POINT AND SANDWICK POWER &POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST JOINT BOARD 15 NOVEMBER 2021 (ZOOM)

MINUTES – 15 NOVEMBER 2021

Minute of Zoom Meeting of Board of Directors of **Point and Sandwick Trust** on **Tuesday 15 November 7.00pm**.

PRESENT:	Norman Mackenzie (Chair) Duncan Mackay (Vice-Chair) Angus McCormack (Hon President) Andrew Mackenzie Agnes Munro Catherine Anne Smith Chris T Mackenzie Rhoda Mackenzie Sonja Macleod Rhona Gallagher Jane Watson Dan Maclennan Donald John MacSween Calum Macdonald Eddie Macgregor
APOLOGIES:	Gordon Mackay Donald Macdonald Steve McDonald Ian Irvine
In Attendance	Viv Halcrow, Woodland Trust

1 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none declared at this point although the Chairman indicated that declarations could be made at any time during the meeting.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5 ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

John Moffat took the members of the Board through the Annual Accounts which had been circulated. An opportunity was afforded to members to ask questions on the Accounts.

It was agreed to approve the Annual Accounts.

6 POINT AND SANDWICK POWER by Calum Macdonald

1) Cable Update and PSP Finances.

Turbine operation was patchy in October, partly because of problems incurred because the turbines were down so long, partly also because the SSE ANM system had problems. The last of these problems was sorted last Friday and we are now back to full operation.

The last payment of the full insurance total of £991786 has also been received following a clarification by Enercon of the output numbers. We are still waiting for the compensation payments from SSE (circa £86,000) and a constraint payment from National Grid (circa £70,000) both of which are overdue.

As stated last meeting, these payments means that we have survived this dangerous period in the black rather than in the red. We have been able to maintain all the operational payments to Enercon and Wood throughout as well as all our debt repayment obligations to Santander Bank.

Next year, we can resume our charitable activities with a clean sheet and no new debt accumulated because of the outage. I still anticipate that it will take us till the end of next year to build up the reserves we need before we can start making new grants via the Trust. The need to build up new reserves is especially acute given that the insurance industry has made a collective decision not to insure any subsea cable going to any island from this point on. Therefore, if there was to be another outage, we would have no safety net.

Energy prices are still high but, as you know, we cannot rely on that lasting to next month far less long term. I will continue to base our forward financial modelling for the bank using the same conservative price assumptions as last year.

2) Wind farm insurance.

As previously stated, the insurance industry has made a collective decision not to insure any subsea cable going to any island from this point on. Therefore, if there was to be another outage, we would have no safety net. We are working with Community Power Outer Hebrides (CPOH) to solve this, perhaps through a mutual insurance scheme, and I will keep the Board informed.

3) Community Battery Project.

SSEN have announced the battery tender will begin on 29th November and conclude on 17th January. The winner will be announced in March next year. To get them to do this is entirely down to all the lobbying work we have been doing with Engie since late

2019, following a decision taken at that year's Away Day. It is an open tender with potentially big companies bidding against us so I am working closely with Engie to put on our bid.

4) Community Cable to Skye.

No new update on this.

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5) Hydogen ferry.

Community Hydrogen Hebrides has been formed and has had its first meeting. We have asked for us to be allowed to join the Council's hydrogen policy committee which already includes EDF, BayWa and Pentland and which had its latest meeting last month, but John Cunningham of the Council who is in charge of this policy area has refused to allow any community companies to attend. No reason has been given other than they want to develop the hydrogen sector through large corporations rather than through community energy companies, so we are being excluded.

The Report was noted.

7 POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST by Donald John MacSween

1) Finance

The current bank balance is £3,800. Payments of £10k continue to be paid on a monthly basis as agreed with the Bank. It would help cash flow considerably if Directors were to approve a one-off payment of £10k once the financial position of Beinn Grideag becomes clear at the end of November.

This was agreed.

I initially had to refuse an offer of grant from HIE for Befrienders development/relaunch because they insisted that the £5k had to be spent first and then reclaimed.
I explained, several times, that our precarious cash flow position would not allow me to spend that amount up front, and that at the time of applying for the Community Recovery Fund (2), I was under the impression that 90% of the grant would be paid up front enabling the project to go ahead and the remaining 10% would be paid on receipt of paid invoices.

Eventually, I got email confirmation that my reading of the grant conditions was correct, and the grant would indeed be paid 90% up front.

I await receipt of the grant before incurring any expenditure, the total of £5k has to be spent before the end of March 2022.

