

Minutes of the HCD Board Meeting on 27 May 2021

Present

Flora Macleod (Chair), Fiona Jefferson, Innes Harrison, Domhnall Macdonald, Ranald Fraser, Sarah Fraser (Projects Manager), Euan MacLeod (Development Manager)

Welcome

Flora welcomed all to the meeting.

Approval of April Minutes

There were no issues from the minutes. The April minutes were approved.

Issues from the updates

Old Church Update (Sarah)

I will give a very short presentation on the possibility and costs of restoration. And, a business project proposal and ideas springboard. It would be beneficial if during the meeting the Board Members could vote for or against continuing with this opportunity. This way I can either confidently move forward with the proposal with the support of the Board or have closure on the offer.

Sarah shared a presentation on the Old Church project. The presentation included background on the UDS project, and Sarah's vision for the building as a contrast to the UDS plan. The presentation included a proposal to develop the building in phases – phase 1 being to upgrade the building in its current form – a village hall type facility. During phase 2, a final use for the building, and funding to achieve this, would be sought. Estimated cost of phase 1 work is £385k, based on estimations in a 2017 building survey.

Directors commented on the value of the research that had taken place. There was a discussion of ideas for facilities which could be developed in the community– e.g. Harris Tweed Visitor Centre, a Gym.

The proposal to initiate the project was rejected unanimously by the directors. It was also agreed that seeking external funding for phase 1 was unlikely to be successful due to the proximity of other community halls (Ionad na Sean Sgoil, Raebhat House), and the absence of a sustainable business case (i.e. without any plan on which to run and maintain the proposed facility).

Innes did not believe that the project was viable due to the Old Church being located outwith the Horshader area. We will investigate this issue as a matter of importance.

Ranald asked about the total expenditure on purchasing and renovating Raebhat House around 2015. Euan will look out the info and send it round to everyone.

HCD Trust Development Plan

Fiona had enquired about the development plan at the April Board Meeting. Euan shared copies of a document he, along with the board of directors, had received by email in June 2020. Euan stressed the point that he had not had sight of the document, or any other parts of the Development Plan before June 2020. The document is on 1 A4 sheet, showing a list of actions/projects which relate to the charitable objects of the organisation. Flora said the projects listed had been compiled after a community consultation meeting in 2018. The 2020 document will be used as a starting point for a Development Plan meeting, arranged to assess the existing document, and how it may be suitably updated and amended. Domhnall will provide examples of other development plans.

The Development Plan meeting will be held on Tuesday 29 June at 7pm, at Raebhat House.

Opening the Office Safely

Flora asked when staff could safely return to work at the Office. We are fortunate to have several offices from which staff can work while maintaining social distancing. Euan will look at the latest guidance on returning to office work.

Tree Ark Accreditation Update (Sarah)

The Tree Ark has been added to the Woodland Trusts audit list for this season and we are awaiting a date for the audit in the coming weeks.

Summer Raffle Update (Sarah)

Work continues on building prizes. I would like to make a request to the Board for £250 of the events budget so we have a top cash prize.

The board approved a £250 cash prize as part of the raffle.

Covid Services Update (Sarah)

Shopper Service - The externally funded service ends on the 31st May. But we plan to continue the service using staff time we already have in place. I am in the process of planning projected costs to the year end.

Horshader Wind Break Update (Sarah)

Chris and I have arranged a meeting with Viv Halcrow (Woodland trust advisor) in June to go over the previously 'shelved' Horshader Woodland project and see where we can sensibly pick this up and get the project back on track.

Horshader Woodland project was established in 2020 and aimed to develop a major wooded area in the Horshader area. The project was led by Alisdair Wiseman and was shelved following the Covid lockdown. Since Alisdair resigned from the board, in October 2020, the project has not been discussed.

Board Member Open Day / Projects Meeting Update (Sarah)

I will send out invites in the next few weeks. It would be a good idea to combine the open day with the projects meeting. But if this proves to be too long a day for everyone to attend, we will break them up.

Everyone agreed to the proposals.

Raebhat Community Space – Completion Certificate Update (Sarah)

Initial calls have been made to O'Mac Construction and architect Malcolm Crate. As yet I am waiting on a response to plan a route forward. Perhaps by Thursday there will be a further update.

