

234th Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Sleat Community Trust

On: Monday 28th of October 2024

In: Board Room

At: 18.00pm

MINUTES

1. Attendance, Apologies, and absences:

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

Apologies :

Ruairidh Morrison RM, Domhnall Angaidh MacLennan (SMO) DAM, Eilidh Grant EG, Chris Pendlebury (SRL Chair) CJP

2. Items for AOB:

- a.) Inverness Royal Academy Donation MML
- b.) SMO Board Member MML
- c.) Loughborough University – SNG Funding AS
- d.) Lease to MacGillivray Motors – Rent Review AS

3. Declarations of Interest:

PM for Sleat Hydro.

AW for Community Council.

MML for shop (supplier).

FM for Garage.

4. Minutes of last meeting, matters arising:

Proposed by FM, seconded by AS.

Compliance with Articles of Association for Trust will be discussed under Finance.

AW attended the Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross Community Partnership meeting.

The Garage will be discussed in A.O.B.

FM has been in contact with the shop managers in regard to the sale of venison. It was agreed that the label should say local Tormore Venison and also mention the Trust. The responsibility of who is getting a freezer for this and how it will work will be discussed by RvR and the shop managers.

CJP as SRL chair wrote to the SCT board about the loan that was previously discussed. This will also be mentioned under Finance.

SRL's ongoing issue with HMRC is still outstanding. CJP is awaiting a response from them.

A Strategy Group has been organised and it has met up. AW and AS have spoken to DTAS about strategies and this will be discussed later on.

No preparations or planning have been made in regard to the AGM. This needs to be looked at and will also be discussed under Strategy.

AW contacted the member of the public who offered to volunteer but has had no agreed meeting yet.

ACTION POINT: follow up with member of public

AW

5. Finances:

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

Prior to the meeting, AS provided a print out and email version of the SCT Board Quarterly Cashflow Report.

Due to SCTCL's good performance, the consolidated accounts show an overall improved balance. SCTCL's income was up over the forecast, however the cost and income have actually both been down.

The SCT balance continues to fall, same as the SRL balance.

SRL is hoping to see an improvement once the woodchip sales have picked up and the felling license has come through. At the moment, the Long Term Forest Plan which is required for the felling, is taking longer than anticipated and the final draft is still outstanding.

SCT's Q3 inflows and outflows are higher than forecasted. This is mainly due to the buddleia clearance funding being received and then paid to SRL. The Quarter End balance is understated by £27.15 but the reason for this has not been found yet.

There is a monthly deficit of approximately £1,083.00 per calendar month for SCT between the in- and outflow. Assuming this is being carried forward without changes, the bank balance will be zero by the end of Quarter 1 in 2027.

The SCT forecast shows the net balance only, which does not include the restricted funds.

AS has introduced a Hybrid figure into the overview which shows a different balance carried forward in Q2. This is due to changes in the restricted funds calculations. AS to leave note about this.

ACTION POINT: leave notes about Balance c/f in Q2 Hybrid

AS

SCTCL's accounts look good. The forecast shows lower outflows, which may be due to inflation and also the fact that Covid Figures were translated into the forecast. This will need to be amended for next year.

ACTION POINT: amend forecast by excluding Covid Figures

RvR

The ferry disruption has had an influence on the sales but also on the opening hours of the shop. The times were amended to reflect the ferry's summer time table but due to cancellations there were extra costs in staff wages but no extra income.

Last year's petrol sales were enhanced due to the Mallaig fuel station being closed. Now the fuel sales are back to normal.

Skyenet is making a profit but will need reserves to accommodate for new hardware etc.

Visit Sleat is doing alright. There will be a slight increase in their fees next year.

The shop is doing well, however RvR is worried about the budget and the National Insurance Premium rise.

Savings have been accumulated in a separate savings account for the shop to be used for unexpected costs. The balance in the Forecast spreadsheet is not including the savings account. The money from the savings account will need to be moved to SCT by the end of the financial year to avoid paying tax.

It was suggested that a savings account for the Trust would be a good idea.

Overall, the shop has got a good balance and due to the sales in the summer it can deal with the downturn during winter.

The previously discussed bonus scheme for shop staff will only be paid if profit exceeds a certain level at the end of the financial year.

The awning for the shop is still outstanding. FM is to meet a builder and get a quote for this.

SRL Chair CJP left some commentary on SRL's performance as he was not available for the meeting.

