

Sunart Community Company Annual General Meeting

7.30pm, Tuesday 23rd October 2018
Strontian Village Hall

Minutes

Attendees:

Directors: J Tyldesley (Chair), J Hilder (Treasurer), J Jones (Secretary), L Cameron, J Mackinnon, J Madden.

Members: R Dunn, M Jones, P Madden, J McIntyre, E Shackleton, E Shackleton(Mrs), H Whitney, C Wilson, S Wilson, D Fowler, D Mann, M Simpkinson, I Baker.

1. Welcome: The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attending.
2. Apologies & Notification by Proxy Vote: D Anderson, S Carmichael, A Carmichael, K Proctor, C Millar-Craig, D Barker, V Barker, E McVicar, J Swain, M Tyldesley, M Hilder.
3. Minutes of the last meeting & Matters Arising

The minutes of the AGM 20th May 2017 proposed by C Wilson, seconded by J Hilder. The minutes for the EGM 13th February 2018 proposed by C Wilson, seconded by J Tyldesley.

4. Chair's Report: The Chair's Annual Report for 2018 is copied below in full.

"Good evening ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to you all and thank you for your attendance tonight at the Annual General meeting of the Sunart Community Company.

It has been another exciting and extremely successful year involving lots of hard work by the Directors. Also for the non-directors, who have been actively participating by developing the working groups. All of which helps to move things forward in our quest in 'keeping Sunart a great place to live, work and visit'. The Directors of the SCC wish to thank you all for your help and continued support in all areas, for your generosity in raising funds and giving of your time over the past year.

In 2017 Kate Procter, Kate Campbell and Joan Madden were elected to the Board and we value their input. James Hilder came to the end of his 6-year elected term but, fortunately for us, he has been appointed the Community Council representative and so happily remains with us.

Unfortunately the funding by HIE for the full-time Local Development Officer, the role which was shared by Izzy Barker and Angela Williams, came to an end this July, which meant that Angela's contract came to an end also. We would like to thank her for all her hard work and for raising significant funds for the new Primary school, the Woodland and the Visitor's Centre. The end of the funding also meant that Izzy had to reduce her hours, but we are most grateful to her for her flexibility and continued assistance in relieving some of the pressure from the shoulders of the Directors. Izzy continues to work extremely hard and is an invaluable asset to the working of the Community Company.

The situation at Dail Mhor has been a blow to the Community and is on going. The Sunart Community Company has stepped up to become the employing organisation for a Dail Mhor House Project Officer. The Project Officer will be working closely with NHS Highland Staff and will look at bringing additional services to the Peninsula and to increasing activity at Dail Mhor. This will create another part-time job locally.

The Longrigg Woodland purchase is still under consideration and the Company have tendered for a consultation to prepare a feasibility study to see if we should purchase the Woodland. We need to know if it is financially viable, manageable and will deliver community benefits. We have been recently awarded a grant from Scottish Land Fund of £16,920 towards this project.

The Visitors centre in the village closed last Autumn and the Community Company was asked to pursue a Community acquisition through a Community 'right to buy.' Hopefully we are in the process of approaching the final stages of the acquisition which will be a valuable asset to the Community. The Sunart Community Benefit Fund has awarded £5,000 towards this. The SCC has subsequently been awarded a grant of £41,00 to help to purchase at a cost of £27,000, and to employ Izzy to assist with the running of the project. This could be a location for local businesses, artists and activity producers to display and promote their goods and services.

The Men's Shed is now up and running. A big thank you to the Strontian Hotel for allowing us to use the shed situated behind the Hotel as an interim home. The Community Company is acting as the umbrella body for insurance. The Shed is open Monday and Wednesday mornings from 10 am and is open to everyone, not just men. Various tools and machinery are available for use. Help is available if required. You may have your own project or prefer to join in with a group one. We are currently making benches for the Paths and Trails group to site around the village. They are beautifully made and have been very much admired. We are also receiving orders for making other objects and repairing small items. I would like to thank Eric Shackleton, Harry Witney and Callan Wilson for all their hard work in helping to set this up; Jean Swain for the very generous donation of her late husband's tools, and tools also donated from the Men's Shed at Fort William, from Jack Liversage and from Val Gee. But most important of all is the kettle, which Val has provided for us all to use.