Filing System Review Update (Sarah)

After discussing this in more detail with Innes and Jordan. It seems the simplest and most cost-effective way of improving access is to create a folder on the Shared / OneDrive specifically for Board Members where regularly viewed files can be accessed. In addition to this Jordan will give each of the Board Member email addresses access to OneDrive where all our files can be viewed.

Insurance Claim Update (Euan)

RPG is due to receive the 2nd part of the insurance claim, covering February – May 2021. We are expecting to receive £90-110k. Jordan continues to provide all the info needed by RSA to progress the claim. The process has been straight forward.

Turbine & Subsea Cable (Euan)

The repair is on track for August 2021. At the most recent meeting with SSE (19 May) we were told the cable has been built and is due to be shipped through the Suez canal on 18 June.

We invoiced SSE for £4,500, based on the electricity produced by the turbine from mid-March to the end of the month. This is the agreement between RPG and SSE, where any electricity going back into the local grid is purchased at an agreed price. Monthly income is expected to be £5-7k. For the months of March, April, and May – while we are covered by insurance – this income will reduce the overall insurance claim, though won't provide us with any extra, unbudgeted income. However, from June till the point the cable is repaired, the monthly income will be additional to the budgeted amount. This is a very welcome boost to income.

CNES have responded with a request for additional information, after our discussions about the Emergency Support Fund in 2020 and early in 2021. CNES state they will go back to SSE with the information and may the case that more funding is needed to support the 'community generators' (Horshader, Point, Tolsta, Galson) who have yet to receive any funding from the ESF – a disgraceful decision which we, along with the other groups, formally challenged.

I haven't yet decided on how best to respond to CNES. On the one hand, it's frustrating that we have been asked to send information that has already been provided over the last 7 months – e.g. how our income is affected, services/projects that are affected. On the other hand, we have nothing to lose by playing along and, if SSE provide more funding, CNES may be more inclined to give us some. I have a meeting with the other generators on Tuesday 25th, and will enquire about the approach taken by the other groups.

Power Purchase Agreement (Euan)

We're awaiting news from Coop Bank that everything has been ratified, along with info on the income we will receive. Everything from our end was completed months ago. Smartest Energy have been slow in getting documents signed and returned.

Gillian Berry (Coop Bank) informed us that £375k is due to be transferred to RPG once the PPA is finalised. From the figure, £100k will be transferred to the Equity Cure bank account – this amount will be drawn from to ensure the next bank loan repayment is met. A further £50-100k will be used to pay RPG operational costs. The amount HCD should receive as RPG income is therefore around £200k. This is higher than the £60k set in the 2021 budget, which was estimated at a conservative level. The difference between the latest project figure and the budgeted amount is due to higher amounts of income being generated by the turbine each month than was originally expected – we have generated £20-30k most months, despite the subsea cable failure. Once confirmation of RPG income is received, a review of the 2021 budget will be arranged.

External Funding (Euan)

I'm making progress with a few applications. The big one is a bid to the UK Community Renewal Fund, which is a UK Government fund to which CNES alerted us. The UK CRF is part of the transition from EU structural funding to UK funding schemes.

Our UK CRF application was submitted to CNES on Friday 21 May. The fund guidance is vague – CNES officers admitted to not having received much instruction to date regarding the fund – and the aims are a mixture of very specific activities (e.g. feasibility studies for environmental projects) and more general things (e.g. supporting people in education). As such, I included a range of activities, with a request for funding that would cover a part of our overheads (e.g. wages of core staff, Bursary and Training Grants), as well a few specific things – like funding to employ a consultant to prepare a decarbonisation plan for HCD.

We should soon receive feedback, and will then know whether CNES are including our bid as part of the collective, local authority-led, application that goes to UK Gov. Regarding the outcome of the bid, I'm neither hopeful nor pessimistic – it's a new fund and worth an application. Even if we are unsuccessful, the feedback should be useful for the next round of funding.

Info to the UK CRF, and other new funds - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus/uk-community-renewal-fund-prospectus-2021-22>

This is worth a read if anyone is interested on larger funding pots that will be available over the next few years.

I'm working with Sarah Campbell, CNES local development officer as she establishes the Westside Area Forum. The Forum is intended to aid in distributing CNES Crown Estate Funds across the ward and can also access funding as part of the establishment costs – though I'm not sure yet what benefit this may bring. The first meeting is planned for the start of June. We received £9k from the last round of Crown Estate funding and will prepare a new application in time for the next round when it is announced.

