

# Sunart Community Benefit Fund

## Panel Meeting Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2025

### 7.30pm, Zoom

**Present:** Eilidh-Ann Philips (Chair), John Jones (SC Company Rep), Denise Anderson, Laura Wilson, Rebecca Drinkwater (Admin). Heather Pykett, Alex Pykett, Sandra Lawton

**Apologies:** Michelle Hilder, James Hilder, Dugald MacIntyre, Bryan Gregg, Catriona Hunter

#### 1) Meeting Minutes for November 2024: John Jones proposed, Denise Anderson seconded

#### 2) SCBF Review Document

- a) Discussion – Panel members all agreed with the review summary and comments. See separate document.
- b) Panel Composition

| Age Group                                                  | Total number that should be in each group                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 16-25                                                      | 2 – Dugald, 1 vacancy<br>Laura and Denise to follow up on leads for a potential addition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 26-44                                                      | 3 – Laura, Alex, Heather                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| 45-64                                                      | 3 – Michelle, Bryan Gregg<br><br>Eilidh-Ann wishes to stand down as chair and from the panel and let someone else take the reins – the panel thanked Eilidh-Ann for her hard work and support of the SCBF since it's inception. Eilidh-Ann will try to find a replacement, and if not will still join for the November 2025 panel meeting. |
| 65+                                                        | 3 – Denise<br>Sandra Lawton                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| SCCouncil/S<br>CCompany<br>reps: – john<br>and<br>Catriona | 1 vacancy                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

## 2) Current Funding Available

**£88,571**

**Current Reserves**

**Note – SCBF Pane thanks Sunart Community Renewables for their generous donation of £65K this year.**

### **This Rounds Applications**

#### **a) Declarations of interest**

| <b>Application</b> | <b>Interests Declared</b> |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Longrigg        | Becky John                |
| 2. Council         | John                      |
| 3. Ewen's Room     |                           |

#### **3) Discussion of each application and award amount**

| <b>Application</b>                     | <b>Award Amount</b>                             | <b>Discussion</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Longrigg Woodland Project (7500</b> | <b>£7500</b>                                    | General consensus of panel what to approve the funding application, but mention a proviso in the letter that when the harvesting begins and money becomes available to the project from sales, a discussion about a donation to SCBF Panel could be had.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| <b>Faeries Road</b>                    | <b>£3078</b>                                    | Approved by all – a well used path so would be good to support                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>Ewen's Room</b>                     | <b>£15,000<br/>(£5000 per year for 3 years)</b> | <p>The first year of funding was approved by all – however the panel wish to see attendance and impact from the first year of the project, before deciding about funding for further years. Ewen's Room are however welcome to submit an application for further funding after the first year.</p> <p>The panel suggested a venue with a lower room hire rate (such as Strontian Village Hall), might be worth Ewen's Room considering, to reduce costs and maximise benefit for Wellbeing Workshops and Open Doors participants.</p> |
| <b>Total Awarded</b>                   | <b>£15,578</b>                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

**Minuted Thanks to James Hilder for his time as Treasurer with Sunart Community Company, and his efforts to organise the financial figures and reports for each panel meeting. Alison Gainsford has recently become the Sunart Community Company secretary, and so will, following a handover with James, be providing the financial updates going forward.**

**Action: Becky to ask about endowment fund**

## 5) Feedback from Applicants

Agree that we need to gather feedback and make sure funds are spent as agreed.

6) **SCBF Endowment Fund:** Action: Becky to ask about endowment fund

7) **Remaining funds going into Autumn 2025.**

£ 72,993

Un allocated funds remaining

8) **Next meeting**

A round will be held in Autumn 2025, on **12<sup>th</sup> November 2025**, 7.30pm, via zoom

## 9) Any Other Business (AOB)

### Looking Ahead – Projects in Development - *Update from James Hilder, SCC Director*

#### Sunart Rainforest Project

This project, valued at over £100,000, is primarily funded by NatureScot. In the event of a delay in drawing down funds on a month-by-month basis, it may become necessary for SCC to pay contractor invoices upfront to ensure timely payment. Reimbursement would then follow upon receipt of funds from NatureScot.

While we will endeavour to utilise SCC reserves for this purpose, there may be occasions where it is necessary to temporarily “borrow” from the Sunart Community Benefit Fund (SCBF) to maintain cash flow.

**Question to the Panel:** Should such a situation arise, and all transactions be appropriately documented, would the Panel object to this approach? For example, if an invoice of £3,000 were paid in advance of receiving funds from NatureScot, would this present any concerns? This would be a significantly more cost-effective solution than arranging an overdraft, especially considering SCC has £80,000 in the bank.

**Panel Response:** John declared an interest due to his involvement with Longrigg Woodland. The remainder of the Panel agreed with the proposed approach. A similar arrangement has previously been undertaken for the Scotstown Common Grazing project.

#### Strontian Playpark

The SCBF may be asked to contribute additional funds towards the redevelopment of the Strontian Playpark. Community fundraising efforts are due to commence in earnest.

#### Old Primary School – Dail Mhor Site

SCC is exploring the feasibility of taking on the former primary school at the Dail Mhor site. This would require match funding to engage a consultant and surveyor. While an application is not yet being submitted, this is shared as advance notice to the Panel.

#### 20th Anniversary Review

To mark its 20th anniversary, SCC is considering commissioning a Socio-Economic Impact Report on both the Sunart Community Benefit Fund and the broader activities of SCC. Although no application has been submitted in the current funding round, SCC may request an interim decision to enable the research to be completed within this milestone year. The estimated cost is approximately £5,000.

**Panel Feedback:** The Panel indicated support for interim applications in the event of an urgent funding requirement. All were happy to provide feedback via email rather than convening a full meeting in such cases.