

### **Minutes of Sunart Community Company Board meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2026**

Attending: J. Jones (Chair), A. Gainsford (Treasurer), N. Brooks (Secretary), S. Traynor, P. Sharples, N. Mellis, S. Willis.

Apologies: L. Cameron MacGregor, H. Taylor.

1. The minutes from the previous meeting (24-11-25) were accepted: proposed by A. Gainsford, seconded by N. Brooks. These have now been added to the web site.
2. It was noted that the scheduled Board meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> January was unable to take place as there were insufficient Board members present to form a quorum.
3. It was universally agreed to co-opt S. Willis as a Board director; proposed A. Gainsford, seconded P. Sharples.

### **Major Project reports:**

1. Dualchas Heritage Centre: S. Traynor updated the Board on the recent meeting held by the project and planning committee.
  - This has got off to a successful start, with Project Officer, A. Harpur, working on plans for initial funding and selection and appointment of architects for the first phase of development.
  - Planning for an open day, including a heritage display, is also underway.
  - S. Willis volunteered to create a promotional video to support wider awareness and a funding and donations campaign.
  - Meanwhile, essential maintenance on the roof and ceilings is underway and Highland Council are to be asked to repair or make-safe the damaged boundary wall.
  - The safety of heaters attached to water pipework is to be checked.
  - Hire rates were agreed as: £10/hour; £25/half day; £50/day. In each case, the cost of electricity will be added. Rates are provisional and will be revised once the building has been restored.
2. Oakwood:
  - Recruitment for a new Shop Manager is in progress. Once applications have been received then an interview panel will be set up.
  - It was agreed that the exterior will be repainted. N. Mellis, N. Brooks, P. Sharples and J. Jones volunteered to help with this work.
  - New signage is being produced – see note below.
  - The solar panels require inspection for insurance purposes. T. Burke to be contacted for advice.
3. Longrigg:
  - The access road and turning area is now complete and harvesting has commenced.
  - Firewood is also available by the load or half load.
4. Men's Shed/Craft Hub:
  - A. Harpur provided an email update on recent activities (see Appendix 1). Two points arose from this: relocation and restoration of the old mine carts (S. Traynor to action), and the removal of the generator from the NHS shed (to be moved to the old hatchery shed).





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5. Rainforest Project:

- A. Gainsford provided an update from a recent project group meeting (see Appendix 2). The existing funding and scope of works is nearing its completion.
- A request has been made by the group for the SCC to continue to act as the coordinating and managing body for any future funding applications. This was agreed unanimously by the Board, subject to each application including a contribution towards the administrative cost for the SCC to manage the process.
- It was also proposed that a member of the Rainforest Project group should be co-opted as an SCC Board Director. A. Gainsford to take this proposal to the group.

**Other activities:**

1. Visioning/strategic planning exercise: R. MacIntyre has previously offered to run a workshop. N. Brooks to ask for further details.
2. Signage/information boards are currently being produced for each of the main project sites. Initial design ideas were presented and discussed. N. Brooks to take the feedback to the sign makers.
3. Declaration of interest forms to be completed by all Directors and SCC employees.
4. SCC stand at the agricultural show 2026: previously, the stand has been run largely by SCC Directors. It was proposed that, as each Project group benefits from the administrative support of the Board, each group should be approached to ask for volunteers to help with this year's show.
5. Next Board meeting will be on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2026.



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## **Appendix 1: Men's Shed/Craft Hub update from A. Harpur.**

### Site & Infrastructure:

- A tip run to clear old cupboards and other items from the site now completed.
- Green wheelie bins without lids, will contact council to remove these.
- Is there an update on relocating the old mine carts?

### Workshop & Programme Delivery

- Most of the tools have now been relocated to the men's shed. However, there is a generator that needs relocating as there is no room in the men's shed for it to be stored. (this is still in the NHS shed)
- I am sourcing an additional new large metal racking to store tools.
- PAT testing and tool sort out still needed.

### Urram Joint Project

- The weekly workshops run jointly with Urram continue to be successful; I have sourced some professional workshop leaders that are happy to run some sessions and work with us this year. We are also running some sessions in Lochaline and Acharachle.

