`

POINT AND SANDWICK POWER & POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST JOINT BOARD

MINUTES – 25 NOVEMBER 2024

Minute of Meeting of Joint Board of Directors of **Point and Sandwick Trust and Point and Sandwick Power** on **Tuesday 9 September 2024** at **7.00pm** in **PST Office**.

PRESENT:

Norman Mackenzie (Chair)
Angus McCormack (Hon President)
Eddie Macgregor, Board Member
Andrew Mackenzie, Board Member
Iain Macaskill, Board Member
Jane Watson, Board Member
Duncan Mackay, Board Member
Donald John MacSween, General Manager
Calum Macdonald, Development Manager PSP
Dan Morrison, Energy Support Unit
Kenny Maclean, Energy Support Unit
Catherine Anne Smith, Finance Manager
Christina Smith, Office Manager
Matthew Smith, Development Support Assistant

APOLOGIES

Rhoda Mackenzie (Vice-Chair)
Agnes Munro, Board Member
Dan Maclennan, Board Member
Chris Tom Mackenzie, Board Member
Gordon Mackay, Board Member
Donald Macdonald, Board Member
Rhona Gallagher, Board Member
Ian Irvine, PSP Board Member
Viv Halcrow, Croft Woodland Adviser
Laura McEwan, Croft Woodland Officer
Stewart Wilson, Energy Support Unit

1 WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all those present to the meeting.

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Donald John MacSween and Calum Macdonald declared an interest in Garrabost Mill Item.

3 MINUTES

The Minute of Meeting of the PSP/PST Joint Board of Directors of 9 September 2024 was **approved**.

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

1. Sales and Output and SSE Breaker

Output in August was 3,399 hours, September 1,283 hrs and October 2,777 hrs. The poor output in September was mostly due to an SSSE scheduled outage that month but performance has been relatively trouble-free since the last set of repairs in July

2. Wind farm subsea insurance

No update on subsea insurance. Regular wind farm insurance is now £101,000 for the year for less coverage but despite searching together through CPOH (Community Power Outer Hebrides) we have not been able to find any alternative providers.

3. Community Battery Project

I met with Stornoway Community Council on 30 September and responded to their questions. They asked why the location could not be moved. I explained how the site was chosen on technical advice and how it could not be relocated without losing our grid access. I also explained again the benefits of the battery for all the community wind farms as well as to the stability of the local grid, and that we will be following all the recommendations of the Fire Service regarding its operation. Nevertheless, the Community Council were unpersuaded and have made a formal objection to our planning application.

The Council planning report to the Planning Board was published on 22 November and it recommended approval. The Board itself meets on 9 December.

I had further meetings with SSE (both Transmission and Networks) and the National Grid and we are still waiting for the connection offer to be modified as we requested.

4. Repowering and Grid Capacity

There is no update on the scope for increasing the Beinn Ghrideag grid connection from 9MW to 15MW.

5. Community Cable to Skye

No update.

6. Hydrogen

I met with a company called HydroGenus who were put in touch with me by HIE. They are looking for a local community partner to supply a hydrogen plant. I advised that they approach the Arnish Community Wind Farm.

7. CES, CPOH and the Community Energy Alliance

The new Scottish Community Coalition on Energy or SCCE (CES, Community Land Scotland, Development Trusts Scotland and Foundation Trusts Scotland and Scottish Communities Alliance) continue to work together to influence gov policy at Scottish and UK level to promote community energy.

Related to this, CPOH and I met with Ofgem and National Grid representatives on 1 October to push for changes to the Grid regulations to make it easier for communities to connect. They were sympathetic and suggested pressing for 'derogations' from some of the rules for community energy and we continue to be in touch with them about that via the ongoing Grid Code Review.

In addition to the above, I have been working with Peter Peacock and Allan Wilson, both Ministers in previous Scottish governments to lobby Labour policy makers directly. On 6 November we met with Hazel Maciver who is a policy advisor to Anas Sarwar and also, helpfully, from Stornoway. We have provided a policy paper for her as part of the policy making for the 2026 SP election.

On 9 November I spoke on community energy at the Highlands and Islands Labour conference. Anas Sarwar and Michael Shanks (UK Energy Minister) also spoke, the latter by zoom. There was a lot of interest and enthusiasm from delegates and Shanks asked for a paper on setting up a Community Energy Unit comparable to the erstwhile Community Land Unit which I have now provided.

I continue to meet regularly with Torcuil Crichton MP who has succeeded in getting the Energy Select Committee on which he sits to hold an early enquiry into expanding community energy in the UK. This is an excellent opportunity to raise the profile of our sector in the press and with governments and to try and make sure it is central to government thinking on its proposed Local Action Plans.

