

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE STRATHERRICK AND FOYERS COMMUNITY TRUST HELD VIA ZOOM AT 7.00 pm ON WEDNESDAY 7 APRIL 2021

Present Frank Ellam (FE), Russell Bain (RB), Jillian Barclay (JB), Kirsty Balfour (KB), Lorraine Lewis (LL), Gareth Jones (GJ), Chris Finlay (CF), Catriona Fraser (CNF), Chris Gehrke (CG)

Apologies None

Non-attendance Martin Donnelly (MD)

Chair Kirsty Balfour (KB)

In Attendance Laura Walker-Knowles (LWK), Tony Foster (TF)

Declarations of interest: CF declared an interest in Wildside Report and Broadband. RB declared an interest in grants.

A. INTRODUCTION

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The Board noted MD had not attended three meetings now and the Board had not been able to get in touch with him.

B. MINUTES 7 APRIL 2021

RB **PROPOSED** and CG **SECONDED** and the Minutes of Meeting held on 3 March 2021 were **AGREED** as a correct record without any further amendment and **APPROVED** and signed by the Chair.

Matters Arising

Knockie Trust

The format for financial assistance procedure had been finalised along with clarity on individual grant schemes.

Draft Timesheet

The timesheet was done and sent out, however the Board noted the claimant did not want payment for work done under Covid 19. The Board agreed that CNF should try and persuade otherwise.

Covid-19 Financial Assistance

GJ advised the Board that financial help would be provided for 10 weeks and there were also sufficient funds left to support another four or five possible applications.

Currently there are 21 applications.

CNF advised in relation to the Knockie Trust that where there was extreme hardship claimants might qualify under the covid scheme as well as the hardship.

Foyers Bay Steering Group

The action point required amendment from Riverside Field to Foyers Bay.

RB, LL and TF have met and the Board noted a steering group has been set up and next steps are being discussed with the Architect.

Action: LWK to amend the minute.

Riverside Virtual Tea Break

TF updated the Board on the idea of the virtual tea break. The idea is for for the Team to speak on the morning of 14 April, prior to the Community Action Plan (CAP) "Community Assembly" meeting on 15 April in order to update the community on planning, including reasons for delays and potential issues to be faced. From previous consultations residents and the wider community were concerned about disruption during works and what the final construct would be. The tea break will be an informal chat to assist in finding those who want to be on the extended steering group. If successful, the Trust will make it a regular event.

The Board noted full and robust steering groups were essential and the Trust should implement a uniform way of doing this and a test to ensure its success.

In relation to the CAP the Trust need to be sure that no one says they do not know what is going on but rather they are fully informed.

The Board discussed the right communications would come out from the CAP itself, but did not feel the Trust should wait for the final CAP but start now, as waiting until June was too much of a delay and Nick Wright will fill in any blanks.

The Board discussed the need for both enthusiastic and negative views with encouragement for interaction between them.

Caretaker

The Board noted the post had been advertised with two applications received. Interviews are scheduled for Thursday 15th April.

Pump Bill

The Board noted the pump bill had been received and paid.

Riverside Field Report

In relation temporary pop up building costs, the Board noted the SSE building had now been disposed of, with the cost for new and second hand units ranging up £15,000, but they can also be hired for £500 a day. However, following discussions with the Architect, this idea will be revisited once a planning officer is in place.

07/04/2021

The Board noted the planning process will take 12 weeks and a road report is due from Fairhurst.

Funders Team Report

The Board were requested to send budgets to GJ, but there would be a further discussion under finance.

Community Asset Transfer

LL's paper from the previous meeting had been noted by the Board.

C. FINANCE REPORT

The Board noted the circulated Finance Report along with small change in bank interest received.

Budgets 2021 – 2022

TF and GJ ran through the budget structure. The Board noted the conversation with SSE in relation to the option of drawdown of funds for Trust projects. In terms of projects if everything took off as planned the Trust would need an additional £700,000.

This information has been relayed to SSE who have advised that if the process was taken forward the Trust would need to provide a business case for all projects including detailed descriptions, funding, staffing, along with financial forecasting and sourcing 20% of match funding. The business cases would then need to be in submitted by the end of the year with funding released at the start of the year.

The Trust therefore need to be clear about the process going forward.

