POINT AND SANDWICK POWER &POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST JOINT BOARD

MINUTES – 26 MARCH 2024

Minute of Meeting of Joint Board of Directors of **Point and Sandwick Trust and Point and Sandwick Power** on **Tuesday 26 March 2024** at **7.00pm** in **Aros an Rubha**.

PRESENT: Norman Mackenzie (Chair)
Angus McCormack (Hon President) - by Zoom
Agnes Munro, Board Member
Duncan Mackay, Board Member
Donald Macdonald, Board Member
Jane Watson, Board Member
Eddie Macgregor, Board Member
Andrew Mackenzie, Board Member
Dan Maclennan, Board Member
Jim Allen, Board Member
Donald John MacSween, General Manager
Calum Macdonald, Development Manager
Catherine Anne Smith, Finance Manager
Christina Smith, Office Manager
Stewart Wilson, Energy Support Unit
Dan Morrison, Energy Support Unit
Kenny Macleod, Energy Support Unit
Joanna Macleod, Public Relations
Matthew Smith, IT

APOLOGIES Rhoda Mackenzie (Vice-Chair)
Gordon Mackay, Board Member
Rhona Gallagher, Board Member
Chris Tom Mackenzie, Board Member
Ian Irvine, PSP Board Member
Viv Halcrow, Croft Woodland Adviser

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 Minutes of Meetings of -
(1) Grants Sub-Committee of 23 January 2024; and
(2) PSP/PST Joint Board of Directors of 23 January 2024
were approved.

4 MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

5 POINT AND SANDWICK POWER by Calum Macdonald

1) Sales and Output and SSE Breaker

Unfortunately, December output was even worse than anticipated in the last report at only 2,088 hours (ie 37% below P50) and January was also bad at 2,203 hours (35% below). This was mostly due to further SSE caused outages, including a DVAR statcom failure, but also due to a continuing Enercon pole shoe problem leading to a severe constraint on output.

February was free from SSE issues, however, and we recorded 2,330 hours which is only 3% down for that month. At the beginning of March, the pole shoe was replaced by Enercon at long last and since then we have been operating normally.

As can be seen in the updated table below, 2023 was our worst year apart from 2021, the year of the cable outage (the average wind yield compared to the P50 expectation is in brackets):

2016 – 24,379 hours (wind – 19% below P50)
2017 – 29,776 (- 13%)
2018 – 24,318 (- 19%)
2019 – 25,665 (- 20%)
2020 – 22,208 (- 16%)
2021 – 7,861 (- 25%)
2022 – 30,878 (- 13%)
2023 – 16,370 (-24%)

The zoom meeting with Pentland wind farm on the 24th of February was to discuss their wish to move from their current Enercon EPK1 agreement to a new O&M contract with a company called Full Circle which is expanding its activities in the UK. Pentland want the community energy companies to do the same to make the arrangement more attractive and viable for Full Circle. I have discussed this with the other community energy companies. South Uist have had substantial difficulties with Enercon (they have had a turbine off for 89 days) so they are the most keen but the others appear to be - like me a- bit sceptical. I have asked Wood for their advice. Our Enercon EPK doesn't end till 2027 so we have some time to consider our options.

2) Wind farm subsea insurance.

No update.

3) Community Battery Project.

The progress I reported in January with SSE has hit another roadblock with SSE. Although we had the breakthrough then with SSE Transmission, SSE Distribution has now withdrawn their offer of a 2024 connection and are indicating a 2027 date instead. However, I am

hopeful we can get them to move it forward again to 2026 which is the earliest date, logistically and practically, that we could have the battery delivered and installed.

The formal planning application is almost ready and I expect it to be submitted next week or the week after. The layout design has been sent to the Stornoway Port Authority. I will also send copies to the Newton Residents' Association and to the local Councillors.

If all goes well, we might have a planning decision by October and the grid connection dates approved by the same time, allowing us to move forward to the next stage of securing funding.

I propose that we offer to make a payment of £5k pa to the Newton Resident's Association, in line with the payments we make to the community council in Point and Sandwick. I have also included an additional parking area for Coastguard vehicles at their request as they sometimes run out of parking when there is a big callout of staff.

