitations of access to that cash, because they are controlled by the lender. Also noted the consolidated cash balance – only a portion of this is available to the charity immediately, while the rest is tied up within Co-op Bank in the loan fund and therefore of restricted access (e.g. via “waterfall” payments). The Board will consider the adequacy of the cash reserves policy going forward – it is reasonable to keep a cash balance to meet contingencies outlined in the reserves policy, i.e. 12 months' outgoings.
- Loan Repayment – If Risort is producing above expected on income, is there benefit in paying off the loan early? The early repayment clause on the loan would kick in and the penalties incurred might exceed the saving on interest (even at high interest rates) payments if the loan was repaid to schedule. It is worth keeping an eye on this, but at this stage unlikely to make a difference.

The chair thanked Mr. Moffat for his report.

Appointment of Auditors: It was moved, seconded, and agreed to appoint Mann Judd Gordon Ltd. as auditors for 2023. CIB will remain as our day-to-day accountants.

Election of Directors: Three directors were up for appointment – Flora Macleod and Jimima Macleod having been appointed recently at the EGM in August would serve a year to the next AGM.

Fiona Jefferson, Donald Murray, and Carole Miller were each duly nominated and seconded. There being only 5 directors, out of a maximum of 8, there was no ballot. The membership agreed to the appointment of these directors.

AOCB: The Chair invited the members present if there were other questions they wanted to ask.

- Blasta Lunches – How much had been raised / spent on this? Blasta received funding from the Calmac Community Fund, and the spend on it was to budget.
- Legacies – Can the Trust receive income from legacies in a will? The Trust is a charity, and can receive this type of income. However, we would have to think very carefully about seeking legacies – even for specific projects. The Trust’s income is derived from RPG, the community has a very well understood grasp of that. The risk of being seen to seek legacy income is something to keep in mind.
- Grass-cutting – Is the grass cutting going to be offered on a commercial basis? The Trust deliberately limits its activities in commercial areas, so that we don’t compete with people. There are no plans to expend the grass-cutting beyond its current scope.
- Minibus – Is the minibus allowed to turn at the drive at Cnoc a Charnain, past the South Shawbost cross-roads? We will check, but our understand is that the road into the 4 houses is part of the public highway. We will confirm with HHP.
- Northland / N4 – Does HCDT have a stance on the Spiorad na Mara Windfarm development? No. The Board understand the community response will be led by the Community Council. HCDT is in a unique position on the West Side, as we are on the only privately owned estate. The Trust aims to serve the interests of the community, in terms of our Governing Document, but our relationship with the developer is on a different footing to other Development Trusts in the area. Gordon noted that other Trusts, as land owners, are in discussions about potential community benefit, directly with Northland, but so far without much clarity on their plans in this area.

Alistair Wiseman proposed a vote of thanks to the Board.

The Chair thanked all those who attended and closed the meeting.