

MINUTES – DIRECTOR’S MEETING 15th DECEMBER 2015

1. **Attendance.**

Present: Neil MacDonald, Neil Campbell (Secretary), Dougie Ferguson, Roddy Macdonald, Norman Iain Mackay, Murdo Mackay (Chairman), Duncan MacPherson (Commercial Development Manager), Lisa MacDonald (Development Officer) and Linda Armstrong (Administrator).

Apologies:

2. **Approval of Minutes 17th November 2015**

The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. **Review of Action Points**

- **Luskentyre House Plots**

Colin Chisolm who will be fencing the back of the plots for the grazings committee. He hopes to start work once the electricity poles have been moved.

It was agreed that an effort should be made to market the plots given that the sites will shortly be serviced to try and recoup costs.

- **Prepare Policy on Absenteeism**

Murdo reported that he would circulate a draft policy once he has checked the council’s position on wilful disposal as he is under the impression that if a croft is gifted up to 7 years before a crofters death the council can insist on its sale to cover any costs incurred by the council relating to the original crofter.

- **IT System**

The Old Tarbert Primary School has an IPT phone system with a server in a cabinet which can have up to 40 lines connected. It cost approximately £7,000/£8,000. Murdo has been informed that the system is 10 years out of date and more advanced technology is available for less. Murdo to contact Murdo Morrison at CnES for advice on a system.

- **Interest in Croft Tenancies**

Following November’s meeting Duncan remembered that he had a record of people who have previously expressed an interest in a croft tenancy which could be shared with the Crofting Commission if required.

- **The Cliff – Roof**

Duncan has inspected the roof externally but cannot see where the water is getting in. He will visit again when the tenant is available to have a look from inside.

4. **Updates**

Financial

A monthly report for the West Harris Trust was shown, see appendix 1.

Commercial Development Manager's Report

The Report was noted, see appendix 2.

Pairc Niseaboist Community Energy Project

Awarding a tender for the design of a potential district heating and private wire network has been delayed but it is still hoped that the design will be complete by the end of January.

Harris Plan 2016-2020

The draft Harris Plan was shown.

Directors were asked for ideas of projects that they would like to pursue over the next 5 years to be included in the Harris Plan. Ideas received;

- Build 4/6 houses by 2020 either in partnership with HIE/TIG or individually
- Aim to sell remaining affordable house plots
- Complete Community Enterprise Centre with business units
- Investigate a community vehicle – electric/hydrogen powered
- Install an electric car charging point at the CEC
- Playpark at CEC/natural play area (in the style of the one in Ness)
- Develop campsite on the west side
- Environment
 - Restore stone dykes
 - Investigate potential woodland sites (hydro/behind CEC/ground between Luskentyre house plots)
- Renewables
 - Install wave device at Pairc Niseaboist
 - Install wind turbine at Horgabost

Any further ideas to be forwarded to Duncan.

Development Officer's Report

The Report was noted, see appendix 3. The following updates were given at the meeting:

Broadband

Lisa has been in contact with HIE to clarify which properties are included when considering the amount of people who will benefit in an area. HIE and BT are looking at the clustering and close proximity of houses, not whether they are resided in permanently. They also confirmed that self-catering properties are not being considered as businesses.

Lisa to email self-catering properties in the area and encourage them to register an interest in broadband on BT's website.

LEADER Funding

An expression of interest for funding has been submitted to LEADER for the Old Seilebost School. LEADER have responded with a request for further information and suggested that a meeting take place in January.

Community Resilience Fund

Next round of funding to open in April 2016.

Circus 2016

Steve Cousin's email was discussed.

It was agreed to reply to Steve's email reiterating that we cannot guarantee that the school will be available for their use. If the school is available, the Trust will have to charge for its use and also for the use of the campervan hook-ups. Steve's offer of the community's use of the tent was declined as it is likely that the CEC will be open and any community events will be held there.

AOCB

Business Plan

The current business plan expired in March. It was agreed that it would be updated and developed incorporating ideas received to be included in the Harris Plan.

JMT Dates

Possible tasks to be undertaken during their visit include;

- Marram grass planting (golf course)
- Dyking

Goose and Deer Management (Borve Lodge)

Steve Woodhall, manager at Borve Lodge Estate has been in contact to report deer activity in the trees at Laxdale. He has asked for permission to shoot the deer during the season in 2016 from the Trust's ground. The directors asked that Steve contact the Trust again should the deer return next year at which point they will discuss whether or not to grant permission.

Steve also asked for permission to feed and shoot wild geese and ducks on Trust land. The directors agreed that they did not want to encourage the feeding of geese as they felt this might encourage more to the area but were happy to grant permission to shoot geese. They were however not willing to grant permission for the shooting of ducks.

Rural Housing Fund

Duncan has received an email from Jodie Macleod at Rural Housing Scotland asking for the Trust's opinion on developing a scheme similar to the previous Rural Home Ownership Grant which provided grants to encourage non crofters to build homes. The idea is that landowners will provide plots of land for free, but will own an equity share in the house which will be repaid

if/when the house is sold in the future. The Scottish Government will also own an equity share in the property in return for the grant provided.

The directors agreed that they are supportive of the proposal in principle as the primary aim of the Trust is to encourage families to the area.

Seilebost School

Rhoda MacDonald expressed an interest as owner of the adjacent property and therefore left the meeting.

Munro Gauld's feasibility report was circulated to the director's prior to the meeting.

The report identified that a hostel would require a high level of capital investment and would be modestly profitable. Therefore it would be worthwhile considering other options for more limited development of the building and tourism facilities as an alternative. It was agreed to feedback comments to Munro for the final report.

Business Enquiry

An email had been received from a local business considering expansion opportunities. Of the several options outlined the Trust was favourably disposed to consider a lease of space in the old school. Lisa would discuss possibilities further with the business.

Resumptions

Two examples of land that were not correctly resumed from crofting tenure by the former owner of the estate have been identified, the first being Luskentyre graveyard and the other the BT exchange in Scarista. Duncan to speak with Maggie at Anderson Macarthur to discuss the Trust's position.

Diary Dates for future meetings:

- January 19th
- February 16th
- March 15th
- April 19th
- May 17th
- June 14th
- August 16th
- September 13th
- October 11th
- November 15th
- December 13th