

**Chair's Annual Statement: Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust Ltd AGM. 26<sup>th</sup> November 2025**

Good evening. It is good to see such a healthy attendance this evening, and I hope it reflects the attitude of our members, that such an interest is shown. My thanks to you all for coming here this evening.

Procedure – is as per the Agenda displayed behind me. Firstly my statement, then Mr Lewis Fraser will talk you through the Accounts, we then move to the election of new Directors, then perhaps some questions and then, the new Board has to meet to undertake a few items of business. That doesn't take long and we hope you will linger and avail yourselves of some of the refreshments we have provided. Thereafter it would be good, whilst we're all here together to have what I believe is called a "blether", where we can chat and talk about your ideas and opinions informally.

The last time I did this, I had to sit in a room, alone, speaking to the wall with lots of little pictures on it, desperately trying to see if anyone had "raised a hand"! Thankfully, that isn't the case anymore, although I am smitten with the plague at the moment, so you'll all be delighted to hear I have made this years statement relatively brief, in the hope that I may reach the end of it.

I have broken this report down into a few sections where I will talk about the Board, the Staff, what has been achieved and what we hope to achieve.

So firstly, The Board of Directors: It is important to remember that they are all primarily Members of the Trust, but more importantly members of this Community. Some have had to leave the Board during the year, but my comments apply to them all. They are volunteers, who give of their time, effort and experience freely. They receive no reward, other than the satisfaction of knowing that they have done their best for the whole Community. They accept that sometimes not all will agree with their decisions, but rest assured they do their utmost, within the constraints put upon them, to improve our environment and lives within Stratherrick and Foyers. They don't just turn up once a month – they work and think throughout the year and then make their decisions. I offer my personal thanks to all the Directors for their efforts throughout the year. Please support them and remember what they do freely.

Now, our Staff. I was informed earlier that we actually have 5.26 Members of staff! That seems a strange number, but of course that means we have the equivalent of 5.26, via 10 actual persons, working for our Community full time. As Chair, it often seems to me that we do actually have 10 full time persons – they are a hardworking, conscientious lot who give us a lot more than they are actually paid for. I could single out individuals for praise – but I would have to do it ten times!

We are fortunate to have them all, and my very sincere thanks to them for the huge amount of effort, time and thought they put into enacting the whims and fancies of the Board (particularly mine!). Thank you all so much, and I hope you all enjoy your little Festive celebration together – without a Director in sight!

So what have we achieved this year? Well there are two sorts of achievements. Firstly, the tangible, physical achievements we can all see, but there are also the achievements in ensuring SFCT functions well, efficiently and for the benefit of our Community.

Without going into too much detail, this year we have some new houses, we have the Forest School at Inverfarigaig, we have the SLNHG camping in Foyers Primary School, much progress has been made at Foyers Bay, and BCC continue to function extremely well down at “The Hub”, not to mention the most prestigious Ladies Toilets in the Highlands, here at the Wildside Centre, and not forgetting our “Community Bus”, which has increasingly proven popular.

Grants are of course front and centre in the activities of SFCT. Many have been given this year, ranging from over £140k to BCC to ensure their stability for the next few years, through to a few pounds to assist someone representing our area in National Sporting events. In between we have assisted many in their studies with Student Grants, assisted with dancing, singing, local nature projects, crafts, hobbies, driving lessons, as well as supporting our friends at the Community Council in their activities, and Stratherrick Hall, so that they can continue to offer their splendid facility to Community groups. As mentioned at the beginning, I’m trying to keep this as brief as possible, and this list could go on, but all the details are published in our Minutes and the various publications that our team issue throughout the year – and that is a major task in itself.

We have of course, facilitated various events and activities, all with the aim of generating good “Community Spirit”. It is very easy to become isolated with modern technology – it can entertain you, it can bring your shopping, it can communicate for you, you can “virtually” meet with people. That’s all well and good, but we mustn’t forget that a little personal interaction goes a long way. So things like the Highland Gathering, our Pie & a Pint nights, the Fireworks display, the Christmas activities we have planned all go a long way toward basically, bringing folk together. We also help with other “group” activities – I believe there is a Fashion show planned shortly, a Childrens’ Christmas Party is planned (although I’ll be giving that one a wide berth!) and our that band of

Thespians, the Luvvies, also have something planned for Christmas time. Your support for these events is crucial – and actually, they're all really rather enjoyable.

So, there's an awful lot going on – but it doesn't "just happen". Much work goes on the background that is crucial and essential. A body such as SFCT must abide by many rules and comply with many laws. This isn't very exciting at times, and our CEO has been working very hard at things like "Governance", "Employment Policies", "Grant Policies", "GDPR Policies", Health and Safety Policies", "Funders Agreements", "Funders' Reports" – the list goes on and on – it's not exciting, but it's vitally important, so my thanks for making sure we're legal and law abiding!

Now, a word about "Strategy" and the future. All organisations need a plan for the future and we are no exception. As a Community we can be proud of our Community Action Plan and our Local Place Plan (we were the first Community in the Highlands to produce one!). However, our CAP is coming up for five years old, so we are looking to see if it's still valid and relevant. A small group of Directors are now meeting regularly under the title "Strategy Group", with a view to pulling together an over-arching plan as to where we go and what we might do in the future, in the short, medium and longer term. This plan will enable the incumbent Board (whoever they are) to focus on projects and areas of concern within a framework with a degree of continuity and consistency. We will have targets and clear objectives – although in my experience, targets have a nasty little habit of moving sometimes, so we'll have to bear that in mind. I am very much looking forward to seeing the results of their work – and hopefully you will see where we are going in a very clear light.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, some Directors have left the Board over the course of the year and will stand down tonight. It is always rather a shame when that happens, particularly with the knowledge that they all did their utmost to further the aims and objectives of SFCT. Please be under no illusion that Board Meetings are cosy little get-togethers – they are anything but, and the rigour and scrutiny that occurs is often frank, robust and at times, a little heated. However, every single one of your past, present (and hopefully future, if I haven't put them off!) Directors has remained consummately professional, courteous and considerate of their fellow Board Members. I like to think that despite some significantly differing opinions being expressed, we have remained friends and appreciative and respectful of our role at SFCT. So, my thanks to them all.

I must not forget to mention our Funders. Without them, SFCT would not exist, so our sincere thanks to them all, as well as to all the individual organisations and people who have given so generously over the past toward the benefit of our Community. There are many, and I won't list them – as I would be very likely to miss someone out and cause offence.

Again, thank you all for attending tonight, and for your patience in listening to me rambling on.

Lewis will now take some of your time in explaining and giving an overview of the Annual Accounts of SFCT to the year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June 2025.