8) Dividend.

Work is still continuing on getting the new step-in agreements for the bank to protect their position via the Engebretson and DR Macleod leases. This has been ongoing since last December and is a source of great frustration as well as cost as we have to pay everyone's legal fees.

These are now with the bank's lawyers to review so I am hopeful that we are in the last lap of the process. We face a hard deadline in February in that we will get taxed a substantial amount on our profit if it has not been converted into gift aid by then, but I am confident that we can avoid that. In the meantime, the bank agreed to release £150,000 as a small dividend.

9) Corporate PPA.

No update.

10) Cowal

I have been 'mentoring' some community councils in Cowal to help them to develop a community wind farm to benefit the whole area. I have identified a site on Forestry Commission land which could host a scheme of at least 30MW and our interest has been registered with Forest and Land Scotland. I am hopeful that this project will be able to progress and provide a template for the larger community wind farms we hope we will see over the coming years.

5 CROFT WOODLAND PROJECT

1. Overview

Viv : 4 new enquiries during the period and 10 site visits
Laura: 20 new enquiries during the period, bringing the overall total so far to 866 enquiries
Viv: 10 site visits in the period
Laura: 14 site visits in the period, an overall total of 774 croft visits to date.

2. MOREwoods

Croft visits and the costings developed from them are generating potential MOREwoods schemes for 2024/25. In Uist and Barra there are 12 to date (seven confirmed, awaiting information from the other five) and 19 in Lewis and Harris. We are working with colleagues at Woodland Trust to process these schemes for delivery in March. This year we are able to offer to fund rabbit netting to protect trees instead of individual rabbit guards, which some crofters prefer. We are also intending to trial the product Trico (a deer-deterrent substance made from sheep fat) which is sprayed onto the trees to make them unpalatable. We're looking into the mycorrhizal fungi product Rhizocore which may be of benefit in establishing trees on our tree-less soils.

3. SRDP (Forestry Grant Scheme):

Uist and Barra:

- An application for a small new FGS scheme in S Uist has been approved.
- Two more FGS schemes in Uist are being prepared for submission.
- A further five FGS schemes are in active development in Uist and Barra.

Viv spent a useful day with Donald from SF visiting four potential FGS sites and discussing issues. Viv will be offering to top-up some of these schemes as there is a substantial shortfall between the grant and the actual costs.
Lewis and Harris:

- There are 3 new FGS schemes in preliminary stages of development.

4. Free Crofting Tree packs: 2023/24 planting:

Two packs have been agreed in Uist so far: for 'Pals of Bayhead Playpark' in N Uist, and Balivanich Primary School, and a small number of trees for Grimsay Community Association. In Lewis and Harris, there has been one agreed for Sir E. Scott Primary in Tarbert.

5. Community: Planting Totals

The planting total to date is **211,420** trees spread through the Western Isles.

6. SSE Compensatory Planting

No further info on this. Viv and Laura had a brief online meeting with SSE staff who are keen to green their image (!)

7. Nursery Network:

Alder seed has been collected in Uist and in Barra, dried, and placed in cold storage. The Tree Seed Collection Project sent 1.5kg of hazelnuts from Skye to be processed and sown in the Uist nursery.

~1500 Downy birch, alder, rowan and a small amount of willow plants will be of a size to sell this winter.

An independent assessor visited the Uist nursery in early October to carry out the Woodland Trust 'UK and Ireland Sourced and Grown' audit. Once the nursery has been accredited, trees can be used for MOREwoods schemes. Viv has subsequently upgraded the nursery recording processes and applied for Professional Operator registration and the ability to issue Plant Passports (both these are necessary if plants are to be sold).

Frank Stark is on a slow road to recovery. His tree operation will be down-scaled considerably but he has stated that he will focus his efforts on growing trees for MOREwoods schemes only. He has been collecting and processing seed when he is feeling up to it. Hopefully this will mean that all trees for MOREwoods schemes in Lewis and Harris next year will be supplied locally.

8. Woodland Survey:

It hasn't been possible to start this, due to a change in staff, and workload. We will look at appointing a contractor to undertake all or some of this work in 2025.

9. Promotion:

In late October, Viv had an information table at the Tagsa Uibhist community market. There was a lot of interest in trees and some were given away for a donation (to be put towards nursery sundries eg compost and fertilizer). There are also several new enquiries to follow up.