The Board agreed that the Trust should put the brake on a little and spend the next few months developing business cases to take to SSE at the end of the Trust financial year. The Board further noted that SSE will only fund one project, however the Trust has a portfolio of projects. The Board discussed the potential for SSE to fund a portfolio of projects.

The Board discussed the position the Trust were in and the need to demonstrate the capacity to deliver.

Portfolio

The Board noted there were projects in place with available budgets and authorised funds.

Timetable

The Board noted the timetable.

April: Each project lead updates on status of each project.

May: Identify match funding for projects along with timing the CAP.

June: Project leads commence business case with information from CAP and feasibility work.

July: The first draft of a business case for each project, subject to relative information being available. The Board makes a decision on progression to SSE.

September: Present at the SSE November meeting.

07/04/2021

December: Take plans for next financial year to SSE and the funders.

March: If only one or two projects are advanced look at funding projects with planning and what the Trust can take forward in a reasonable amount of time.

The Board noted that TF had looked at a 4 to 5-year programme and the idea would be to raise £4million match funding to go with the projects the Directors want to put forward.

The Board discussed and noted that support from a local group would assist.

TF ran through the requirements for uniformly applying for match funding.

The Board discussed the position of Project Coordinator (PCo) and to ensure we hit the targets the PCo is essential.

The Board noted project management would be part of the funding built in.

The Board discussed specialist fundraisers.

The Board noted the Trust were in discussions with local groups who are planning large projects, including Boleskine Community Care and the Green Team.

The Board discussed the Trust's technical support would be required and TF is in favour of this strategy and encouraging it. The role of the Trust will be coming off the back of the CAP and this will be to support the community with projects.

FE updated what can go into the budget for next year was dependent on what could be presented at the May/June Board meeting to allow refinement of the budget.

FE highlighted the financial management policy drafted in 2014 contains a section whereby the Board can set a minimum amount of cash to be kept in the bank. This was previously set at 120% of overheads and core grants. However, as the Trust has grown more money has been spent on these and 120% now to keep in reserve is £430,000. The Trust now has a sophisticated financial reporting process and FE suggested to the Board to reduce the reserve to 100% making a difference of £75,000 available for next year's budget.

RB recommended the reduction of reserves to the Board with amendment of the financial management policy. The Board **AGREED** to the reduction of the threshold of reserves to 100%.

In relation to budgets, TF advised there is a budget from July 2021 for a finance position, as an estimate this would cost around £10,000 per year part time.

D. GRANT APPLICATION

(i) Student Grant Applications

Applicants: **Roxana Elgar**

Amount applied for: £500

Purpose of grant: Student Expenses

The Board **APPROVED** the grant in the sum of **£500**.

Fund: Green Highland

RB left the meeting 8.53 p.m.

(ii) Covid-19 Financial Assistance Applications

Applicants: Multiple

Amount applied for: Various – financial help

The Board **APPROVED** the grants in the total sum of **£11,800**.

Fund: Greencoat

RB returned to the meeting at 8.55 p.m.

The Board noted the number of applications to the Knockie Trust for support.

E. QUARTERLY UPDATES

Riverside Field

CNF updated on the possible activities and uses for the field once restrictions are lifted, to be decided alongside the Riverside Field steering group. The Board are aware there is no parking and discussed parking at BCC and involving the community. The Board were keen on these ideas.

RB offered an afternoon at Wildside for bicycle maintenance.

The Board discussed further ideas for use of the field before the development starts.

The Board were keen to get the field mown and potentially other areas so that sports and games can be played on the field. This discussion will also form part of the virtual tea break.

Action: Information to advertise on the website – CNF/JB

F. MONTHLY REPORT

Funders Team

This had been covered under finance.

FE added that SSE Trust annual reports had been drafted and sent to TF for review. The Trust needs to add a paragraph about evaluations and then they will go to KB to sign as Trust Chair. The deadline is Friday 23rd April.

07/04/2021

CF left the meeting at 9 p.m.

Action: Finalised annual reports to SSE – FE/KB/TF

Wildside

The Board noted the report and the output from the steering group, including two lawn areas, the existing lawn and an additional one to the rear of the building, which would require clearing then seeding; along with the installation of seven benches, including accessible benches, floral hanging baskets, seasonal grounds maintenance and proceeding with the CFWN (Cromarty Firth Wireless Network) broadband infrastructure.

