**Sunart Community Company**

**Annual Report April 2022 – March 2023**

**Structure and Management**

The company is managed by a Board of Directors, elected to the Board in accordance with the procedures outlined in the company’s Articles of Association. The Sunart Community Council and the Strontian Angling Association each have a seat on the Board. Up to three directors also may be co-opted by the Board to serve until the date of the next AGM. Directors are provided with an induction pack and sign up to a Code of Conduct and provide a register of interests to promote transparency.

The directors set the strategy and policy of the company, and generally control and supervise the company’s activities, monitor its financial position. During 2022-2023 we had two part time employees, the Oakwoods Co-ordinator and an administrative officer, whose tasks include updating the website and social media, maintaining the membership database and producing periodic updates to members, and provide the admin support for Community Benefit Fund (CBF). The company has also engaged a person to provide a bookkeeping service for the company and the Oakwood Tourism and Crafts using the SAGE accounting system.

The members of the company consist of the subscribers who are ordinary members. Ordinary members are over 16, ordinarily resident in the community, are on the electoral register and who support the objectives of the company. There was no annual Membership fee for 2022 - 2023. The company must maintain no fewer than 20 members. It currently has 152 residents listed as Ordinary Members. Two directors have retired from the board and moved away from the area and two new directors have been appointed.

**Risk**

The directors have conducted their own review of the major risks to which the charity is exposed, and systems have been established to mitigate those risks. A director has been appointed to provide oversight of the company Risk Register.

**Reserves**

The policy of the charity is to retain sufficient funds required to meet the on going running costs in respect of insurance costs, levies etc. The Board is of the opinion that the balances held at the year-end by the charity were prudent to ensure that these commitments could be met.

**Aims and objectives**

The objectives of the charity are to manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the Community and the public in general as an important part of the protection and sustainable development of Scotland’s natural environment. In this context "sustainable development" means development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It is the position of the Board that it does not generally wish to see publicly owned assets sold into private ownership. If the company can use its legal structure and relevant legislation to secure that asset for future generations it will attempt to do so, where resources and prevailing circumstances allow. When the Board becomes aware of a sale or potential sale of publicly owned property it may consider whether that property offers a strategic or operational fit with the aims of the Company and or the 2014 Sunart Community Action Plan or the 2023 Community Consultation Report. If so, it will consider undertaking an initial or detailed feasibility study to confirm the potential for asset purchase. This policy does not imply that every property will be purchased but confirms the intention of the incumbent Board to examine the potential for each property, as part of its duty to future generations. Where the asset acquisition appears to offer limited opportunity, viability or that prevailing resources prevent acquisition, then no action will be taken.

The work of the Company has been grouped under three key activities:

* **Enhanced Facilities for the Community**
* **Fundraising, Income Generation**
* **Sunart Community Benefit Fund (CBF)**

Following a presentation to the board in June 2022 it was acknowledged that a potential overarching theme might be a transition to net zero i.e. seeking to help the community become more resilient in the face of climate change and carbon reduction. The company has worked with the Community Council and established a Sunart Resilience Group. The Company also look to work with Urram to progress care activities locally.

**Enhanced Facilities for the Community**

The Community Company aims to work closely with the Sunart Community Council for the benefit of the community. As the Sunart Community Council are not permitted to own assets, where land and, or facilities in the public or government ownership are offered for sale they can ask the Community Company to explore the community benefit, feasibility and viability for the community.

The Community Company continued to work on existing projects including Longrigg Woodland community buyout, facilities at the head of Loch Sunart, and to make a success of the community run visitor centre – Oakwood Tourism and Crafts.

**Longrigg Woodland:** We continued to progress the feasibility of a community buyout and the directors agreed to take forward the community buyout as volunteers from the community stepped forward to take on the project. A Longrigg Working Group was formed and they are undertaking work to progress to a Community Asset Transfer Scheme (CATS) Stage 2 application to purchase the woodland on behalf of the community . Decision expected in summer 2023.

**The Loch Development Group** The plan to refurbish the shed and repair the concrete on the slipway continues. The open water swimmers and kayakers use the shed and slipway. We continue to maintain our three visitor moorings for visiting yachts but usage has declined since Covid. as the de facto operators of the former Sunart Moorings Association. More work is required at the green shed and on the jetty.

**Paths, Maps and Trails Group**, - Following requests to the working group a bench has been installed on the village green and another outside the Oakwood shop. There have been further requests for benches to be located by the Green Shed, at the Teddy Bears Picnic and on our land by the Strontian river bridge. The trees on the Back Road have been surveyed and remedial work carried out with those overhanging the public road to be triaged and remedial work carried out by Highland Council Roads Dept.

**Men’s Shed**  - The applications for electricity and water connection have been connected and an electric meter installed. A health and safety and risk assessment has been conducted and Urram has provided grant funding for paint and materials for the repainting of the portacabin. We hope to secure funds for an Activities Coordinator in 2023.

**Website:** Our part-time admin worker has taken on the responsibility for maintaining information on our website and our social media, and also for our communications, which include updates in the local monthly magazine (the De tha dol?) and periodic updates to our members. The company member database was updated as a result of working with the Sunart Community Renewables distribution of £150 cheques to every local resident household.

**Fisheries, Angling**: The fishing permits for the Strontian River and Loch Doilet, and Boat Hire on Loch Doilet continue to be sold to raise funds for the community company. The Angling Association now operates of a sub-committee of the Community Company, with club funds held in a ringfenced account within the company.