Thank you to the Paths, Maps and Trails group who have continued to work extremely hard over the past year, clearing paths and planning routes and rising to the challenges and opportunities involved in developing our local paths network. They have worked on the path from the Strontian Hotel to the Village green, the Back Road path along the river (along which Val Gee provided all the daffodils), the Longrigg Burn and the path to Ardnastaing beach. Attention will now be focused on developing a new leaflet for the area. Izzy has again secured funding from the grant provider 'Paths for All.'

The Loch Development Group has been working very hard too.

On Loch Sunart, with funds from the Sunart Community Benefit Fund, three new moorings have been installed at the head of the Loch, at a cost of over £5,000 and it is hoped that this will kick start a greater use of the Loch and be the first step towards further developments at the jetty.

The Sunart's first ever Water Festival was held in September with 70 people attending. There was a range of fun and educational activities for the children. Unfortunately the water based activities had to be postponed due to the weather. Next year it will take place on Sunday May 19th when the weather should be much kinder.

As always we are indebted to Pete Madden for all his hard work. With support from the SCC and the Council, he manages the Strontian and Polloch rivers and Loch Doilet. He is dedicated to restoring the salmon to the rivers. Unfortunately the young salmon in the hatchery did not survive the year, due to problems beyond our control. However Pete has electro fished to obtain a batch of eggs this year, so the process has started again.

The fishing permits for Loch Doilet and the Strontian River continue to be for sale.

The Sunart Community Benefit Fund is the new name for the Sunart Common Good Fund, this change has been necessary because of confusion with other legal structures associated with the name 'Common Good.' The Benefit Fund is supported by the Sunart Community Company which provides administration and accounting support. The panel usually meets about every six months and all applications are treated with discretion and sensitivity. No discussion takes place outside the meeting room and any personal interest is declared. In this period £45,000 was received for allocation from the Sunart Community Renewables. The Benefit Fund met in September 2017 and in March 2018 and £34,255 was awarded in total.

The Directors are extremely grateful for the time and consideration that the Community Benefit Fund Panel volunteers put into their decision-making.

The profile of the Sunart Community Company continues to rise. The Company works hard to foster links within the Community wherever possible. It works closely with the Community Council to assist wherever practicable. Directors have also attended the meetings concerning the future of Dail Mhor

House and also attended transition meetings, which looked at the move from the Old to the New Primary School. We have attracted International interest and hosted visitors from Australia and Canada and locally from the Social Enterprise Academy.

Now that we own the Old School House Plot we have had various suggestions as to how we can use this as a village amenity and the paths and Trails Group have taken responsibility for this. Over the Summer a proposal was put to the Community Company to examine an option for the purchase of the former Common Grazings land around the mine, which was being sold by the Scottish Government. Following a review of options, it was agreed that there was no immediate benefit to be gained, nor was there a viable business proposition which would release grant funding.

Looking forward to another exciting year, the Directors will schedule a planning meeting to review the CADISPA outcomes and Community Plan and consider the focus for the next twelve months.

Our day to day costs such as accountancy fees, insurance and operating costs of the Company are mounting. The regular fund raising events help in paying to keep us afloat. A very big thank you to everyone who has helped us in our fund raising activities this year. They are of the utmost importance. The Burger Stall at the Annual Show and the Christmas Auction together raised more than £2,400. I would like to thank my happy band of trusty volunteers for working so hard at the Burger stand and thank you to all our customers for buying the burgers. The generosity of people who donate wares to the Christmas Auction never fails to astound me, nor does the generosity of the bidders. It is always an enjoyable evening for all the family. But we still need to explore other ways of generating funds to develop a sustainable company and allow for development.

We are, as you all know and realise, an exceptionally busy Company. All the projects need a lot of administration by the Directors and we must ensure that everything we undertake is properly and efficiently managed - and all this on a purely voluntary basis.

We all should be extremely proud of our Directors who work tirelessly on our behalf to make the village a vibrant, thriving and exciting place to live, work, raise a family and be welcoming to visitors. In other words a happy functioning village which will benefit all and which will ultimately be shaped by you, and your wishes and visions for the future, truly 'keeping Sunart a great place to live, work and visit.'

