

231st Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Sleat Community Trust

On: Monday 22nd of July 2024

In: Board Room

At: 18.00pm

MINUTES

1. Attendance, Apologies, and absences:

Andy Williamson (SCC) AW (as acting chairing role), Flora MacLean (FM), Ade Stokes AS, Myrielle Macleod MML (admin), Ruud van Ruitenbeek (SCTCL Chair) RvR, Paddy McKay PM, Garry Noakes GN, Chris Pendlebury (SRL Chair) CJP

Apologies :

Ruairidh Morrison RM, Domhnall Angaidh MacLennan (SMO) DAM, Eilidh Grant EG

2. Items for AOB:

- Forest School (MML)
- Skyenet (FM)

3. Declarations of Interest:

PM for Sleat Hydro and VS.

AW for Community Council.

4. Minutes of last meeting, matters arising:

Proposed by FM, seconded by PM.

The application for a new SCT bank account is still a continuing item.

The hole in the garden is still a continuing item.

The advert for a cleaner is out but no applications yet.

AS has not been back in touch with DTAS, however the regional meeting will be held in September. FM and AS are being registered for participation in this meeting and if anyone else would like to join, please contact AS.

There is also a DTAS Crown Estate Fund online meeting in September which might be useful, however for this a project should be ready to go as there is otherwise not enough time to apply.

The Strategic Group has yet to meet.

5. Finances:

a.) Report from the Finance Director (AS):

AS circulated the finished Quarterly Cashflow Report for Q2 ahead of the meeting and print outs were handed out during the meeting together with Bank Statements for the SCT account from March and June and an overview of the restricted funds at the end of March and June 2024.

AS explained the information given in the Q2 column for SCT. This shows the Actual vs the Forecast Cashflow for Q2 (April to June) and there was a reporting error done in the previous forecast as the funds were overstated due to having the restricted funds included in the forecast. AS explained that there is a spreadsheet behind all these figures and that there have been some glitches in it which have been resolved except from one slight issue that is still being dealt with.

How the figures in the Forecast come to be was explained. The Cashflow sheet is checked and reconciled against the bank account and this needs to match. Then the restricted funds are taken off. The figures for the restricted funds are kept in a separate spreadsheet that gets updated. Here is where the outstanding issue may result from. The Timing between entering the data into the sheet and the time it takes to be cleared via the bank account may cause a difference and also manual mistakes can be the reason for the issue.

ACTION POINT: check the restricted funds with dates against bank statements (including checking for historical errors) **MML**

AS had suggested that it would be easier to split the restricted funds in the bank account via Pots, but MML has checked with RBS, and this is not an option.

In the main spreadsheet, the differences between the actual and the forecast match the bank statements. Apart from the restricted funds issue they balance out. AS then asked the board to see the proof for this by looking at the Bank Statement at the end of Q1 and the end of Q2 and the same information about the restricted funds. If the restricted funds get subtracted from the Bank Balance, it all matches apart from the slight difference due to the restricted fund issue mentioned above.

One of the big differences between the actuals and the forecast for Q2 was the Buddleia Grant that came in for SRL and went out again to SRL. However, the variance between the balance carried forward and the actual balance is higher than anticipated due to the energy costs being higher and having to pay out for a new meter to be installed.

The accountants have sent out new fees that cover ½ a year. The fees were expected to come down, but this has not happened yet even though the bookkeeping has been taken back into house. The Board will have to look at all of the fees.

ACTION POINT: Check what the fees cover and what time frame **MML**

ACTION POINT: Send out Fee information to all board members to be checked **MML**

b.) Insurance Review:

Following up from the recent insurance review, the new documentation was only sent to the office last week. During the meeting, Jake from the insurance was asked to provide several options for coverage. However, this seems to have not been done. Information was given on what difference it would make to take off accidental damage which resulted in a reduction of only £89.

AS suggested that, even though it will take a lot of work, it will be worth to go and do some market research for insurance providers. For this, a template of information is needed, and the insurance documentation needs to be unraveled and put into a spreadsheet. AS is happy to go ahead with this and the board agreed.

ACTION POINT: put information for insurance research into template/spreadsheet **AS**

The question was put out to ask if we can get the information that Jake gave verbally at the meeting to say that we can leave NFU at any time.

ACTION POINT: Ask Jake to confirm in writing that we can leave the insurance at any time **AS**

ACTION POINT: write an email to Jake about the insurance documentation and the review **AS**

AS suggested to approach Zurich and a commercial insurance broker Marsh in Inverness to see what they could offer. It was asked if an insurance broker would charge SCT. However, usually the broker would get his money from commission, but this will be checked before anything is agreed with the broker.

