

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRATHERRICK AND FOYERS COMMUNITY TRUST HELD VIA ZOOM AT 7.00 p.m. ON WEDNESDAY 7 JULY 2021

Present	Frank Ellam (FE), Russell Bain (RB), Jillian Barclay (JB), Kirsty Balfour (KB), Lorraine Lewis (LL)
Apologies	Chris Finlay (CF), Catriona Fraser (CNF), Chris Gehrke (CG), Gareth Jones (GJ)
Chair	Kirsty Balfour (KB)
In Attendance	Tony Foster (TF)
Non-attendance	-
Minutes	Laura Walker-Knowles (LWK)
Declarations of interest:	None.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

The Board noted that Ronnie Macrae from the Communities Housing Trust (CHT) would be attending at 7.30 p.m. In relation to that, the Board discussed funding from SSE and the rules around drawing down payments in advance. KB gave the background to the funding request from the CHT and the reason a quick decision was required. This was in the main due to rising build costs and a preferred contractor who could only guarantee the price for a limited time. The Board were aware of the need for housing emerging from the Community Action Plan discussion groups. The Board noted the Trust's risk would be minimised as CHT would lead the project. CHT are looking for £65,000 of funding to secure this project.

The Board discussed allocation of housing and if there was a particular need for housing in that area. The Board queried if a recent housing needs assessment had been carried out by CHT.

The Board discussed the catchment codes the Highland Council use for housing needs surveys and noted it fell into two areas North Loch Ness and South Loch Ness. A more targeted survey would be a preferred. TF highlighted that CHT would have carried out a needs analysis in order to unlock the rural funding they have been awarded.

TF advised the reason for the request arose during CAP discussions with local organisations. TF has spoken to Fort Augustus about their housing survey and in hindsight they would have preferred to take the project forward with a developer, due to time and cost running away.

KB shared a plan, narrative and project development costs and funding document from CHT.

Ronnie Macrae (RM) from Communities Housing Trust joined the meeting at 7.30 p.m.

KB introduced RM to the Board.

RM advised the Board he had been in meetings with the community over a long period of time and there was interest at some point in the past for the community taking forward a project such as this. A lack of funding has held the project back. However, this is now in place with a grant from the Rural and Island Housing Fund. CHT has a contractor in place at a reasonable price and a planning application. The initial plans were not favoured by the neighbours so this was withdrawn and revisited. There is agreement from the Scottish Government for the bulk of funding, but there is a gap of around £65,000 which is holding the project back. CHT are now under time pressure from the contractor who can work to the current price. Therefore, there is the choice to move now or delay and revisit tendering further down the line, but in the current climate if left it is unlikely to prove a viable project.

The Board asked RM where the demand for housing in that area came from. The area is classed as Stratherrick and Foyers and not particular to the specific area. Previous discussions with communities and needs analysis has been based on the whole area. CHT have also carried out housing surgeries in the area. The Board queried why that particular area as it was very remote. CHT has owned the land for the last twenty years, purchased under the National Forest Land Scheme. CHT plan to address any further concerns of neighbours once the full funding package is in place, including an allocation policy that all community groups would have input to.

The Board discussed ownership options and if the Trust would recoup the £65,000.

Ronnie Macrae left the meeting at 8.00 p.m.

LL commented she had not received a questionnaire living in the area discussed.

The Board discussed the acceptability of an affordable housing project if the Trust had an asset that generated an income in the future.

The Board noted the Trust do not have to put their name to it at this time.

FE advised that if the Trust decided to progress, given the price of housing builds, it needs to look at how much flexibility there is in the current budget to free up the funds.

The Board noted that there is shortfall of £85,000 in the current year's budget to be discussed later under Finance.

FE made several points. Housing was in the original budget at the start of the year when the Trust were hoping to secure a drawdown, however, as the Board were aware, the Trust had to cut £300,000 - £400,000 from that budget and therefore deferred the budgets for transport, housing, Riverside, reduced the number of community land proposals and decreased funds for kick starting projects from the CAP. A further £85,000 still has to be taken out of the 2021/22 budget.

FE suggested and the Board discussed several projects that could be put on hold in order to raise funds.

The Board noted the financial implications and further discussed the local need for housing in the area CHT are proposing to build. There was a consensus that evidence is required of need by local (Stratherrick and Foyers) people for housing in that area and that the concerns of Inverfarigaig residents had to be listened to.

B. MINUTES OF BOARD MEETING – 2 JUNE 2021

RB **PROPOSED** and JB **SECONDED** and the Minutes of the meeting held on 2 June 2021 were **AGREED** as a correct record without any further amendment and **APPROVED** and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Martin Donnelly has been removed from the register at Companies House.

An e mail in relation to the stalls has been done.

A letter has been drafted and sent to SOSA. KB will circulate the response received.

A date and time for the funders meeting has not yet been set.

CNF has volunteered up to be signatory.

C. FINANCE

The Board noted the circulated finance report and the only addition being a small amount of further interest received.

The Correigarth benefit payment has now been received and increased over last year by 2.1% due to the increase in RPI between May 2020 and May 2021.

Both the Glendoe payment due in April and the payment for Stronelairg, due early June have not been paid by SSE (subsequently received).

Staffing

Prior to the Board meeting a short meeting had been held in relation to staffing. The first decision required is to increase the employer's contribution to the pension fund from 5% to 7%. The proposal is to increase the employer's

contribution to 7%, employees can also make additional voluntary contributions over that.