### Engagement & Activities

- Edward Ferder ran a wood carving session in the workshop on Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> February; he is paying SCC a nominal rent for using the space. He provided his own tools and materials. I am keen to get the Men's shed/workshop end used and back in the public eye.
- Further sessions and workshops are in the planning stages with other people.
- Ella (hair dressing) continues to use the craft hub once a month and donates to SCC.
- **Open Day** I plan to hold an open day show casing the completed works, after the roof and gazebo and raised beds have been completed and the Polycrub is on site. There will be drop-in sessions being held in the workshop and the craft end and various other demonstrations throughout the day. BBQ and other entertainment are also being planned.

### Maintenance & Building Condition

- Heating is still running at low levels twice daily; dehumidifier running continuously. There has been a lot of condensation dripping from the ceiling recently.
- Minor mould developing on some internal walls needs regular cleaning.

### Funding

- We were successful with our CRF funding application and the work for a false roof/ raised beds/gazebo at the craft hub will begin in the nicer weather all the work is to be in kind so I will be recruiting volunteers.
- The work will be done by Polloch community to re-clad and re-roof their workshop.
- Work to be completed on both by February 2027

### Greenhouse.



- I would like to request again that priority be placed on finding new homes be for the contents of the greenhouse so that it can be used for growing purposes this year. The BBQ and gazebo's, gas bottles etc. Also, the generator in the NHS shed.

#### Heritage Centre

- Initial research on funders, attending first board meeting, contacting DTAS researching other communities that have converted churches. Preparing a list of surveyors and architects to approach for quotes (liaise with the heritage board for previous ones used)

#### **Appendix 2: Rainforest update from A. Gainsford.**

The 2 projects which are currently running, i.e., the Natural Regeneration and the Rainforest Regeneration project will finish at the end of March 2026. Both have achieved considerable success and outcomes and have laid the foundations for a continuation project and for the respective landowners to undertake work on their own ground and will provide the necessary information by way of reports which will support any funding applications they wish to make as individual landowners. This includes SCC although we have taken a slightly different approach in that we are producing a land management plan independently of this project. The overall plan for the SRF will set our plan in a wider context.

At the meeting of the SCRF group last week, discussion was held on the future of the project and of the potential to set up a Sunart Deer Management Group separate from the East Loch Shiel DMG. The discussion has not progressed far, but a critical element of any project and funding going forward was community support and engagement for a future project. This was expressed by all funding representatives at the meeting e.g., FLS, SCRPID and in particular NatureScot. NatureScot considers the SCRF to be an exemplar of the type of project they want to see going forward in terms of organisation, community engagement, cooperation of landowners and results to date. The Rainforest group have therefore asked if SCC would be willing to act as the applicant and administrator of funds for a future project which may cover wider elements of woodland management including education, events, woodland reinstatement etc. as well as ongoing deer culling, invasive species removal etc.

I agreed to take this outline proposal to SCC Board, but emphasised the following:

1. Any project put in place going forward would have to cover 100% of costs and contribute to the overall running costs of SCC.
2. A staff member would require to be employed to cover the day to day operations of the project and they should either undertake any tendering processes required by funders or the project should cover the costs by employing a consultant to undertake what can be an onerous task.
3. The landowner group would still require to be active in the development and operation of the project through volunteering as required via the current set up. I also proposed that at least **1 landowner member** become an SCC Board member and be responsible for reporting to the wider SCC Board. This would be in addition to the 2 members of the SCC Board members already on the group, i.e., John and myself.
4. If we are to go forward with another project, we take the time to work out what our priorities are and to make applications timeously to funding bodies so that we can make considered decisions. Funding is likely to come from a variety of sources including the private sector so we need to carefully consider timing, cost, and duration of the various elements of the overall project.





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**Recommendation:**

As one of the landowners involved in the project, I would recommend that we continue to engage with the rest of the landowners to see if there is potential to take forward a further project to develop the Sunart Rainforest. This accords with our ongoing view of developing Longrigg Forest. There is expertise within the current group and contractors to ensure success.



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