All present agreed for AS to go and speak to Zurich and the broker.

ACTION POINT: approach Zurich and Marsh **AS**

c.) Lease to Macgillivray Motors – Rent Review:

This will be discussed at the end due to a conflict of interest with FM.

6. SCTCL (Trading) Update:

RvR informed the board that the financial situation of SCTCL is good. The turnover in the shop had been down in the previous weeks but is picking up now. A difference in the fuel purchases has been noted as well. With Mallaig fuel station now operating again, there are fewer fuel sales and less sales overall resulting from people visiting the shop while fueling up.

RvR informed the board that a decision has been made to use the excess profit money to invest this back into the shop. For this, the SCTCL board is looking into getting an awning installed between the store's back door and the garage to keep both the staff and the goods dry in rainy weather.

Staffing wise there have been 2 new starters, Orla and Daisy, and both are settling in well.

Armada Stores has been anonymously nominated for the Scottish Grocer's Sustainability Champion Award and there has been a recent visit which went very well. Armada Stores is one of only 6 stores nominated. The feedback received so far was good and the Store was encouraged to put their name forward for other competitions in the future. RvR will write an article for the West Highland Free Press about this nomination, and this will be done just before the announcement of the finalists comes through.

The Trading figures in the Quarterly Report were also explained and the actual balance is improving even though it is less than in the forecast.

The shop is also thinking about moving away from using the manual spreadsheet to a Xero spreadsheet. However, this is currently still proving difficult due to the VAT being included in the manual spreadsheet and not being included in Xero. RvR is still working on this, and TP will continue to fill in the manual spreadsheet until everything

matches and the board are happy to progress with the Xero spreadsheet. In the next financial year, the forecasting via Xero will be a lot easier as there will be already a year's worth of data in Xero.

MML mentioned that she had been shown a new Xero budget spreadsheet which can show the actual figures as well as the forecast. This is a great improvement as previously the forecast was overwritten by the actuals.

7. SRL Update:

CJP had sent out the Cashflow for AS to include in the Quarterly Report prior to the meeting. GN has also given AS some other figures to finish the Quarterly Report. The Q2 figures in the report are now matching the figures in CJP's manual spreadsheet.

CJP mentioned that the outstanding VAT that needs to be paid back by SRL to HMRC has started to be paid back. A lump sum of £30,000.00 has already been paid and the rest has been put on a monthly repayment plan to HMRC which will cover everything including the interest accumulating. However, the office received a letter to say an interest amount of about £2,300.00 was still outstanding and after MML spoke to HMRC twice it was mentioned that this interest is owed on money from before 1st of January 2023 and therefore could not be included in the payment plan. CJP will chase this up with HMRC.

ACTION POINT: speak to HMRC and query the interest payment outstanding **CJP**

CJP updated the board on the progress of the Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP). This is proceeding according to schedule and 3 harvesting companies have been approached. So far only 1 quote has been received back and this quote was below the amount Adele Beck had predicted. (Adele Beck has been hired to help with the LTFP).

In general, the timber prices seem to have gone down so the biggest offer needs to be taken once it comes in. The harvesting also needs to be done before the end of January due to the sea eagle's nesting phase beginning after that. With the felling, the debt SRL currently has will be cleared.

The outstanding invoices from the Lochalsh Leisure Centre have still not been paid and no more information has been provided to CJP.

ACTION POINT: speak to LLC's chair and chase up the invoice payments **CJP**

The contract with SMO has been lost for this year and An Crubh had complained about wet chip recently however the chip is now dry enough for them to get supplies again.

The inflows and outflows in the SRL bank balances are due to the Buddleia Grant coming in and the resulting invoice to the contractor being paid out and also due to the invoices Adele Beck has sent for her work with the LTFP which can hopefully be claimed back.

The next VAT Return is due in August, and this should get some money back in.

There is currently a steady income from campervans using the Tormore parking site and these come in via PayPal and the donation box in the forest.

John Rawlinson is helping out with wood cutting and deliveries and he is doing this on a voluntary basis, but he is being reimbursed for the fuel he is using.

It was pointed out that the LTFP was sent out to stakeholders for comment but not to the SCT board. The question was therefore raised whether the board members would want to see this.