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

Laura delivered a presentation to the 'Women Together' group in Harris on 5th November. It was very well attended and an article about the presentation was published in Welovestornoway.com

Laura will be on the Friday afternoon panel discussion at the Scottish Crofting Federation Gathering on 22nd November and deliver two workshops on Saturday 23rd on the Croft Woodland Project.

10. Training:

Viv and Laura attended a 3-day Croft Woodland Project team meeting based in Morvern in September. Useful time was spent discussing mutual issues with colleagues and visiting CWP sites on Mull.

GDPR refresher course, new GIS mapping system

11. General:

Woodland Trust Scotland: monthly recording update.

Laura has had discussions with Mark Jamieson from NatureScot who is on the Deer Management Group for Lewis and Harris and with Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn about deer damage to MOREwoods schemes in Upper Shader.They are currently seeking funding for a Deer Larder to assist with processing culls and incentivise a voluntary group of stalkers. They highlighted the need for people to report sightings and we have discussed a joint press release encouraging people to do so.

6 ENERGY SUPPORT UNIT REPORT

1. Schools workshops -Eco School learning in Point

Sgoil an Rubha are continuing their journey as an Eco School and learning more about renewable energy and sustainability. The school was awarded their Green Flag status by the Eco Schools Scotland programme in December 2023 and this week welcomed in some visitors to learn more about renewable energy and sustainability. Both Stewart and Iain of the Point and Sandwick Energy Support Unit visited the school over a couple of days to run some hands-on sessions about solar, wind and hydro energy explore how energy is used and can be conserved in pupils' homes while tackling related pollution. The visit was funded by Outer Hebrides Climate Hub's Ideas Into Action Fund with an "Energy & Climate Champion Initiative" grant and matched by community-owned wind farm, Point and Sandwick Trust. The funding of £2,000 was used to cover materials for the sessions and some useful goodies for the children including wind-up torches, reflective keyrings for school bags, and beanies. The children were also presented with "Sustainability Champion" certificates and medals in recognition of their efforts.

2. Hardship Fund

The ESU continues to assess households for assistance through the fund. The increase to the energy price cap coupled with the removal of the winter allowance for many and the prospect of further increases to the price cap in Jan 2025 drives demand as household grapple with the increasing cost pressures for energy.

3. Energy Performance Certificates

The ESU continues to work through the ESU database aiming to improve the data available upon which funding bids can be constructed and strategic decisions can be based. Where homes to not have an EPC or it is suspected that the EPC is inaccurate or out of date then it will aim to undertake a survey to enable an accurate EPC to be lodged on the national register. These surveys are time consuming but help improve the accuracy and robustness of the date held against the housing stock.

4. Home Repair Service

The ESU has commenced the process for its first Home Repair Service job – with a soft launch to assess the process and administration demands. We are looking at a home with typical disrepair where the elderly client has some funds but cannot source any tradesmen to undertake the work. The property has active water penetration and requires gutters and downpipes, missing slate replacement, path clean etc.

5. SSEN Submission-Dampness Service

An application has been submitted to the SSEN Regional on behalf of Point and SandwickTrust for a project called 'My Dry Home'. This proposal focuses on addressing

dampness issues within the Point and Sandwick Community. Our key objectives include providing practical solutions like dehumidifiers, ventilation grilles and window sealing, alongside conducting dampness surveys and educational workshops to improve energy efficiency and household health. The application also includes plans to expand our technician's role to at least 3 days per week, enabling increased support for households, and investing in diagnostic tools like thermographic cameras and airtightness testing kits. With this funding it is aimed to directly assist over 80 households and share our findings to benefit the wider region. PST and ESU match funding of £47,770 was used to support the bid.

6. Utilita

The ESU met with Utilita on Teams call to explore opportunities to help schools have their own hands-on solar and battery resources as well as educational tools to highlight the benefits and promote sustainability towards their ECO-schools goals.

The possibility of assessing whether a solar panel project could be constructed for the windfarm to displace the grid supplied energy which is used to keep the turbines warm and at the correct humidities.

8 POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST by Donald John MacSween

1. Finance

The balance in the PST account is c£390,000.

The balance in the Insignis Investments Account is £291,283.

The balance in the ESU account is c£60,000.

A Report on actual spend compared to the Budget to the end of October is appended.

The Gift Aid payment is still awaited.

2. Grants Sub-Committee

Grants Sub-Committee was held on 25 November 2024 and the recommendations for approval was separately circulated to Board Members.

3. Point and Sandwick Trust: Community Support : June Update

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

(1) Projects: There has been a continuing effort to pursue project activities including the Coastal Walk, Garrabost Mill, Sandwickhill school.