Innes asked if funding was ever given to private businesses. One of the charitable objects of HCD is to support local economic development, however direct funding cannot be awarded to private businesses. Domhnall suggested, as an example, that a business park could be developed, which would benefit the local economy, without directly funding private business. Euan spoke about the Tree Ark, currently a facility run by HCD, which could in future be split off as a social enterprise subsidiary to Horshader.

Staff Update (Euan)

As part of the Kickstart scheme, we were awarded funding for 2 6-month Horticulture Assistant posts. One of the posts has now been filled by Adam Maclean from Bragar. Adam came for an interview for the Tree Ark Nurseryperson earlier in 2020. He did very well but ultimately wasn't successful.

Adam came for an interview for the Horticulture Assistant post at the beginning of May and he officially started his 6-month post on Monday 17 May. Adam will do 20hrs per week, spread over 4 or 5 days. He will mainly be assisting with Support and Connect grass-cutting, as well as helping to maintain the community growing sites. I'm happy to get this funding in place, as it is a cost-effective way of keeping on top of the grass rota and keeps Don and Billy happy too!

The Support and Connect Driver/Handyperson job advert closes tonight. We have a few applications returned already, but I'll review things and provide an update at the board meeting. If we have some good candidates, interviews will be held next week.

I'm still doing the school bus runs, which amounts to 10 hours per week on top of my regular hours. I'm enjoying it, but lately it has been taking its toll as I've worked on a few big project applications. Looking forward to getting someone recruited to take over!

I am meeting with all the staff I line manage next week to discuss their progress with the objectives set in Q2, and to discuss new objectives for Q3. I'm reasonably pleased with progress at the HCD Growing Sites, the Tree Ark, and with Support and Connect. Staff continue to do a good job in difficult circumstances. I'm planning to make a few changes to the procedure for planning and reporting for my staff, mainly due to us having several new members of staff. This should ensure good coordination between the different Horshader activities. The Staff Objectives are up as an agenda item, any input from the board is welcome.

Interviews for the Driver/Handyperson position will be arranged as soon as possible. Flora and Domhnall will join the interview panel.

Covid Services (Euan)

Blasta Ready Meals are going well, with 70 meals going out to residents between Dalmore and Shawbost two times each month. The funding runs till August 2020. I'll look at possible sources of additional funding, along with ways we could run the service without external funding. It's been a good service to run as a way of engaging with the older residents at a time when they are not attending events.



Once James's contract ends, I'll take over responsibility for the Community Support service. There isn't a lot of demand for assistance now, just the odd household job or skip run. I'll get support from the staff to carry out any job requests.

Prescription Deliveries – see Anna's update

Horshader Map/Mapa Sgìre Thorsiadar (Euan)

Good progress with this project. I've extended the deadline to appoint an artist to mid-June, due to comments from the Directors following the last board meeting. We didn't get a chance to discuss the project properly, so it's worth putting on the agenda and getting everyone's thoughts.

The board approved the recommendation of asking Alisdair Wiseman to be the map artist. Iain Murray (Basher) will also be asked to contribute art to the project. James has composed and recorded a tune which will be used as part of the map exhibition.

Slàn San Dachaigh Update (Anna)

Prescriptions continue every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon.

Fitness & outdoor sport

- The Shawbost loop social walk – Cuairt le Chrissy - has very been popular with all ages with up to 12 people attending each walk. The walk is around the shore, and suitable for all ages and abilities, every Tuesday evening at 7pm. James Jefferson is our star walker 😊 .
- Immerse Hebrides's block of open water swimming sessions on Shawbost beach will be advertised on Wednesday 26th May. - Friday evenings at 7pm starting 9th July for 4 weeks 9th, 16th, 23rd, 30th July.
- Short health walks have started every Friday morning at 11am for around 30minutes. The walkers have been to the Norse Mill and Rubha an Dùnain. Friday 28th's walk will go to Geodh an Tuill (South Shawbost blow hole).
- Surf Lewis surfing taster session on Saturday 5th June at 10am for 10 years and over at Dail Mòr or Shawbost beach has been advertised and there are still 2 places left.
- Surf Lewis's paddle boarding session will go ahead this Saturday (29th May) on Loch Raoinebhat for adults. This session was fully booked within 2 days.
- Children's rowing – Clann nan Raimh - is planned for Monday 24th May on Loch a' Bhaile with 12 sign ups. We would like to continue throughout June as an

after-school club. A risk assessment is in place and has been shared with An Eathar rowing volunteers and HCD staff, consent forms have been sent out to parents.