2) Community Consultation Meeting

A note of the Community Consultation Meeting was previously circulated to Board members**.**

3) Away Day
A note of the Away Day was previously circulated to Board Members**.**

Norman Mackenzie declare an interest in this item.

4) Knock Hub

Work on the Knock Hub is proceeding according to timetable so far, work on the first phase is due for completion by the end of February 2022.

There is a problem with Local Energy Scotland who have still not issued grant and loan confirmation- indicated verbally last May, because apparently Scottish Government are concerned about USAR ability to honour the loan element.

The effect of the delay is impacting on ordering the solar panels and fitting before the scaffolding is dismantled at the end of November.

It was agreed that in order to progress this matter speedily, Point and Sandwick Trust would process an advance payment of rent as soon as possible in the sum of £7,500 from its Office Budget to Urras Storas an Rubha which would hopefully give an assurance of ability to honour the loan element.

5) Croft Woodland Progress Report

Update for Point and Sandwick Trust Board meeting 15th November 2021
Period covered: 29th September – 12th November 2021 (7 weeks)
Overview: Continuing high level of interest
11 enquiries during the period, bringing the total so far to 628 enquiries
2 site visits in period, a total of 439 croft visits to date. Not every enquiry needs a visit; many are advice only
Planting:
We are now in the planting season and work is ongoing. Most schemes are planted February – April but the following are happening now:
MOREwoods: one scheme in Harris of 1020 trees.
A further 19 schemes will be planted in spring.
All trees for Lewis and Harris planting this season will come from the new W Isles nurseries (see below) and Little Assynt in Sutherland. Trees for Uist and Barra will come from Alba and Little Assynt due to delivery issues.
SRDP (Forestry Grant Scheme): two schemes, both in Harris, totalling 3120 trees
2 more applications are near submission (1 South Uist, 1 Lewis), for planting in 2022.
Viv collated evidence on the actual quoted costs of schemes compared to the grant income; we are trying to influence Scottish Government for an uplift in grant, as schemes are not going ahead due to rising costs.
We are also trying to persuade Scottish Forestry to consider alternatives to traditional deer fencing for small schemes, eg an offset electrified wire, to lessen costs.
Free Crofting Tree packs: two packs in Lewis: Aline Community Woodland and Stornoway Primary School
A further three packs will be planted in spring.
In addition, groups apply direct to Woodland Trust online for tree packs
Planting totals: to date

- 2016 - 2018: **40,990** trees in **13.38+ ha** (2 planting seasons)
- 2018/19: **18,405** trees in **5.23+ ha**
- 2019/20: **32,030** trees in **10.23+ ha**
- **2020/21: 50,820 trees in 16.43+ha**

- **2021/22: 21,425 trees in 6.57+ha (**figures down on previous year due to Covid and the dramatically increasing costs of fencing etc not being met by FGS grant)

- **by end of the 2021/22 season: 163,670 trees in 51.84+ha, from Barra to the Butt**

('+' due to area planted under Free Tree packs not being known)

In addition, many people are planting without grant aid

Nursery Network:

Stark's Ark (Leurbost) is the major supplier for MOREwoods and tree packs this season. Woodland Trust is assisting Frank Stark to set up a 'hardening-off' area for trees as he intends to expand his operation. Tree guards etc will also be stored there. Hebridean Trees (Robin Reid, Harris) is supplying the 2 FGS schemes only. Horshader Trust is now registered as a supplier to Woodland Trust but currently has little stock.

Training events:

Craig Shearer delivered 2 days' training of volunteers in seed collection and processing. 15 volunteers signed up for this. This is a two-year pilot project, with initial work concentrating on locating seed sources and getting landowner permission to collect seed. Craig is also supporting the nurseries with advice and practical help (he formerly worked at Alba Trees).

Viv attended an event in the Scottish Rainforest (which covers most of the mainland west coast). It may be possible to push for the Western Isles to be included in this, which could enable access to extra funding.

Promotion:

Fb pages: 'Western Isles Trees on the Croft' and 'Croft Woodland Project'

Article written for 'The Crofter' magazine, autumn edition, on planting on common grazings.

Projects in the pipeline:

Iolaire planting:

A morning of maintenance work on Wednesday 17th November, meeting at 10am at the gate on Memorial Avenue. **Support would be much appreciated;** bring strong gloves, loppers or secateurs, and work clothes.