(2) Coastal Trail

The Aird, Upper Aird to Sheshader, project is due for completion this month all £100K claims to Paths for All funding for this project has been drawn down. Monthly liaison meetings with their representatives are taking place. Discussions took place with them on the Melbost-Aignish project. The use of a mesh grid which grass could grow through and be cropped by sheep is a potential solution to issues which Aignish Grazing Committee have raised but they have not been amenable to further discussion putting the other £100K external grant at risk.

Alternative route development has been explored which meets Paths for All grant criteria and Lower-Bayble to Knock and Swordale is being proposed. This requires connection of around 400m between the existing grazing tracks to provide 240m of improved connection, similar to the Aird path. Both respective grazing clerks have indicated their support. To enable negotiations with Paths for All to be successful, PST are requested to vire their previously approved grant for Melbost-Aignish to be redirected to the Lower Bayble-Swordale/Knock route instead and this is now requested.
Research byTony Robson found a planning guide on non-domestic permitted development rights (agriculture and forestry private ways) circular 2/204. This classifies tracks and paths as permitted development, and the local planning authority only requires notification instead of a planning application. When planners were approached, they did not seem encouraging. Alasdair Nicholson believes that this circular creates a presumption in favour of use of this device and that planning authorities should not without good reason refuse to accept notice given. In the meantime, planning has been applied for through the on-line process.
Sheshader -Dun Dubh is expected to be more straight forward once PST funds become available later.

(3) Sandwickhill School
Alasdair Nicholson had a meeting with HIE to discuss the proposal for a community purchase. The site is valued at £170,500 and the Sandwickhill Trust would need to provide CNES with a business plan and pay £17,500 to acquire the site. Alasdair Nicholson suggested that a referral to Just Enterprise in Inverness for advice would be useful to assist in business planning and governance given the dialogue between them and An Lanntair.

Alasdair Nicholson attended recent meetings and their AGM. It is suggested that some additional support from PST be considered to help the Trust and facilitate progress in this stage of development.

(4) Garrabost Mill
The move towards completion of the initial phases of work on the Mill and outbuildings have reached a crucial stage where, if completed, would enable the mill to be able to receive visitors. This includes electrical works, design and erection of display materials, the installation of an office and toilet unit, and surfacing the approach road, and additional safety measures to meet required and recommended works. Since the previous funding package was discussed, firmer prices have been obtained, and Alasdair Nicholson has explored further assistance from HIE and an application submitted. The path group therefore seeks amendment of the previous bid to seek to capture all works remaining funded from HIE and PST. Alasdair has had an indication that HIE grant may come from underspends and be required to be spent by end of March 2025. Full details are in an application to PST.

(5) Constitutions and advice
As previously advised, a draft constitution for a Community Hut was provided for the steering group. This has been approved by the group and an application to OSCR has been made for charity recognition on their behalf.

Two funding applications were made on behalf of Knock Youth group towards a skatepark. It is understood one bid was successful with a £9,000 grant, the other is under consideration.

A meeting has been arranged with Liz Chaplin to give advice to Ui Church group.

4. Knock Mission Hall

PST have been informed by the Solicitor that the bid of £70 for the purchase of the above has been successful.

The property is in a reasonable condition for the price and various suggestions for future use have been suggested including eventually housing the Derek Thompson Collection and creating an exhibition and display area as an attraction for locals and tourists. Title to the property has not been finalized.

5. Development Support Assistant

Attached is a report on tasks and events attended by the recently appointed DSA.

(1) Tasks Undertaken

Since beginning in this new post my role has expanded significantly, the first task was to aid DJ in transitioning to part time. Sorting through his files and desk, creating files from various documents and correspondence. There was a lot to do with the extension and preparing the office for occupation. Around this time, we were also preparing for the visit from Princess Anne in which I was involved in some door duties, setting up display boards etc. As things settled down after that the role consists of a lot of different tasks.
I have been at meetings with DJ with the Garrabost Mill regularly, as well as attending the meetings of the Point and Sandwick Trail. There have also been irregular meet ups with Baiba and others. A significant amount of time has been spent on filing since the disruption from the building work ended. Going through the old files and sorting through extra files from Mann Judd (some from as early as 2005) has been useful for me because I've been able to familiarise myself with the background to this project.
Another regular task is looking at funding streams and keeping on top of what is happening as well as looking at information DJ sends and filling out surveys from various organizations.

There has also been time spent on less regular tasks, such as sourcing equipment and picking it up. I have also delivered and picked up display boards from the office to Portnaguran in connection with the Portnaguran Amenities event as well as assisting in setting them up. There have been various lifts and drop offs with Calum, DJ and Eddie. I have also been checking on the minibus.