The original forecast CJP works with has been changed and overwritten a lot so there are some variations in the forecast which are also due to the decline in woodchip sales.

The projections that CJP works on are going beyond the forecast that AS works with. The forecast makes assumptions based on the following:

1. £15,000 transferred from SCTCL to SRL in 3 tranches of £5,000 from 1st November, January and March
2. Woodchip contract with SMO re-established from March 2025
3. Woodchip, logs and split log sales maintain at 2023-2024 levels.

Regarding the woodchip contract with SMO, CJP and Polly are due to speak with them. Reliability will be a main point for the college. The idea for this is to stockpile woodchip in summer so it is readily available in winter time.

The relationship with the Lochalsh Leisure Centre is looking positive. All outstanding invoices have been paid and it looks like the Pool is staying with woodchip however it is unclear if they will be using SRL for this.

The LTFP needs to be signed off and submitted asap but it was agreed that everything needs to be corrected before it goes out to avoid any further delays. However, it could still be months before the approval goes through.

Meanwhile, tenders have been sent out to various contractors in preparation for the felling.

b.) Insurance Review (AS):

AS provided an update about the insurance review prior to the meeting via email.

Zurich, Marsh and a broker affiliated with DTAS have been approached with the requirements of the Trust. Neither DTAS nor Zurich are able to provide cover whereas Marsh has said they will get back in contact with AS in April, closer to the time of the NFU Renewal.

ACTION POINT: make note to chase up Marsh if they haven't contacted us

MML

This means the insurance with NFU will continue to run until at least May 2025.

6. SCTCL (Trading) Update (RvR):

Most of the updates from Trading have been covered in Finance.

Skynet is doing well even though Fibre based internet is being provided by other suppliers. There have been not too many customers been lost which is mainly due to the good service provided by CS and its predecessor. Some customers that have left have been replaced with new customers joining.

The One Touch Switching which gives customers the ability to switch broadband providers within minutes from one to another has been a concern. However, CS has found an organization that can do this at a reasonable cost. Skynet is continuing to increase its performance and bandwidth.

PM provided an update on Visit Sleat:

Visit Sleat is getting on well. It will try to get members in for the beginning of the year so the brochure can be printed on time. Social Media Posts are being shared and the screens in the foyer and An Crubh are up and running.

There will be a fee increase of 10% next year as this has not gone up in at least 5 years.

There is a suggestion to move VS out from Trading and restructuring it into the Trust. PM is to ask the accountants about this.

ACTION POINT: follow up with Accountants on restructuring of VS

PM

The shop had a good month. Staffing wise, Claire has now left but Mary and Freja have both joined.

The shop managers had post office training recently and learnt a lot from this and they now have things to follow up on.

The Status of the Postmaster was formerly the Trading board however the Post Office now requires a named person to be the Postmaster. Either Catherine or Norma will take this on.

EVRI has stopped bringing parcels to the shop as they have currently a contract with MacRitchie's to deliver to people's houses. However, it is not sure how long this contract will run. Parcels are still being dropped off though.

The maintenance contract for the fuel pumps has expired and needs to be renewed as the company doing this before has ceased Trading. The shop managers are now awaiting a quote to have the pumps checked. The pumping out of the separator tank is now also due but this will be expensive.

The October Fruit and Veg promotion is doing really well, and the managers will ask about another promotion.

7. SRL Update (this was provided by GN as CJP was absent):

Most of SRL's Update has been covered in Finance.

Radical Travel Volunteers are working up at the forest all week.

The log splitter has been fixed by John Rawlinson using his own initiative and some wood deliveries have taken place.

8. Staffing: General Update:

The new cleaner is due to start work on Friday, 1st of November. She will work 6 days a week, 1 hour each day. This is being paid for by the Highland Council Comfort Scheme.

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

a.) Strategy Development Group Update

A Strategy Development Group Update was provided via email prior to the meeting.

AS and AW met up with DTAS and they offer a 2 stage strategic financial review in 2 parts.

- 1.) Governance and Financial Health Analysis
- 2.) Balanced Scorecard Strategic Planning

This could help SCT to provide a 3 year strategic plan with set goals.

DTAS can run this facilitated session for SCT at the next board meeting in November online providing there is a 90% turnout of board members on the day. This would probably be covered by the first hour of the meeting.

All present agreed to go ahead with this.

After this Teams Meeting a physical meeting can be held which will take about half a day. All boards can be involved in this meeting.