The costs would be:

£2,800 (max) seasonal contractor.

CFWN (quote) additional infrastructure £1,701.24. CFWN additional infrastructure is to allow additional Broadband inside and outside along with protection to the router from being switched off.

Clearance of scrub and seeding £1,110.56.

Floral decorations £125.00 - £175.00 – the Board discussed advertising this work through tender. The Board discussed the timing and forthcoming Caretaker and whether this would be included in the role.

In relation to the choice of benches, these were initially chosen from the Internet. These were round benches so no climbing required. However, for sustainability and longevity a quote was requested for scratch built round benches at £450 (max) a bench. The Board agreed six benches and the procurement should go out to tender, given the potential value.

Maintenance contractor, the Board agreed this should also go out to tender.

The Board **APPROVED** the proposal.

Caretaker Role and Grounds Maintenance

At the last board meeting the Directors discussed the caretaker role and had since determined the role was preferably employed with no requirement to carry out maintenance/heavy work or specialist work.

Broadband

The Board noted CG's report and the government's R100 programme.

The Board noted this was an important point as currently there was no agreement with CFWN. However, confirmation of the Openreach R100 rollout plans will not be known until August 2021. CG was informed by Digital Director of Highlands and Island Enterprise that it was unlikely Openreach will extend their network here, but if we do anything prior to them unveiling those plans it may have a negative impact on the rollout. The Board noted the increase of 4G since the start of the project with expansion of 4G in the area. CG ran through the options available.

07/04/2021

The Board noted:

Option 1 to establish a joint partnership with CFWN and use SBVS (Scottish Broadband Voucher Scheme) following the R100 rollout plans in Summer 2021.

Option 2 to handover the network to CFWN.

Option 3 to complete the planned work and enter into partnership with CFWN without using SBVS.

CG recommends option 3 as allied to option 1, joint ownership of the network with completion of already proposed works.

The Board discussed waiting as other Directors were aware that BT have plans to install FTTP (fibre to the premises), in particular in rural low service areas and the Trust should not prejudice a resident's position to not get FTTP if it does become available.

CG suggested a choice to offer a connection or to wait for the rollout by Openreach. The Directors expressed concern over waiting longer and fuelling conception by the community and SSE of failure to deliver. The Board discussed the implications of taking up CFWN now and the prejudice if a resident then wanted to change to a different provider. Directors also discussed the impact CFWN may make on decision by Openreach to rollout FTTP in an area.

The Board **AGREED** to wait until August and Openreach actions.

G. MEMBER APPLICATIONS

The Board noted the Associate Membership application from Emilia Leese and Ordinary Membership applications from Graham Martin and Maureen McGuire.

H. COMMUNICATIONS

CNF thanked TF for his five things on a Friday, a great addition to the website. GJ and JB asked for reports to add into the Stratherrick News by Monday next week.

I. PROJECT OFFICER ROLE

The Board had noted the support requirement discussed earlier in relation to taking projects forward. The support of a PCO will help with preparation work on funding, moving projects along, match funding and preparing for business cases. The recruitment process may take up to three months and the Trust need this person on board as soon as possible.

The Board **AGREED** to recruit for the role now.

J. COMMUNITY MARKET PROPOSAL

Next meeting.

K. COMMUNITY ASSET TRANSFER – GREEN TEAM

The Board noted a reassessment was required.

07/04/2021

L. AOCB

The Board noted thanks from Caroline Mortimore for the student grant awarded last month.

KB had received a request from Anna Lowe for a Trust letter of support for a ranger on this side of the Loch. The Board **AGREED** to a letter of support.

Inverfarigaig Residents Group - Fields

The Board noted the report and the £1,500 valuation for transfer of the land and budget around that. If agreed in principle the Trust would be the body to accept the transfer. IFRG can't as it's not incorporated, the CAP shows a great appetite for community transfer of land into community control.

The Board **AGREED** to the valuation.

M. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

7.00 p.m. Wednesday, 5 May 2021 via Teams

The Meeting closed at 10.50 p.m.

Signed by Chair (KB) _____

Date _____