



**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRATHERRICK AND FOYERS COMMUNITY TRUST HELD
AT WILDSIDE, WHITEBRIDGE AND VIA MS TEAMS
AT 7pm ON WEDNESDAY 6th November 2024**

Present Catriona Fraser (CF), Gareth Jones (GJ); Malcolm Stewart (MMS); Chris Gehrke (CG); Ken Sinclair (KS); Maire Brown (MB); Craig Lightbody (CL); Maureen McGuire (MM).

Apologies Mark Sutherland (MS); Susan Greer (SG).

Non-attendance

Chair Catriona Fraser (CF)

In Attendance Kirsteen Campbell (KC)

Minutes Kirsteen Campbell (KC)

Declarations of interest:

None noted.

INTRODUCTION

CF welcomed the Board and staff members to the meeting. It began at 19:08.

MINUTES

CF **PROPOSED** and CL **SECONDED** the Minutes from the Board Meeting held on 2nd October 2024 and these were **AGREED** as a correct record and **APPROVED** by the Chair.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

CEO update

CF noted that 4 strong candidates were interviewed. The successful candidate has been offered the position and has accepted the role. The candidate, Jewels Lang, is due to start on Monday, 6th January 2025. She will be introduced to the Board and SFCT members at the AGM.

CF also suggested that the new Board, once in place, should advertise the other vacant positions within the Trust prior to the CEO commencing in January.

Action: CF to notify Carol Masheter (SSE); the Community Council Chair; and the wider community of the appointment.

Stratherrick Public Hall Grant

CF stated she has been in touch with Sharon Ferguson, SFCT Fundraiser, and that all documents had now been received in relation to the grant application for £19355.00. An underspend of £4641.46 was documented on the application form and this will be paid back to the Trust. New wording is to be included in all documentation going forward changing the original wording on the grant application form from 'strategic reserve' to 'contingency funds'. Sharon Ferguson has produced a spending tracker which is also to be submitted along with the next grant application.

The Board discussed the sustainability of the hall building and the need to bring it up to current standards. This led to a wider discussion on encouraging all groups who apply for larger grants to improve the sustainability of their premises/buildings.

CF **Proposed** that the grant be paid in full with the three conditions attached: i) The underspend is returned; ii) the tracker is completed fully for next year; iii) Consideration by the hall committee on how they can improve the costs of the building. The Board **AGREED** unanimously.

Action: KC to prepare and send out grant paperwork.

FINANCE

Fiona Mustarde, Finance Officer, circulated the cashflow for September and CF noted there was nothing to report to the Board.

CF also noted that no unexpected expenditure has come up since the budgets were set at the beginning of the financial year.

GRANTS

Loch Ness Heritage Group

GJ/CF stated that the Large Group Grant application has been withdrawn. A Constituted Group Grant for Community Benefit will be submitted in due course.

GJ noted that the Loch Ness Heritage Group discussed the use of The Gathering Place (formerly Errogie Church) to be used as a multifunctioning centre focussing on education, biodiversity, and a drop in for the community. This will potentially open-up future funding opportunities for National Lottery Heritage fund etc.

Facilities to match the function of the Gathering Place are ongoing. The practical plan will include displays, floor space, projectors etc.

Boleskine Community Care (BCC)

CF informed the board that BCC have submitted a Large Group Grant application. CF met with Carol Masheter (SSE) to discuss how continuity of employment could be ensured between the current grant running out in October 2024 and the new grant application being approved. Carol Masheter suggested that SFCT continue to fund the grant for the relevant staff members monthly in the interim. The spend will then be deducted from the new grant once it has been approved.

The Board will consider the application at the December Board meeting.

During her discussion with Carol Masheter, CF also raised the issue of ensuring employment funding security given that grant applications are submitted on an annual basis. It was agreed that SSE are happy for large group grant recipients, BCC, to put in an application that outlines a three-year projection and SFCT issue one third of that each year over the three-year period. Providing conditions are met, the money from year to year may be carried forward. Carol Masheter also expressed that in their grant application, she would like to see how BCC can generate income via various activities.

Action: GJ to discuss discussions with BCC employees.

AOCB

Errogie Church

GJ stated that the project reset at the beginning of the year. He noted that the steering group are developing their own strategies, including for biodiversity and heritage. They are re-engaging with the community and have produced two surveys for the community to complete. These have come back with a more detailed set of activities for the steering group to focus on.

The phases were discussed and how the building may work with the current basic facilities and how these could be utilised more effectively. CG asked about the toilet facilities and CF noted that these could be modified. There is a functioning septic tank and catering facilities. Parking remains an issue, and the Board discussed the possibility of leasing the land rather than purchasing it outright. CF noted that discussions are ongoing with the landowner.