ACTION POINT: circulate the scoping for LTFP to SCT board members **CJP**

The financial viability of the LTFP was not mentioned in the scoping but this is something that should be discussed during the strategic review.

After the reports from all the boards, AS went back to explain about the consolidated figures in the Quarterly Report. These figures are quickly going down to the current situation SRL is in and also the Trust which is lacking funding.

8. Staffing: General Update:

No one has replied to the job as cleaner for 6 hours a week. MML to keep advertising.

ACTION POINT: keep readvertising cleaner Job

MML

9. SCT Chair: Strategy, governance, and management (AW):

This is a continuing item on the agenda.

The group that was supposed to meet as the strategic group has yet to meet due to lack of time.

The current issue is that SCT is lacking management and fundraising, which is both required. Core funding would be best to get some business development. PM and AW suggested approaching someone for help which has experience in funding. All present agreed that they can go forward with this.

ACTION POINT: speak to person about getting their help for securing funding

AW, PM

It was suggested that a preliminary list of things SCT, SRL and SCTCL want to do should be compiled to make looking for funding easier.

With the AGM coming up in November, a strategic review needs to be held before that. To reach out to the community and show what the Trust does it was mentioned that an open day could be held. This could show the Trust's purpose, history, story and challenges. The skill sets that are needed in the Trust could also be discussed to attract volunteers as well as future board members. Branching out and holding open days in different locations such as Tarskavaig was mentioned. AS will provide a storyboard template for this and circulate it across to the board members to fill in.

ACTION POINT: provide "straw man" in email for open day preparation

AS

ACTION POINT: plan open days in the community

all board members

10. CRF2165: Playpark Report (AW):

AW showed the most recent plan for the Playpark and explained the challenges which are being faced while developing this. Currently, there is a small flat area that can be used for small children, but the rest of the playpark and equipment is only aimed at children up to 10 years old. Comments from locals are being collected for this but the progress is slow.

11. Local Place Plan (AW):

There has been no significant progress or update on this.

12. Office Rental/ Shared Office Use (MML):

A poster has been designed and put up in the Trust office to show what can be rented. This has also been publicized on Facebook. So far, no one has shown any interest yet. MML will keep re-advertising this.

ACTION POINT: keep readvertising the rental spaces

MML

13. AOB – from items given in 2 above:

Forest School (MML):

MML confirmed that there is currently only the need for a PVG for the Forest School. The question was asked whether the Forest School as such is a part of SCT and therefore needs to have PVG's handled via the Trust or not. This would include having any complaints from volunteers that have had their PVG checks done and are unhappy with the recruitment decisions done by the Forest School being handled by SCT.

It was agreed by the Board that even though the Forest School is held on Trust Land, it is independent and is as such not affiliated with the Trust. This means that Emma, who is running the Forest School, will be responsible for any PVG checks required for volunteers she hires. MML is to put this in writing to her.

ACTION POINT: email Emma and tell of decision about Forest School and PVG's

MML

This decision now means that no update to the old PVG policies is required as such as no one needs a PVG check to be done.

Skyenet (FM):

During the recent SCTCL meeting, CS from Skyenet mentioned that there is a possibility of Skyenet buying a fibre optic connection in Tarskavaig. This would possibly help with broadband speeds and provide an alternative to customers leaving that want to have a fibre connection. FM was asking how to advertise this so customer are aware of having the possibility of using Fibre via Skyenet before they decide to switch to another provider.

RvR explained that it was suggested that CS will buy one line for now and try the service out to see how it works. This will give the option to then test the bandwidth per line and what the contention ratio is. If this proves successful, then a price for the new service needs to be discussed and then it can be advertised.

FM left the meeting at 19:50 pm due to a conflict of interest in the discussion about the Garage Lease.

Garage Lease (from point 5, C.):

AS presented five options to the Board ahead of the meeting by email with a recommendation to progress Option 4. Following feedback from EG and DAM via email and a considered discussion the Board opted to take the recommended option forward to negotiations with MacGillivray Motors.

ACTION POINT: speak to Ali about rent and possibility of buying the garage building

AS

ACTION POINT: ask Duncan and Martin if they know why offer to buy was declined in the past

AS

It was mentioned that in the current Garage contract there is a floating charge from SIS mentioned. No one is sure what this is and if it may relate to the Tormore purchases. MML to investigate.

ACTION POINT: find out what floating charge in garage contract is and if it is paid off/ expired

MML

The meeting finished at 20:15 pm. The next meeting is on Monday, 26th of August in the Board Room.