

Sunart Community Company Annual General Meeting

7.30pm, Tuesday 29th October 2019
Sunart Centre, Strontian

Minutes

Attendees:

Directors: D Barker (Chair), J Hilder (Treasurer), J Jones (Secretary), A Carmichael, J Tyldesley

Members: M Jones, V Barker, A Edwards, C Wilson, P Madden I Baker, J McIntyre,

1. **Welcome:** The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all attending.
2. **Apologies & Notification by Proxy Vote:** D McCorkingdale, J MacKinnon, J Troup, K Proctor, J Tait, H Tait, L Cameron, M Tyldesley, E Shackleton, E Shackleton, M Hilder, D Calver, H Ricketts, J Madden.

3. Minutes of the last meeting & Matters Arising

Amendment: Item 8, second para. C Wislon amend to C Wilson. The minutes of the AGM 23rd October 2018 proposed by J Hilder, seconded by J Tyldesley.

4. Chair's Report:

The Chair explained the purpose of this report was to record the activities of the Company for the year April 2018 – March 2019 and also to update people about certain activities since. The Chair mentioned that copies of the written Company Annual Report are available, and this gives details of Company activities for the year. It provides details of Company structure, management and our aims and objectives, and makes interesting reading for anyone new to the company.

The Company is run by a Board of Directors, however, much of the work is done by special interest groups. The Chair wished to highlight activities of special note:

- One group, the Paths Maps and Trails group completed a path to Ardnastaing beach, had benches built, mapped local footpaths using a GPS device bought by the Company, took photographs of the paths and secured a grant for £1,400 from Paths for All, to produce a leaflet of walks around Sunart – a tremendous effort!
- The benches mentioned for the Paths Group were built by the Men's Shed. This is another group, set up in a building behind the Strontian Hotel. This is another very successful group, who are now making seating and signs to order, and offer fellowship, mainly to men although ladies are very welcome.
- The Loch Development Group was set up to develop the use of the Loch, centred around the jetty and slipway and also the wider Loch within the Sunart Community Company boundary. The Highland Council indicated early on that they would like to transfer ownership to the community, which was endorsed by the Sunart Community Council; however, the process and legal paperwork has taken forever. The Sunart Water Festival was organized but this had to be reduced to land-based activities because of the poor weather forecast. However, the children's events did take place.

- Another group is looking at the Longrigg woodland. The Forestry Commission Scotland, now Forestry and Land Scotland, informed the Community Company that they are going to dispose of this asset. The Community Company raised money to explore options to buy, as indications are that it could be viable for a community group, subject to access. Investigations are on-going.
- Another group came into being this year and is currently the most active of all. When Visit Scotland decided to sell the visitor information centre, the community had first option to buy it and the Community Company were very fortunate to obtain a grant to purchase and refurbish the building. Local craft producers were contacted, a group was formed and by the end of March, things were ready for the 2019 tourist season and the name became the Oakwood information and tourism centre.

The Chair explained that the Company has two part-time employees, Izzy Baker and Lara Van de Peer. Izzy is the part-time project worker working to help us move forward with the Oakwood visitor centre and Longrigg Woodland. Lara is employed by the Community Company as we have the necessary procedures and systems in place. However, Lara is managed by the five Community Councils and funded by the NHS Highland. Her role is project officer working with the Dail Mhor and Care on the Peninsulas project.

Many of the Company activities have required a good deal of money. In almost every case the money has come from grants and a huge variety of sources. However, there are many things for which we cannot obtain grants, such as insurance, accountancy fees, etc. For these the Community Company has to have money-raising activities. The two main annual activities being the Burger stall at the Agricultural Show and the Christmas Auction. These are only successful thanks to the enormous efforts of lots of volunteers, on these events and by assisting on the various groups throughout the year. The Chair thanked all volunteers for the varying contributions they all make which contribute to the ultimate success of the Community Company. The Chair thanked the Treasurer and Secretary for their time they give and their expertise, which is invaluable.

Five directors, Louise Cameron, Kate Campbell, Chris Millar-Craig, Janice MacKinnon and Kate Proctor are resigning this year. We wish to thank them for their contribution and help and we wish them well. We look forward to their help at future events as and when they can.

All the Directors and helpers bring expertise and the Chair invited anyone who is wondering whether or not to get involved then “don’t hesitate, please get involved.” He emphasised that “in the current political climate, if we as a community don’t do it for ourselves, then it won’t get done.”

The Chair emphasised the many activities mentioned in the full annual report but wanted to briefly update on some activities since April 2019:

- The Paths group got their leaflet printed, it is available in the Oakwood and selling well
- The land around the jetty and slipway and the green shed now belong to the Community Company and a lease for the jetty and slipway from the Crown Estate is being finalised
- The Men’s Shed will be moving to the Portakabin which has been purchased and located on the old compost site

- The Water Festival this year was blessed with fantastic weather and was a great success
- The old visitor centre, now called Oakwood, has been trading successfully and the Community Company has been selling books and maps and there will be special events for Christmas shopping

Finally, the Community Company has a turnover of around £100,000 and assets of £156,000. This is a tremendous foundation on which to build and should give us optimism for the future.