**Heritage**: The Company continue to work Dualchas Sunart Heritage Group towards the purchase of the Church of Scotland Strontian church. A grant of £3,000 from the Sunart Community Benefit Fund (SCBF) for an assets transfer application was awarded and a further £20,000 from the Scottish Land Fund (SLF) for the cost of a survey and a consultant report has been obtained. Dualchas have conducted a graveyard recording project, produced a leaflet, held an exhibition and conducted work on the “Sunart Archives”. The Church of Scotland valuation of the church has been received but given the amount of remedial work required this is considered to over value the property. Discussions and negotiations are on going.

**Current Assets** include:

* The Oakwood Tourism & Crafts
* Old School House Plot
* Former Composting Site & Men’s Shed Building
* Community Greenhouse
* Community Woodland Plot.
* Green Shed and Jetty Car Park and lease on the jetty & slip
* Three visitor 15 tonne visitor moorings.
* Ownership of the Sunart Community Hydro land, leased to SCR
* Two rowing boats for fishing on Loch Doilet
* “Muck Truck” motorised wheelbarrow
* Awning and burger stall signs for the Agricultural Show burger stall
* 2 3x3 metre gazebos
* 2 K6 Telephone Kiosks, one located in Polloch and the other in Scotstown
* A replacement bridge for the Faeries Path (still to be installed)

The items listed above are in addition to areas of recreational ground around the village.

**Fundraising, Income Generation**

Our income is from the Sunart Agricultural Show, (Burger Stall) and a Christmas Market & Auction, which are currently the two main fundraising activities. These complement funds raised from Angling tickets and moorings/jetty user fees and any contribution transferred from Oakwood Tourism & Crafts.

**Oakwood Tourism & Crafts** – Oakwood provides an outlet for 26 local craft producers to display and sell their work. It generates an income for Oakwood to cover the running costs with any surplus being retained by the company towards other overhead costs and supporting the work of the company. A new manager was appointed in April 2022 A work day was organised to maintain the building and benches and flower tubs have been installed. Also a new iPad has obtained and All Square software installed

We must continue emphasise the importance and the value of the volunteer and community support that we have, this is vital and critical to our achieving our goals.

**Sunart Community Benefit Fund (CBF)**

The Community Company helps distribute and audit profits donated by Sunart Community Renewables and we are grateful to the Board of Sunart Community Renewables for their continued generosity. Significantly SCR decided to distribute some of the profits caused by high wholesale electricity prices as “Cost of Living Payments” the community which significantly increased turnover this year.

Awards of £62,696 were made including Cost of Living Award payments of £150 per household totalling £34,200. The 2022/23 recipients were:

* Sunart Heritage Fund Dualchas & Buyout Feasibility
* MAAD Pipe Band
* Strontian Primary Playground
* Strontian Angling Association
* Longrigg Woodland
* Sunart Community Company Administration
* Sunart Men’s Shed
* Polloch Defibrillator (matched by Community Council) Dualchas

The Directors are immensely grateful for the time, consideration and commitment of the SCBF Panel volunteers.

**Investment – Sunart Community Endowment Fund**

Since the building of the community hydro and the establishment of the Sunart Community Benefit Fund there has been an ambition to start to invest money “for a rainy day” – or to be precise, to have some revenue coming into the community long after the current subsidies for renewable energy are gone. Accordingly Directors (in discussion with representatives from SCR) agreed to establish an endowment fund with Foundation Scotland. Importantly monies invested via the FS EQ Portfolio on the stock exchange, are only invested in companies that have been screen for their ethical behaviour. Whilst not as lucrative as say fossil fuel or armed weapons, such stocks will have an ethical footprint. £25,000 was donated to Foundation Scotland and the endowment established in October 2022, match funded with £25,000 of investments from Foundation Scotland. After an initial growth spurt, these investments have flat lined as a result of the Ukraine war, but its important to emphasise this is a long term investment. <https://www.foundationscotland.org.uk/set-up-fund/fund-management-forcommunities/community-investment>

**Employees**

Karyn Simpkinson is the part time manager of Oakwood Tourism and Crafts. Becky Drinkwater is our part-time administrative worker who provides updates to our website and social media and our communications, maintains the member database, provides admin support for the Longrigg Working Group and the admin support for the Sunart Community Benefit Fund.

**Looking to the Future**

At the AGM in January 2023 concerns raised included: access to healthcare services; ferry services; cost of fuel and household energy bills. The company was approached by Sunart Community Renewables to assist in the distribution of funds to every local resident household.

Work continued to analyse the data from the community survey, with a group to be set up to identify options and potential items to develop further; early indications are for church/ heritage, Strontian electric vehicle, Longrigg Woodland buyout completed, more activities and events in the village. Also, as the Burns’ Night supper and AGM proved so successful this will be repeated in 2024. Other targets were:

* To work with the Sunart Community Council Resilience Group and as part of this work to have the telephone box in the village centre re-commissioned.
* To work with the Highland Council and local village store provider to install two electric vehicle charging points on land shared with Company and the village store.
* To Install solar panels on the roof of Oakwood.

***Acknowledgements***

In this financial year we particularly wish to acknowledge support from:

* Sunart Community Council - various grants
* Sunart Community Renewables and the Sunart Community Benefit Fund
* Scottish Government - Inspiring Scotland “Ideas into Action” fund for the community consultation
* The Energy Savings Trust for solar panels on Oakwood
* Urram SCIO
* Highland Council – grant towards playpark equipment.
* Foundation Scotland - match funding investments in the Community Endowment Fund.
* All the local businesses, producers and individuals and members of our community for all their support.