(2) Events Attended

A major event was of course the Royal Visit, aside from that I also attended an event at The Galson Estate. It was a fairly small meeting led by a student looking at barriers to community projects. A few groups were represented and spoke their mind about the difficulties they face.

There was also a visit from a group of German students who were visiting through UHI.

I also attended OH-COP1, the first climate conference in the Western Isles although I was only able to attend the morning session due to going away 0n lunchtime ferry. There were some interesting presentations, including one from a Scottish Government organisation. I have asked for copies of some of these for future reference.
I would recommend taking up the opportunity to hold a My Climate Story workshop, as I cannot remember there being one held in our areas.

(3) Future Goals
I would like to learn more regarding funding processes from Tony and Alasdair and how that is incorporated into projects and keep learning from DJ who has been great to work for.

6. Away Day

Our annual Away Day this year took place on Tuesday 10 September 2024 in Lews Castle. It was well attended, and a brief note is attached as Appendix 1.

APPENDIX 1

POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST
AWAY DAY
TUESDAY 10 SEPTEMBER 2024 – LEWS CASTLE

Those Present:

Norman Mackenzie (Chair)	Donald J MacSween	Alasdair Nicholson
Angus McCormack (Hon Pres)	Calum Macdonald	Tony Robson
Rhoda Mackenzie (Vice-Chair)	Catherine Anne Smith	John Moffat
Agnes Munro	Christina Smith	Stewart Wilson
Eddie McGregor	Matthew Smith	Dan Morrison
Duncan Mackay		Kenny Maclean
Chris Tom Mackenzie		
Jim Allan		

Apologies:

Gordon Mackay	Andrew Mackenzie	Viv Halcrow
Rhona Gallagher	Dan Maclennan	Laura McEwan
Donald Macdonald		

Welcome and Opening Remarks *(Chair, Norman Mackenzie*)
The Chair welcomed everyone to Away Day and then invited John Moffat to give an update on the financial situation.

PST/PSP Finance (*John Moffat)*
John Moffat confirmed that the Engie overpayment of £617,954 had been paid off and that gift aid payments for PST for 23/24 were at £3,800,000. Both PST and PSP were in a comfortable position with cash position as at 31/8/4 showing £2,985,412.

Energy Support Unit *(Stewart Wilson)*
The ESU gave a brief presentation on grants applied and the importance of gaining feedback and capturing this information. Stewart also spoke about provision of disabled alarms and minor works repairs for wind, water, heat and safety.

Financial Planning
John Dobson, Greenbank, gave a presentation on the financial model to improve members' understanding. He described it as an operational model that can be updated every six months to reflect actual performance and make assumptions for future financial performance. The model is used to show actual profit for the period and inform future expectations.

Stornoway Port Authority
Alex Macleod gave a presentation on the Stornoway Port Authority and spoke about the new £49 million deep water port, completed earlier this year, for the berthing of large cruise ships, container ships and to support the renewable energy sector.
After lunch, those present were given a guided tour of the new port.

APPENDIX 2

7. Timetable of Meetings 2025

The proposed timetable of meetings for next year is attached as Appendix 2 for Members' information and note.

DATE	MEETING	TIME	
Monday 27 January 25 **Tuesday 28 January 25**	**Grants Sub-Committee** **PSP/PST Joint Board**	**2.00 pm** **7.00 pm**	**PST Mtg Room** **PST Mtg Room**
Monday 24 March 25 **Tuesday 25 March 25**	**Grants Sub-Committee** **PSP/PST Joint Board**	**2.00 pm** **7.00 pm**	**PST Mtg Room** **PST Mtg Room**
Monday 12 May 25 **Tuesday 13 May 25**	**Grants Sub-Committee** **PSP/PST Joint Board**	**2.00 pm** **7.00pm**	**PST Mtg Room** **PST Mtg Room**
Monday 23 June 25 **Tuesday 24 June 25**	**Grants Sub-Committee** **PSP/PST Joint Board**	**2.00 pm** **7.00 pm**	**PST Mtg Room** **PST Mtg Room**
Monday 22 September 25 **Tuesday 23 September 25**	**Grants Sub-Committee** **PSP/PST Joint Board Away Day**	**10.00 am** **7.00 pm** **9.00 am**	**PST Mtg Room** **PST Mtg Room** **Venue to be notified**
Monday 24 November 25 **Tuesday 25 November 25**	**Grants Sub-Committee** **PSP/PST Joint Board** **Annual General Meeting**	**10.00 am** **7.00 pm** **8.00 pm**	**PST Mtg Room** **PST Mtg Room** **Ionad Stoodie**