CF mentioned the most recent survey had been analysed by SFCT staff. 115 had been returned with housing being highlighted by approximately 50. It was noted that some surveys had come from the same IP address.

MB noted that the timescale of the survey was too short. She expressed concern that this is not enough time and that paper copies should be available on request.

Housing

Following discussion on the high volume of comments relating to housing on the survey, MM noted there is no steering group and the Board discussed the importance of reinstating this asap. She also noted that SFCT are active on this front and discussions are ongoing in relation to rented accommodation within the community.

MM suggested that a staff member should take things forward in this highly important issue. The Board advised that a new CAP Officer would be the best person to take this forward and that a clearer strategy be put in place when the new CEO starts.

Foyers Bay

MMS noted that Foyers Bay is progressing well. He went through the budget and noted there is a positive sense of purpose surrounding the project. New signage has deterred overnight campers, freeing up the parking spaces. Landscaping is ongoing and this has assisted with safe launching of boats into the loch.

MMS commented on how positive the steering group has been, and he stated that Caroline Tucker, Project Office, has been excellent in keeping the project running smoothly. MMS mentioned that discussions at the last steering group included the possibility of the project becoming an autonomous subsidiary of the Trust. CF suggested that the group approach DTAS for advice.

MMS noted that safety equipment, groundwork, and work on the inner compound is planned which is hoped to be completed by the beginning of the new season which will begin in March/April 2025. He noted that the Scottish Canal fund is being used to better the whole area.

GJ suggested that governance of significant legacy projects should be reviewed, and the Board agreed that this should be a priority for the new Board and CEO.

MM suggested the Board should look at projects as a whole and noted that staff resources must be considered in terms of what projects can be taken on and supported. She suggested prioritisation of projects, particularly in relation to when staff are required and when steering groups can work independently.

CL asked MMS about the slipway plan being inadequate. It was noted that the current plan will not be used.

AGM & Staffing

CF, MMS, and GJ, to give reports on their projects. CF noted that the format would focus on the promotion of the current Staff and give them a platform to share their contributions to the Trust and the wider community.

The Board discussed Staff remuneration in light in the absence of a CEO and two other members of Staff. Payment to be made in acknowledgement of extra responsibilities and hours were agreed.

The Board discussed the recruitment of new Board members and noted that there are many capable community members who could bring a wealth of experience to the Board.

CG suggested that a focus on the benefit SFCT grants from recipients should be showcased at the AGM. CF suggested that the successful firewood distribution would be one such story to share.

SFCT Review

MM circulated her review in August. This is ongoing.

SFCT Operational Update

MM circulated her operational management document which the board acknowledged.

MM – If staff time is required for project groups, this must be approved by MM and CF until the new CEO starts in January.

CL suggested that in accordance with article 82 of the SFCT Articles of Association, MM should be remunerated for taking on the role of Executive Officer.

KS **Proposed** and CF **Seconded** that an honorarium payment of £1000.00 be paid to MM for consultancy work undertaken. The Board **AGREED** unanimously.

Events Management

Caroline Tucker, SFCT Project Officer, circulated the events management which was noted by the Board.

CF suggested that SFCT move to organising one large event, the Highland Gathering, rather than multiple events. It was noted how positively community groups have come together to create the upcoming Winter Wonderland event. Support and encouragement for community groups wishing to organise events to continue.

Dates of board meetings 2025

KC to update the newly agreed monthly Board meetings with Grant Board meetings remaining at every two months.

Action: KC to update the website with 2025 dates.

Mark Hindley Questions (CF)

CF noted that this has been addressed via email and direct correspondence.

Dynam

GJ noted that this is an ongoing strategy used to support a strategy to reform the CAP.

Inverfarigaig Forest School

CF informed the Board that a pause has been put in place until the new CEO has commenced work, and a new Board is formed. Concern regarding the maintenance and running costs of the building were discussed and will be considered by the CEO and Board in due course.

The pause allows for greater flexibility for current spending with £60,000.00 freed up for current or new projects, or improvements required for existing Trust buildings for example.

Internal HR issue

CF notified the Board of a confidential HR matter which has been dealt with internally.

Winter Resilience

The Board discussed the possibility of the Trust helping to fill grit bins within the community. CF suggested that a notice be put out to recruit volunteers to help with this.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The board agreed to move the date of the next board meeting from 4th December to 11th December due to staffing issues.

Meeting closed at 21:59

Signed by Chair (CF): _____

Date: _____