

## Sunart Community Company Board Minutes – Meeting 30<sup>th</sup> October 2023 – Village Hall

**Attending:** P Sharples, J Hilder, John Jones, J Madden, T Burke, L Macgregor K Simpkinson, A Hughes

**Apologies:** R Henderson, B Drinkwater

1. Chair welcomed people to the meeting
2. **Acceptance of minutes of the last meeting:** Minutes of the meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 were proposed J Hilder; seconded: T Burke. There were no amendments.
3. **Community Company Planning:**
  - a. **Christmas Market:** Karyn gave an update. Currently there are 16 stallholders confirmed and she will need to speak with Jacob Green about the siting of the tables. Karyn has rationalised the pricing this year to a price for one, two or three tables, which is the maximum someone can have. This is to avoid the unnecessary work and confusion caused last year by people chopping and changing and asking for more tables, etc. The Community Council is in abeyance; previously they have run the market jointly with the Company. The Primary School Parent Council have offered to run the refreshments stall at the counter area and provide home baking for sale. The home baking is something the Company offered in previous years so this will mean less income however it was agreed for the Parent Council to run the refreshment, mulled wine and some snacks. Joan hoped to be able to help with home baking. J Hilder commented that we will need to apply for an alcohol licence. The question was raised about other food stalls: there are no other stallholders providing food. The Strontian café will be asked if they want to provide turkey rolls, etc. in the dining area and using the domestic science room; if so we should charge them this year and £30 was the suggest fee. It was agreed that the Company will make a donation to the Sunart Centre for the use of the hall and other areas  
**Raffle:** directors are asked to assist with obtain/providing items for the raffle. Paul will host the raffle draw. The prizes will be split into smaller lots as people as appear to like the occasion this provides.  
Setting up on the night: Tony, James, John, Karyn will be there at 4pm to set up – others are welcome to assist.
  - b. **On line auction:** a new, improved system has been introduced this year, this allows Becky more and better control. Becky is contacting local business to ask for items for the auction; James will ask John MacDonald about venison, Paul offered a romantic stay at Heatherbank. If anyone has items then please contact Becky.
4. **Longrigg Woodland:** Andy Hughes attended and gave an update: all the work has been done for the SLF grant application. The initial announcement was embargoed, as the Scottish Government likes to announce all the successful applications at the same time. The Company application was a success and we have achieved a massive discount and also funding for a harvesting manager for 12 months to organise and manage the priority harvesting of the commercial timber. Andy felt that impact of the announcement was reduced somewhat however James mentioned the project and award was commented on positively on social media by various groups. Andy mentioned the ongoing discussion with FLS for the cost being levied for use of the turning area of XXp per tonne, which is the commercial rate. The total cost to the community will be £thousands and some on the working group think this cost should be reduced. The FLS have given a date in 6<sup>th</sup> November for reply, which does not leave must leeway. However, if a letter of request from the Company to the FLS for an extension to the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2024, the extension would be allowed. Action Andy to send wording to J Jones who will prepare and submit the letter of request.  
On the question of the proposed levy price per tonne, James explained that he has been working with other organisations and he is very aware of how the Scottish Government are applying pressure on the FLS to increase their income and understands that some on the working group may take issue with this. The SLF have given the project a massive discount and perhaps the negotiations with FLS should not become too protracted or acrimonious. There will be concerns about extracting the commercial timber and obtaining a good price, however perhaps when

considering the negotiations the working group consider all factors, such as level of profit from the felled timber, also, the award was made with a massive discount and the fact FLS is under pressure from the Scottish Government.

James asks that the trustees become more aware of our increasing responsibilities as this project moves forward, not least in the sums of money that will be going through the Company accounts. Also, it is important that the next phase of the project is managed and there is continuity given that two members of the Longrigg Woodland working group have now moved away from Strontian. James asked if Andy would agree to being co-opted to the Board, to which Andy agreed. John agreed and proposed that Andy continue to lead on this project thus providing the necessary experience of how the project has progressed and continuity as the project moves forward. The Board voted and agreed to Andy being the lead and his co-option to the Board.

**Men's Shed:** Nothing at this time

**Oakwood:** Karyn provided updated sales figures and comparisons for 2023 compared to 2022. It appears that the ferry didn't have a big impact for visitor numbers for the first three months and whilst there are some differences overall there is a slight increase in sales this year. There is a meeting with the producers in the Village Hall at 7pm on Thursday 2<sup>nd</sup> November. There is the belief by some producers that Oakwood is making a profit and it was never meant for profits to go back to the Company and subsidise other parts of the Community Company activities. It was agreed that this is a misconception and the covering page of the Producer Agreement, that all producers have signed, sets this out very clearly. Directors are asked to attend this important meeting.

The EV **Public** charging point installation: John Jones and Paul Sharples have signed off the wayleave. The Urram charging point will be installed shortly.

**Lochs and Moorings:** the Mussel Farm has not responded to James' request to conduct a moorings inspection. The mooring fees collection is still outstanding.