Schools:

Craobhan airson bun sgoiltean (Trees for Primary Schools) joint project with Rotary Club: 6 participating schools in Lewis. Planting to take place in National Tree Week (27th November – 5th December 2021) with help from Rotary Club members (**and PST Directors as available!**). This has involved considerable liaison with the schools and the nursery. Viv will collect the trees on 29th Nov and prepare things. The current event programme is:

Nov 30: 1.30pm Laxdale school
Dec 1: 10am Shawbost school, 1.30pm Sgoil a Bhac
Dec 2: Sgoil nan Loch, Pairc (tbc)
Dec 3: 10am Stornoway school

Community:

Queen's Green Canopy plantings to celebrate 70th Jubilee in 2022. Proposal to plant groups of 70 trees in each of the main islands. Developing in liaison with Lord Lieutenant of the Western Isles, who retires in March, so it is hoped to have at least one planting carried out before then. Most will be in autumn 2022, on Community Land Trusts' land.

Croft Woodland Project management:

Viv is moving to part-time working (working mainly in Uist and Barra) in a job-share from 22nd November 2021.

Her working days will be Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday morning (with flexibility). Robin Reid will take up the Lewis and Harris part of the job-share. Viv has had input to his induction programme and will support Robin as needed to ensure he settles into post quickly.

6) Point and Sandwick Trust: Community Support – August 2021

The following is an update on activities of the community consultants undertaking community development work on behalf of PST.

Projects. There has been a continuing effort to chase resources and pursue project activities despite the continuing cumulative effect of two successive black swan events

which first diverted then curtailed normal PST grant giving capacity, namely the Corona virus pandemic and then the loss of income PST had to manage due to the loss of cable connection to the mainland. For development work this removed a match-funding source and therefore part of the flexibility previously in place when pursuing external funding sources. To put simply it added hurdles to be overcome.

In addition to those significant constraints, problems have been experienced in time taken to obtaining planning consents for some capital projects and this effects applications under consideration as well as delivery times for project completion, especially where the periods between applications opening and project delivery can be particularly tight. A further concern has been delays in a local Crown Estates Programme opening for 2021. This again is limiting match-funding opportunities available for the community. Despite the above, this year has seen the consultants pull in **£301,764** for 2021 to date, taking it to **£515,895** over the last 2 years and totalling over **£708,713** over the last 5 years (from 2017.)

Examples from this year include **£17,203** of small grants shared between 6 organisations and **£80,920** from the Island Fund for Shuilishader- Flesherin section of the Coastal Path. This latter grant was one of 21 approved out of 180 applications made and which was £16M of application value chasing £2M of funding, so funding competition is tough. Some of this funding spend will take place in 2022, helping employment with local contractors as well as contributing to post-covid recovery, green recovery and extending opportunities for health and wellbeing, for locals and visitors alike. This backs up consultation and engagement work early in the year, with grazing committees and others, which found good levels of local public support for path development and recognition that this was important for health and economic and social reasons. This follows collaborative work with Mossend Residents Association on Steinish and we look forward to seeing completion of phase 2 in the near future.

E-Bikes -We still await delivery dates for e-bikes ordered through Bespoke Bicycles which could be centred on knock school in due course. Priority will be for low-income users and local volunteers however it will be some months before they are delivered. This creates synergy with other green local initiatives. It is anticipated that delivery will be late December leading to a Springtime project start date. As a follow on, a successful bid has been made to **WIDT** for **£1,731 f**or a cycle shed for this project.

Knock School - We have continued to support the efforts of Urras Storas an Rubha, and partners, in developing a 90% grid free facility as part of the redevelopment of the

old School at Knock. This when completed will be a valuable demonstration project for rural green energy developments and contribute to net zero targets as well as wider social benefits.

It should be noted that we await the outcomes of other funding bids and continue to seek good outcomes for organisations in Point and Sandwick on behalf of them and the

voluntary effort which underpins them. This includes ongoing support to Garrabost Mill Trust to enable the community purchase of the mill for community benefit purposes.

The consultants continue to work remotely and can be contacted by phone, e -mail, through What'sApp and other electronic means in support of PST and referred organisations.

It was agreed that the report detailing grants levered in by the consultants be added to our web pages as an illustration of the value of the Community Development Consultants, especially during the last difficult year.

7) <u>Press and Marketing</u>

A press and marketing report from Jo Macleod has been previously circulated to members.

The Report was noted.

8 CONCLUSION

The Chairman stated that it had been a remarkable year with the Pandemic and the cable break but that Point and Sandwick Trust had kept on a steady course and was in a good position going forward. He thanked everyone for their contribution to this.

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