

MINUTE OF WEST HARRIS TRUST AGM 23rd JUNE 2015.

1) Apologies

Steve Woodhall, Geoff Calvert and Diana Calvert.

Members Present

John Macleod, Donald Macleman, Margaret Macleman, Margaret Macleod, Flora Macleod, Margaret MacDonald, Neil MacDonald, Norman Macleod, Marion Macleod, Aman Toor, Lucy Toor, Finlay Macleannan, Donald John Macsween, Alasdair Wiseman, Lesley Wiseman, Donald John MacDonald, Perter Godfrey, Catherine Morrison, Murdo Mackay, Neil Campbell, Richard Macleannan, Rhoda Campbell, Sandra Fraser, Rhoda Macdonald, Isobel Mackay, Lindsay Woodhall, Morag MacDonald, Roddy MacDonald, Fiona Toor and Jeeves Toor.

Non Members Present

Anna Helfrich, Charlie Helfrich, Sarah Helfrich, Nick Helfrich, Rachel Campbell, Angus Campbell, Renai Toor, Anish Toor, Duncan MacPherson (Commercial Development Manager), Lisa MacDonald (Development Officer) and Linda Armstrong (Administrator).

2) Approval of 2014 Minutes

The minutes were noted and unanimously approved.

Proposed – Rhoda Campbell

Seconded – Aman Toor

3) Chairman's Welcome & Report

Murdo Mackay welcomed everyone to the 5th AGM of the West Harris Trust. Murdo took the opportunity to welcome the Helfrich's who have purchased a house site from the Trust and hope to begin construction later this year.

4) Development Report

Duncan MacPherson and Lisa MacDonald gave an update on what has been a very busy year and one that has seen many projects come to fruition after years of planning.

Marine Access Project

The marine shore base at Seilebost, known as 'The Cliff' is now occupied by three tenants, Hebrides Met Ocean, Harris Classic Campers and the Seilebost Common Grazing Committee.

John Muir Trust

Members were asked to contact the Trust if they could think of any projects/tasks that John Muir Trust volunteers could carry out.

Met Mast

A met mast has been installed above where the new community enterprise centre will be. The met mast is measuring wind speeds and gathering data required when looking for finance for the project. Roddy Maclellan was thanked for his help in erecting the mast.

The Trust is in discussions with Xant, a Belgium firm who are interested in installing a turbine at the site. The Trust had initially planned to erect a Harbon turbine, the same as in Scarista, but discussions have shown that a deal with Xant could earn the Trust the same, if not better income than if a loan was taken out to pay for a turbine. The Xant turbine is 9m taller than the Harbon, but significantly thinner and supported by guy ropes. A photomontage was shown.

Community Enterprise Centre

The site was formally opened in a 'cutting of the turf' ceremony carried out by Donald John Mackay, Luskentyre.

The build is currently approximately 3 weeks behind schedule due to a delay caused by being unable to move the water main.

2015 and beyond...

The year is proving to be a very busy one with a lot of projects taking place including the building of the community enterprise centre, involvement in a digital tourism pilot and new housing.

5) Fixing of Annual Membership Fee

Agreed no fee to be collected this year.

6) Annual Accounts

The accounts to December 2014 were presented by the Secretary and approved.

7) Election of Directors

Both Murdo Mackay and Norman Iain Mackay had stood down. Both were re-elected, with Murdo proposed by Rhoda Campbell and seconded by Sandra Fraser, and Norman Iain proposed by Sandra Fraser and seconded by Rhoda Campbell.

No other nominations were received.

The chair reminded members that 10 directors was the minimum number required and that the Trust was always looking for new directors if anyone was interested.

8) Election of Auditors

CIB Services were re-elected

9) AOCB

Hebrides Art Café

Alasdair Wiseman, owner of the Hebrides Art Café took the opportunity of having the community gathered to announce that he and wife Lesley had taken the decision to put the café on the market at some point in 2016. The decision had not been an easy one, but taken due to deteriorating health. Alasdair thanked the community for their support and confirmed that they hoped to sell the gallery as a going concern.

5 Borve

An email received from the tenant of 5 Borve was read, informing residents that building work on their home would commence by the end of June.

Members were given the opportunity to ask any questions;

When will the pontoon be reassembled and are there any other alternative winter storage options?

- *The second batch of damaged modules have been sent to Stornoway for repair and when returned will be reassembled and returned to the water. It is hoped that this will be done by the end of June. As for an alternative winter storage option, the directors would be happy to consider any alternative location suggested..*

Will the recent announcement that wind power subsidies are to be stopped make further wind projects untenable?

- *The announcement was with regard to 'Renewables Obligation Certificate' subsidies which apply to much larger wind projects. For the size of wind turbines that the Trust has installed and will look to install in the future, feed in tariff (FITs) apply. The rate has reduced since the Scarista turbine was installed but the Xant turbine is more efficient than the Harbon, therefore producing higher revenue regardless of FITs.*

Is the Gleann Dubhlinn Hydro project going ahead?

- *The Trust is in discussions with a group of private investors that are interested in investing in the project. It is hoped that a contract will be signed by the end of the summer with construction to begin in the autumn or next year.*

Should the Trust consider placing a sign at the dunes in Horgabost (next to the carpark) to discourage people from climbing on it?

- *Horgabost machair is covered by a SSSI which is monitored by SNH. A survey is carried out every 5 years with the last survey showing an improvement in the condition of the dune. SNH have not raised any concerns regarding the condition of the dunes in West Harris in the 5 years since community ownership took place. It was agreed to consider whether John Muir Trust volunteers planting marram grass might be an option.*

Has much progress been made with plot sales?

- *3 plots have been allocated with construction having started on one and the other two hoping to begin construction later this year. There is a constant stream of enquiries, but many people do not realise the true cost of building in Harris. HHP have agreed to purchase land from the Trust at the development site and plan to build 6 units, 4 for rent and 2 for shared equity. If funds allow they hope to commence work later this year.*

The formal business of the meeting was followed by tea, coffee and home baking provided by the fundraising committee.