Needed for the review are the following:

- Existing strategy documents
- The boards need to be briefed on this
- Date and venue for the workshop: DTAS will attend this at no cost to SCT. SMO was suggested as Venue.

ACTION POINT: inform DTAS to go ahead with online meeting on 25th of November

AW

ACTION POINT: think about the full session and find out day and venue for this

Strategy Group

b.) Articles of Association

AS went through the Articles of Association and put these into a Key Articles Checklist. This was provided prior to the meeting.

Some requirements of these articles need to be investigated such as those covered in the Action Points below.

ACTION POINT: find out how many members the Trust has

MML

ACTION POINT: update membership list to confirm members still active and ¾ of members are members of the community

MML

ACTION POINT: check membership list has name, postal address, category of membership, date of appointment and cessation

MML

ACTION POINT: check majority of board members are elected directors at AGM (check elected vs co-opted)

MML

ACTION POINT: check all directors are ordinary Trust Members

MML

ACTION POINT: check articles for term length of retiring and reelected directors AS, MML

A co-opted director is required who is aged between 16-25 to represent the interests of the young people in the community.

ACTION POINT: check with shop staff if someone suitable there RvR

A board of directors is maintained on Companies House. If RM wants to leave the SCT board this will need to be formally mentioned at the AGM and then MML can remove RM from Companies House.

ACTION POINT: check articles for conditions of Company Secretary AS, MML

Accounts must be sent 21 'clear' days in advance of AGM to all Members.

ACTION POINT: check when we can expect accounts from Andy MML

ACTION POINT: look at possible AGM dates once accounts available SCT Board

Actions that will need to be done before the AGM include the accounts, setting up a Video Conferencing and have staff available to deal with this, get Andy to join the AGM via Teams, settle on location for AGM. The role of the Chair also needs to be reviewed and defined before the AGM and the acting chair will have to write a report.

It was agreed that the Strategy Meeting needs to be done first and then the AGM can be planned and organised, which means it will need to be postponed. This will require a statement to the members to let them know that the AGM will be delayed due to the Trust waiting on the accounts and going through a strategic review process. An AGM date for early in the new year is anticipated.

ACTION POINT: write statement for members and get this published in next newsletter MML to ask Duncan

It was mentioned that it would also be a good idea to reach out to the community by ways of doing a leaflet that depicts what the Trust and the different entities do and giving facts and figures.

ACTION POINT: liaise with Ciorstan from the shop and Duncan on designing leaflet MML

ACTION POINT: get Ciorstan to translate parts of leaflet into Gaelic MML

10. CRF2165: Playpark Report (AW):

A design has been agreed on which will bring the budget down. However, the money from the full budget needs to be kept so it can be used for other things such as benches.

11. AOB – from items given in 2 above:

a.) Inverness Royal Academy Donation MML

MML had circulated an email recently from someone asking if the Trust would be happy to accept a donation from the Inverness Royal Academy for philanthropic work.

All present agreed for MML to get back to the Academy and see what is required.

ACTION POINT: follow up on possible donation from Royal Academy MML

b.) SMO Board Member MML

MML informed the board that she has been in contact with SMO to ask about getting another co-opted member for the SCT board now that DAM has left SMO. Donnie Munro will discuss this at the next Senior Management Team Meeting as SMO values the link to the Trust.

MML also asked if there is a “good news” story from SCT that can be provided to the Scottish Islands Federation. The Grocer’s Award for Armadale Stores plus information from the Newsletter can be used for this.

ACTION POINT: speak to SIF and provide 50 words story

MML

c.) Loughborough University – SNG Funding AS

AS circulated an email prior to the meeting about this.

Dr. Tom Stanton of Loughborough University asked if he could list SCT in his funding application as a partner. There will be no liability for SCT and if the funding application proves successful any further conversation will be held with the Sleat Nature Group and the University.

All present agreed for this to go ahead.

ACTION POINT: email Dr. Tom Stanton and inform him of the decision

AS

Before discussing the Lease to MacGillivray Motors FM left the meeting at 19:57 due to a conflict of interest.

d.) Lease to MacGillivray Motors – Rent Review AS

There has been no update in regard to an answer from Ali and his solicitor.

AS will speak to Ali the next time he sees him on an informal level.

The meeting finished at 20:06 pm. The next meeting is on Monday, 25th of November in the Board Room.

AW will be chairing the next meeting.

Both DTAS and MML will be joining via Teams.