

**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the
Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust held at Wildside
Wednesday 29 November 2023 at 7.30 p.m.**

Present	Kirsty Balfour (KB), Gareth Jones (GJ), Chris Gehrke (CG), Catriona Fraser (CF), Ken Sinclair (KS), Maureen McGuire (MM), Mark Sutherland (MS); Malcolm Stewart (MS).
Chair	Gareth Jones (GJ)
In Attendance	Tony Foster (TF) (Chief Executive Officer); Kirsteen Campbell (KC) (Trust Administrator), Caroline Tucker (CT) (Project Co-ordinator); Robbie Burn (RB) (CAP Officer); Fiona Mustarde (FM) (Finance Officer); Matt Rhodes (MR) (Facilities Manager).
Non-attendance	Susan Greer (SG)
Apologies	Maire Brown (MB); Janet Sutherland; Ian Bateman; Jim Cameron; Jo Cameron.
Minutes	Kirsteen Campbell (KC)
Members	22
Non-members	6

1. WELCOME

The Chair informed the meeting that as 22 members were present, the meeting was therefore quorate and **declared** the meeting formally **open**.

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. ANNUAL ACCOUNTS AND FINANCE DIRECTORS' REPORT

Fiona Mustarde, Finance Officer, introduced herself and presented the Financial Year End Report and Annual Accounts for year ending 30 June 2023. FM explained the statutory requirements for accounts for a company limited by guarantee. The Trust qualifies as a micro-entity allowing the accounts to run to only 8 pages. The accounts are available on the website or from the administrator. FM took the floor through the profit and loss account and balance sheet. FM advised that she would accept questions from the audience. However, being new to the role, she may not be able to answer immediately and would respond to any questions via email if required.

Question from Pete Faye

In relation to staff costs of 13% outlined in the recent SFCT Newsletter, PF questioned what the 13% was from.

FM explained that the percentage is taken from the overall expenditure of the year rather than from the profit and loss.

Question from Peter Faye

Is the Trust still investing 25% of our income into the Legacy Fund?

GJ confirmed that this is still the case.

Question from Chris Balance

Given the millions of pounds of investment, do the Trust have an Ethical Investment Policy?

KS confirmed that this is currently being discussed and the Trust are looking into environmentally sound investments.

Question from Mark Hindley

What is the financial threshold for changing the accounting basis to something requiring fully audited accounts and if the Trust expected to cross this during the current financial year (2023/24)?

FM responded stating that yes, she does expect to cross the threshold during the period.

Question from William MacKenzie

Are the Board of Directors confident that the balance between 'people funding' and acquisitions are correct? Is it correct that legacy projects, once in place, are self-financing? Will the ongoing needs, such as elderly care, health care and the provision of people activities be met?

GJ addressed these issues in the Chair's report.

GJ thanked Fiona Mustarde for her contribution and the accounts were accepted.

3. CHAIR'S REPORT

The Chair presented his report to the floor outlining the activities of the Trust during the fiscal year from July 2022 to June 2023.

CG summarised the work of the Inverfarigaig Residents Group including the purchase of a Forestry Commission field within Inverfarigaig through the community benefit funding that comes into the area. They have also purchased a polycrub, and a brownfield site at the Corkscrew, where they plan to have the Men's Shed. CG highlighted the success of the group in achieving positive outcomes for the area they live in and encouraged others within the community to come together in a similar way where they too can access funds to benefit their villages.

MS summarised activities at Foyer Bay that have been undertaken over the last year and are planned for the near future. He encouraged people in the local community to

get involved with the project, and hoped that as a gateway to Loch Ness, it will be appreciated as an area with lots of potential for sports, boating etc.

CF gave a summary of the grants awarded from the Knockie Trust during the period. In total sixty grants were awarded to local residents who were experiencing financial hardship. The fund was divided equally between every applicant. CF explained the need for the Trust to safeguard funds for the Knockie Trust in the future and have a Concordat in place. Funds can be drawn down if and when required. She emphasised that the Knockie Trust and its Trustees are very private and have been entrusted by the SFCT to assess the grant applications due to their years of experience. The Christmas vouchers will also be continuing in 2023 and will be arriving with eligible residents in the coming days. CF explained that those are people over the age of 65 who have lived in the local community for at least 4 years.

CF went on to thank Janet and Alex Sutherland who had donated wood to the local community last year. She was pleased to confirm that wood has also been secured this year and thanked Malcolm Stewart for coordinating this.

KB summarised the challenges with schooling, lack of childcare in the area, and the lack of wraparound care. She identified a key problem is parents who work in Inverness tend to place their children in schools in Inverness which results in the local primary schools being lost – Foyers Primary School, which was recently mothballed, is an example of this. She highlighted that there is no childminder between Dores and Fort Augustus meaning that there is no provision for childcare for children under nursery age. She went on to say that there is external funding and practical support from the Scottish Childminding Association to help someone within the local community set up a childminding service.

KB also praised the Stratherrick Primary & Nursery Parent Council, who she described as a strong group, working to benefit the children in the area. They have been supported by SFCT to help provide activities that best meet the needs of all children in the school and nursery.

KS summarised the work of the small committee within the Trust, comprising of himself, Gareth Jones and Maureen McGuire, who are responsible for overseeing the legacy fund. Currently around £12,000 a month goes into the fund and growth will be available for use for specific projects. KS advised that investments are managed by Clarendon Financial Service and noted that they have done well for the Trust in the previous years. He summarised the effect of an unfavourable stock market over the last three years and the importance of not panicking when the market fluctuates. The money input into the fund is under constant review.

He summarised some of the funds that the Trust currently invest in and the level of growth since 2018. He emphasised that this is a long-term investment to secure a sustainable future.

4. ELECTION OF DIRECTORS

In accordance with the Articles of Association, a third of Directors had to step down each year. The existing Board comprised of eight Member Directors. Five Member Directors remained on the Board, Catriona Fraser, Maire Brown, Susan Greer, Ken Sinclair and Maureen McGuire. Kirsty Balfour, Gareth Jones and Chris Gehrke stood down along with Co-opted Directors Mark Sutherland and Malcolm Stewart. The Articles allow for nine Member Directors. There were therefore four vacancies. Three nomination forms had been received and therefore no requirement for an election. The three Member Director Nomination forms had been received from Gareth Jones, Chris Gehrke and Malcolm Stewart.

CF thanked Kirsty Balfour for her work as a Director, and Gareth Jones for his year as Chair.

5. QUESTIONS

Alex Sutherland

Should energy saving schemes now be subsidised, and given the amount of timber that Forestry Scotland take from the local area, should there be a community benefit for every ton that leaves the area?

CF said that to her knowledge the timber haulage companies pay into the RTIF (Rural Transport Infrastructure Fund).

Alex Sutherland

Would a good way to keep in contact with one another be to develop a local phone book?

CF agreed this was a good idea and suggested it could be a school initiative like in other areas that have developed their own phone book.

CF asked the audience how best the Trust could attract more input from the local community. She emphasised the importance of keeping the Community Council alive with more members and encouraged people to get involved and share their ideas.

The Chair thanked everyone for attending.

The Chair **declared** the meeting **closed** at **10.00 p.m.**

Signed by Chair

Date