There were questions:

- Oakwood: how do crafters generate income for the Community Company, is it rental or commission? Currently it is a mixture of both rental and commission.
- The Oakwood current account shows a loss but was this because Oakwood had only just opened and there were set up costs? Yes.
- Income from Oakwood; hopefully, will generate enough income to employ a manager and a surplus towards other costs and overheads of the Community Company? This will be something that the Community Company Board and Oakwood will look into this year.
- Comments were made that the volunteers have enjoyed and are enjoying working their shifts in the Oakwood centre
- There are still things to be done at Oakwood e.g. painting, noticeboards and advertising space
- A question asked as to whether or not there had been any problems with pilferage – there has been none and hopefully this would continue to be the case. The point that the shop is always staffed and there is CCTV and the customers can see the screen, is thought to be an effective deterrent.

5. Sunart Community Benefit Fund (CBF)

Information provided that shows £94,787 has been awarded since it began which “unlocked” over £1,000,000 in grants and funding. This figure is inflated because of the New Primary School by £800,000, which skews the ratio. However, if the New Primary School is removed from the equation, each Hydro pound (£) generates £3 with other funds raised. This is a very good fundraising ratio.

There was a meeting with the CBF Panel in May 2019, which reviewed progress and future needs. There is a group looking at options for developing a “legacy” fund for the future to generate an income when Feed in Tariffs (FITs) cease.

The CBF Panel have worked well together, they have thorough discussions when making decisions and demonstrated and exercised, prudence. A succession plan will be in place and there are discussions about possible areas where grants don't seem to be targeting certain groups e.g. the 50year + group.

Comments and questions: Chair of Sunart Community Renewables (SCR) explained that the company had little income since before Christmas 2018 as Electricity Company to whom the power is sold stopped trading. This means we have not received sales or Feed In Tariff income. SCR are therefore owed a substantial payment in FITs: over £50,000. It is hoped that SCR will eventually receive a payment before the end of 2019.

Question: Who are SCR selling electricity to now? A: Good Energy and EDF and a payment is due in November 2019.

In the first 3 years of operation all FIT payments could go to the SCR and with generous payments to the CBF, as there were no buy-back of shares. However, from 2019 buying back shares has begun which means there is less money available for the CBF.

An observation was made, that in some ways the FITs payment problems was a shock, but it has raised awareness that the “fund” is precious and needs preserving.

6. Projects Update

Longrigg Woodland: we are currently examining costs of extraction and the option of having to use Longrigg road with the cost of renewal/ repair afterwards.

Men’s Shed: A Portakabin has been delivered and planning permission obtained for this to be sited on the old composting siting. We are currently applying to have services connected. This will then be a location for the Men’s Shed two morning a week and will be available for other use at other times. It will include a social space for teas / coffees / chat.

Old Primary School: Highland Council have said that they have no plans for this building. Currently the Community Councils are exploring costs and options for the future use, such as leasing or purchase. There is the Village Hall, which is part of the Dail Mhor and Old Primary School complex and Highland Council want to see this run along the lines of the Sunart Centre and Highlife Highland. The five Community Councils are looking at the options for Dail Mhor and the Old Primary School building, as there is an uncertain future. The Highland Councils position on the Village Hall looks similarly uncertain but that remains the business of the Hall Committee. NHS Highland has been investing in Dail Mhor as a Respite Centre which is good news for local jobs, and care services but have no wish to take on the ownership of the building.

The Jetty, Slipway car park area and green shed: this is something we will be working on in the next 6 months.

A recharging point was a question raised, as this was previously mentioned, and that the Community Company should consider installing a charging point at Oakwood. It was explained that Alistair McLean had applied to install two charging points and the Community Company does not wish to compete. However, it is believed that the adjacent electricity substation will not cope with the type charging point that is wanted. This is something that needs clarifying and we will take this to the next Community Company Board meeting.

7. Treasurer’s report

Audited accounts were tabled and presented by the treasurer. The Treasurer explained that this is a 29 page document that will be placed on the Community Company website for those who wish to read the full accounts:

- The front page is a balance sheet
- Shows income from charitable activity and other activity

- There are restricted funds given for specific purposes
- Fixed assets have increased due to Oakwood Visitor Information Centre and the moorings
- Pages 24-27 show outstanding payments received
- Fund raising are shop; BBQ; Christmas auction; boat hire; permits and moorings
- Costs: rent Loch Doilet; shop
- Other costs: wages; pensions; moorings costs; capital depreciation; Men's Shed cost; insurance

Annual Income	£102,043
Annual Expenditure	£ 56,796
Funds Carried Forward	£157,604
Total Funds Carried Forward	£202,851

Most of this is the assets of the new properties and restricted funds – in fact the unrestricted surplus was only £231, and total surplus unrestricted after adjustments was £7,390.

There were no queries. The treasurer explained that the Community Company need to continue with fund raising as it may be asset rich but more income is required to cover running costs. He explained that the Community Company are now at the stage where an experienced treasurer and/or book keeper is now required.

Treasurer proposed the accounts, which were seconded by J Tyldesley. The Chair proposed a vote of thanks to J Hilder for all his time and effort on this matter.

8. Retiral & Election of Directors

There are five directors retiring: Louise Cameron, Kate Campbell, Chris Millar-Craig, Janice MacKinnon and Kate Proctor.

We have received three applications for election as directors:

- Helen Ricketts
- Debbie Calver
- James Hilder

The three applicants were elected by default, as there are five vacancies. There are spaces for co-opted directors. David Barker will step down but will be co-opted at the next Board meeting.

People are invited and encouraged to consider applying to be a director.

9. Any Other Business

There were no items of other business

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