**Paths:** the Paths Around Strontian Leaflet reprint: John apologised for his oversight, he meant to re order this in September. The Board were asked to approve the expenditure of £896.94 to purchase a reprint of 1,200 copies of the leaflet. The expenditure was approved and John will place the order with Halliwells. The leaflet will be sold at £1.50 per copy

**Website, Communications and Newsletter:** Website – Becky has updated minutes and community updates upon her return, and the list of directors. This week she will plan to add upcoming social events to the website.

Social media: Becky is planning posts for the launch of the auction, Longrigg Woodland updates, and to promote the social events announced in November Dtd?. Please contact Becky if there are any other pressing items for social media.

Email News: Becky would like to do a Christmas update from the Company to all members, as she did last year. It doesn't need to be a full newsletter, more of a brief email update and a chance to wish members a Merry Christmas, and announce the amount raised from this year's auction. Please let Becky know if there are any items you wish to be included in this.

**Heritage:** Church sale: James has written to Ian Campbell with regards the piece of land on the riverbank alongside the church, however, he has still to go and speak with Ian. The Church of Scotland's (CoS) surveyor is adamant that his valuation £120,000 is correct. James has done some research and this makes this church one of the most expensive in price per foot terms, despite the same valuer surveying the building in 2022 and listing £100k of repairs, which at today's prices would be over £140k. . James understands that the SLF are prepared to increase their grant offer provided a joint re-valuation can be prepared or the CoS accepts a revised valuation from our valuer. The alternative would be to approach the community for shortfall in acquisition price or to seek to apply for a community right to buy registration on the property, which would force a sale to the SCC. Andy suggested that writing to the Church of Scotland Committee might be another option. Joan suggested that James deal direct with CoS trustees regarding the sale. James has just received a revised valuation of £50k so will see what response this receives.

**Social/ Activities:** The clothes swap: a lot of items were brought and the overall quality was good. However it was a lot of work and time for the £21 raised. It was a good idea, worth trying but it might work better in a larger community. It will not be repeated.

Hogmanay: the Village Hall is booked, live music is arranged; there is a £3 entrance for adults and no charge for children. It starts at 8pm 'til late and people seem keen.

Burns' Night and AGM: the Ariundle Centre is booked and it is hoped that Kate can accommodate more people. The suggestion is that we charge just a minimum amount over the cost of the food; last year it was an additional £2. This amount was agreed.

5. **Assets and Risk Register:** Tony presented the Company risk register, explained the importance of the role of the "action owner" and there followed a discussion. It was agreed that the Company Code of Practice, which is provided to all directors upon joining the Company as their induction pack and this includes the responsibilities for directors to follow. It was agreed that the Code of Practice should be reissued to directors each year at the AGM.
6. **Income generation:** Nothing at this time
7. **Finance inc SCBF & Oakwood:** Oakwood bank account: £11,072.60p; Company account: £27,772.37p this includes various monies ring fenced e.g. £6,000 towards the play park swing. James had applied to Highland Council for some funding towards a community worker, however, this application has been rejected and we understand the fund was heavily oversubscribed. James will apply to the SCBF. Our bookkeeper, Wendy, has mentioned that she will need to increase her charges in line with her other clients, and this was agreed.
8. **Staff Matters:** Not discussed on this occasion
9. **Any other business:**
  - a. FLS sale of Shed in Polloch; this shed is in a very poor state of repair and would be a burden to the Company, so the decision is not to proceed unless there is genuine community interest – the information has gone on Facebook.
  - b. Offer of a bench on behalf of Lorna Tonge. It was agreed to accept this offer and site the bench on our land opposite Eric McVicar's property, where a picnic bench was previously sited.
  - c. Faeries Road Bridge – James will arrange for legal agreement with FLS after which arrangements can be made to install the bridge.
  - d. James mentioned that the Company should have a representative director on the Sunart Community Renewable (SCR) - our last representative was David Barker. Andy Hughes agreed to be the Company representative on the SCR Board.

**Date of the next meeting:** 25<sup>th</sup> November 2023 – the Christmas Market and the AGM is Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January 2024

#### Future Meetings

Month	Date	Day	School Holiday	Comments
November	25 <sup>th</sup>	Saturday		Xmas Market, auction tree lights switch on. Venue: outdoors or Sunart Centre?
December			25 <sup>th</sup> – 31 <sup>st</sup> Dec	Oakwood closes until March 2023 – Producer stock cleared and stock take done for end of year accts. Maintenance work done.
January	27 <sup>th</sup> 2024	Saturday	1 <sup>st</sup> – 5 <sup>th</sup> Jan	<b>AGM &amp; Burns' Night Supper</b>
February	5 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	19 <sup>th</sup> & 20 <sup>th</sup> 21 <sup>st</sup> (Inset) Feb	If post AGM i.e. for appointment of office bearers
March	4 <sup>th</sup>	Monday	29 <sup>th</sup> March	