The Board **AGREED** to increase the employer's contribution to the pension fund from 5% to 7%.

The second decision relates to two staff members who are due a pay review from 1 July 2021. A suggested 2.5% increase had been made based on the 2.1% RPI, which is on an upward trend.

The Board **AGREED** to increase the salaries by 2.5% from 1 July 2021.

Thirdly, TF had suggested and there was a consensus that after five years' service an extra weeks' holiday (pro rata) be offered to staff.

The Board **AGREED** to increase staff annual leave allowance by one week after five years' service.

Finally, in relation to staffing, the Board noted the anomaly concerning Bank Holidays and particularly for one member of staff working Mondays and Tuesdays. The Board **AGREED** to TF investigating a way around this.

Budget

FE took the Board through the cash flow forecast. The Board noted there was still a need to make savings of £85,000.

The Board discussed several suggestions on finding funds to cover the deficit.

The Board noted there are applications underway for a Fund Raiser and financing the Finance Officer post.

An application has been submitted for Errogie Church, a regeneration capital grant, for £650,000, on top of the budget that currently exists. The Board noted Errogie is currently the Trust's strongest project and due to timing and funding constraints its budget should not be cut.

Pending confirmation from CF concerning broadband, further cuts were approved to the budget.

Action: Contact GJ and CG for recent Broadband figures - FE

D. TIMELINE REVIEW and UPDATE

LWK had uploaded as the timeline was due for review at this point in the year.

*Action: Review timeline and forward any updates to LWK - all
Action: Media deadlines to include – TF and CT*

E. AGM DATE

As a number of Directors were not present it was suggested this be dealt with via e mail.

Action: Agenda item August - LWK

F. MONTHLY UPDATES**(a) SSE**

TF updated the Board on a recent positive meeting and the meetings are going to be monthly again from August. TF gave SSE an update on the likely outcomes emerging from the Community Action Plan and an update on current community projects.

G. QUARTERLY REPORTS**(a) Communications**

As the outcomes from the CAP are awaited, a full communications report was deferred to the next quarter, to include any recommendations.

A new local directory will shortly be up on the website. The Trust Gala day is on 24 July with eight confirmed groups and 30 stall holders. Posters have gone up on noticeboards and in shops. CM and JB are co-ordinating where volunteers will be required.

Nick Wright will be in attendance to further engage with the community on the themes from the CAP.

The Trust stand will include with a visual map of Wildside asking the community what they would like to see happen next with the landscaping and any further suggestions for the building and grounds.

Caroline Tucker, Project Co-ordinator will be there on the day and it is essential some Directors attend for a few hours.

The Board discussed an approach from a local musician about erecting a sound shed for musicians to practice and JB will add the suggestion to the steering group spreadsheet, but it was noted discussions were underway to use Errogie Church for music.

Action: Project updates for the website to JB - all

Action: Trust stand info to JB and KB – all

No (b) funders or (c) Broadband update.

(d) Wildside

The Board noted the report. Current work includes installing benches, creating the lawn area to the side of the building and clearing bushes to the rear of the building.

The next steps will be how to engage the community for the next phase of landscaping. After suggestions are gathered at the gala a plan will be drawn up to discuss ideas at the next steering group meeting.

Contractor work identified in the maintenance report includes replacing and/or repairing fire doors and frames, some external windows, fixing a slipped roof tile, replacement of the urinal system. A decision will be required to tender for this work either, individually or as one contract.

Mark Henderson is currently contracted for 8 hours per week. Mark has notified TF that additional capacity is required to run the centre with a total estimate of around 30 hours per week needed.

Additionally, in the budget request is the purchase of artificial grass for the flooring of the marquee, currently there is just gravel on the court. The prices range from £9.99 - £15.99 per square metre, so the cost would be around £900 upper limit. The Board discussed the pros and cons of an outdoor green carpet.

The Board **AGREED** to the purchase of artificial grass up to a maximum of £900 from the existing budget.

The Board noted the landscaping costs were currently under budget.

For the contracted works the Board **AGREED** to invite quotes.

The Board discussed the purchase of a corner desk at the cost of £2,600.00 and did not think it an essential purchase at this time.

TF will include the office furniture to the Adapt and Thrive application. The application had been delayed until the position of finance officer was confirmed and the fundraiser information known.

(e) Grant Report

The Board noted the Grant Notice and the annual grants spreadsheet.

G. AOCB

Community Council

The Board noted TF's circulated report.

Student Grant

Applicant: Michael Bloodworth

Amount applied for: £456.00

Amount approved: £100.00 (to be ratified via e mail)

The Board discussed the grant assessment and the level of grant to award under the new rules. For a short course of a month or less the award should be £100.00. The Directors will check this figure is correct before approving and will ratify via e mail.

07/07/2021

Toilets

KB has emailed Patrick Haston at SFCC as the Board agreed to hold the RTIF grant on behalf of the Community Council. There are ongoing discussions with SFCC and the Trust as the project moves forward.

The Board discussed liabilities to councillors when running and managing public toilets.

The Board discussed ownership of the project.

The Board discussed offering support and administration and decided it would be in all parties' interest to revisit the grant application and project plan and discuss further with the Community Council.

J. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Next meeting 4 August 2021, 7 p.m. via MS Teams.

The meeting closed at 9.45 p.m.

Signed as a correct record of the meeting

Signed
Chair (Kirsty Balfour)

Date