- A Gaelic interview with Rev Callum MacLeod discussing the history of the Shawbost Free church recorded in the community space will be published on the 11th of June.

Euan commended the great number of events taking place as part of Slàn san Dachaigh (Healthy at Home). The Directors discussed the promotion of events, which is done primarily through the newsletter and social media. It was noted that all the Slàn san Dachaigh events have been well-attended, if not fully booked. In future, paper copies of the newsletter will be given to Shawbost Post Office and Ionad na Seann Sgoile. We have not been using the village noticeboards as of late. Event posters should be placed in each village noticeboard.

Tree Ark Update (Chris)

Pricking out of the rowan is now nearing completion we now have over 3 and a half thousand in cell and growing on. The alder and birch are growing however slowly, and we will be pricking out into cells toward the first week of next month, both have been slow in germination this year. Aspen shoots are beginning to show, we will be taking cuttings when appropriate size is reached.

One invoice to be raised, at the end of the month after trees are collected.

Growing Sites Update (Chris)

Rota has been lifted, social distancing and hand sanitizing still in force. Work is progressing, all being at a reduced pace as the growing season has started. Some bedding plants and veg plants will be readily available for sale starting 31st of May, this will be advertised via e/mail to allotment holders first then to the wider community

Several new raised beds have been installed at Grinnivat Rd, increasing the total amount of growing area available to the community growers.

Community Flower Tubs Update (Chris)

The tubs have been painted and have centre plants in. They will be ready to be distributed around the villages in June.

Village Roadsides Clean-up (junk, scrap) (Innes)

Innes proposed a project to clean up the village by removing scrap from village roadsides. Sarah will develop the project, possibly incorporating other clean-up activities, like a community event to pick litter from the verges. The project plan will be brought back to the board.

HR Audit (Innes)

Innes is in discussion with Mr King of New Shawbost regarding a full HR Audit, which may be available at little to no cost to the group due to the charitable status. This was agreed as an excellent idea that would ensure the best standard of care for staff.

Staff register of interests (Euan)

Staff last completed a register of interests in 2018, with staff who have subsequently joined the group providing details on financial interests as part of their original application forms. The register will be updated as part of the 121 Staff Meetings, planned for June, in anticipation of Q3.

Financial Management - petty cash policy, bank card, financial reporting (Euan)

Euan will conduct a review of financial management. The things to update include policy for petty cash; bank account signatories; financial reporting as part of the monthly governance cycle. Everyone felt it was useful to receive monthly updates for each bank account.

Horshader Community Development Aims, Objectives, and District Coverage (Euan)

Copies of the Governing Document were distributed. The core aims and objects of Horshader are included in the Governing Document. In general, 'The overall aim of the Trust is to promote the benefit of the people of the Western Isles in general and those of the people of the Horshader area. The Horshader area is defined as the townships of South Shawbost, Dalmore and Dalbeg.'

Viewing the Governing Document prompted discussion over the varying geographical areas in which Horshader runs services and projects. In short, certain services and full membership (with voting rights) is only open to those based, or working a croft, in the Horshader area. Other services, such as Support and Connect and the Covid Services, operate in the Horshader area as well as in North and New Shawbost. The HCD Community Fund is open to groups based across the island, though evidence of benefit to the Horshader area is usually sought at the application stage.

It was noted that Raebhat House was located outwith the Horshader area. Ranald requested details of the original purchase of Raebhat House.

Support and Connect Recruitment (Directors)

Two good candidates have submitted full applications. Flora, Domhnall, and Euan will make up the interview panel. Interviews will be arranged next week if possible.

Horshader Map Project (Euan)

James has written and recorded a composition which will feature in the map exhibition. Other aspects of the project are progressing well, including recording drone film footage of the coastline, and the places discussed as part of the Richard Cox lecture.

Euan assessed local artists that could be approached to design the map. The final recommendation made was to approach Alisdair Wiseman. Alisdair is an excellent illustrator, with work featured in the Neil Rackham book published by Acair. The directors approved the recommendation.

Funding applications

The Directors approved the application by Western Thistle Football Club for funding of £750 to cover a set of strips for the club's under-15 team.

Actions from the last meeting

Flora was satisfied that all actions had been progressed sufficiently.