I am continually in awe of the breadth of knowledge and experiences present at our SCC meetings. Each director has different skills to offer and as a company we gel together very well. Although disagreements may occur, as they can and should in meetings, there is never any agro and we always work amicably through any differences and retain our sense of humour. I can't thank my fellow Directors enough for all their input and hard work. We are extremely fortunate to have James Hilder on board with us since his breadth of knowledge in this field is second to none.

I can thoroughly recommend becoming a Director. If anyone would like to join us in this interesting, visionary work, which is often challenging but extremely rewarding, you will be made very welcome and we would love to have you on board.

We are a Community Company, and without Community support there would not be a Company and our vision for the future would never happen. Thankfully, with your help, we are in an excellent position to continue moving forward and growing, to ensure that Sunart is a 'great place to live, work and visit,' and we are certainly achieving this by 'all working together and building a strong community for the future.'"

5. New Website Update

Isobel Baker, explained that there had been problems with the website. The site had been updated using a free software package however this has crashed and it was impossible to rebuild using that software. However, Dean Mann, a website designer and builder had moved to the village and joined Paths group and the Community Company. Dean offered his services to build a website and he and Isobel have been working together and we now have a website. Isobel explained the layout of the website, what information is available e.g. the minutes and the different project groups

and how to access information. This is a work in progress and the website will continue to be developed. The directors thank Dean for giving his time and expertise to the company and John Tyldesley presented him with a bottle of whiskey as a token of our appreciation.

6. Sunart Community Benefit Fund (CBF)

J Hilder gave an update and presentation on the monies received, grants awarded and the totals of support the CBF awards had generated. There is information on the website and a folder in the library for those who do not have access to the Internet.

A proposal from the floor was made that the Company directors should review the Sunart CBF strategy and direction. J Hilder agreed and pointed out that the Company, when the CBF and the Panel was established, had set for a review after three years. The Directors will organise a meeting to review the strategy, direction and operation of the CBF. There was a concern for the need to explain how monies had been awarded, to overcome any perceived misconceptions, and that more publicity is needed.

7. Projects Update

Isobel Baker gave an update on the Longrigg Woodland, that consultants had been appointed and would prepare a report on the feasibility and viability. A question was asked if there would be a public meeting about Longrigg Woodland. It was explained that the consultants had included in their proposal consultation with the community, which was one of the reasons for appointing them. When their report is available and there information and their recommendations then that is the time for the public meeting. A question was asked about progress on the swimming pool on community hub. It was explained that the Swimming Pool project group were to arrange to meet and present options, however, this group has met since. The Community Hub concept is still open and the Men's Shed is a part of this. Also, the Visitor Information Centre and purchase is proceeding. The heritage element is regularly reviewed with the Community Council as the Board are cognisant the importance to the local community of the substantial and important private collection amassed by George Fox and the wishes of his heirs.

8. Treasurer's report

Audited accounts were tabled and presented by the treasurer. A question was asked about payments for mooring and it was agreed that this query be taken to the Loch Group meeting on the 25th October 2018. Another suggestion was that the LDO be given a separate cost centre for income and expenditure.

The acceptance of the accounts was made by C wislon and Seconded by L Cameron.

9. Retiral & Election of Directors

There were three applications received for the two vacancies for elected directors. The applications were from:

- Alison Carmichael
- Eric McVicar
- Matt Simpkinson

An election took place by a secret ballot. The Chair announced the results, that Alison Carmichael and Matt Simpkinson were duly elected.

John Tyldesley, the current Chair, announced that he is stepping down as chair but will continue to serve as a director. John stated that serving was a pleasure, entertaining and interesting and he felt he now wanted to focus more on the Men's Shed. James Hilder proposed a vote of thanks to John for all his hard work and contributions over the years. James presented, on behalf of the Board and the Company, a bunch of flowers for Maureen and a bottle of wine to John, as a token of our gratitude and appreciation.

10. Any Other Business

There were no items of other business

The Chair thanked everyone for attending and their participation and closed the meeting.