4) Community Cable to Skye.

No update.

5) Hydrogen.

I had a call from another potential hydrogen developer (linked with Porsche) who are looking at supply options for future hydrogen car engines but without progress on the community consortium wind farm at Arnish, there is not much more that we can do.

6) Community Energy Scotland.

The collaboration with Community Land Scotland, Development Trusts Association Scotland, Scottish Community Finance and Community Shares Scotland which I reported on at the last meeting has progressed well. On 10 March we launched a short joint paper called A Fair Energy Deal for Scotland. This received some publicity and has been sent to all MSPS and to Scottish Councils.

We agreed to follow this up with more detailed papers on:
i) expanding the number of community owned projects to 1 GW by 2030
ii) developing a credible route to community part-share ownership in private projects
iii) reforming and improving community benefit payments, and
iv) creating a National Community Wealth Fund to fund investment in community energy.
I am drafting the paper on the first of these topics and will submit it to the others this week.

7) Dividend.

After much analysis of the figures, we agreed with Engie that we had been overpaid £617,953 at the start of 2023 due to the meter outage (their first estimate was over £1 million but they were happy to accept that they had made a mistake). That enabled us to at long last close our accounts and to work on the financial model which was overdue from November.

Unfortunately, however, when Jon Dobson delivered the first version of the financial model, it showed us in lockdown once again (as happened to us last May) and therefore unable to receive a dividend. Indeed, it showed us in potential lockdown till May 2025.

This made no sense to me as we have not spent the overpayment from Engie but kept it aside, so I have been working on the financial model to resolve the issue. It turns out that when calculating the ratios we need to meet to avoid lockdown, the model only looks at the commercial income due in each 6 month period and compares it to the planned invoice payments over the same time. It – bizarrely – ignores any savings we have accumulated and which we can use to make these invoice payments. Even more bizarrely, it would also allow us to take out these same savings as dividend payments without putting us in lockdown as dividends do not count as invoice payments.

Based on that new understanding of the model's quirks, I worked with Jon to get two more iterations of the model and eventually we had one which would allow us to use our savings and projected income to pay off the Engie debt plus pay out an immediate dividend. Technically, this model breaches the ratios but, in reality, it is obviously much more sensible for us – and for the bank – than the first model which showed us dragging out the Engie payment till 2025 with no dividend in the interim.

On 20 March, John Moffat and I finally had a meeting with the senior credit team from the bank (now headed by Howard Whitehead who was our first case officer back in 2013) and they accepted the logic of our argument for an 'exceptional waiver' from the normal financial model rules. We will not know for sure until it is formally approved but I am hopeful that we will be able to escape a second consecutive lock down and that we can clear off the Engie overpayment and issue a reasonable dividend to the charity by early April.

8) Potential Corporate PPA.

The Stornoway Port Authority, Essence of Harris and the Loomshed Brewery have all signed contracts with Engie which will tie their individual specific consumption of electricity with our output, hour by hour. These contracts will be recognized with official REGO certificates with our logo on them alongside Engie. As a result, I am hopeful that National Grid and Elexon who are responsible for regulating these certificates will confirm that such sales to local businesses will be rewarded with an exemption from various grid charges which will increase our income by £8 per MW hour. However, this is very novel territory – hardly any examples exist – and we cannot guarantee that Elexon won't change its mind and close the exemption in future.

The report was agreed and noted.

6 CROFT WOODLAND PROJECT

Update for Point and Sandwick Trust Board meeting 26th March 2024
Period covered: 24th January 2024 – 26th March (9 weeks)
Overview:
After nearly two and a half years working in the Croft Woodland Project in Lewis and Harris, Robin has decided to leave in order to concentrate on bird research and consultancy work. This is a big blow, and he will be a very hard act to follow. Iona is working on the recruitment of a new member of staff. Viv will do her best to keep the work in Lewis and Harris afloat until their appointment.

Viv : 2, and Robin : 8 **enquiries** during the period, bringing the total so far to 791 enquiries
Viv: 0, and Robin : 7 **site visits** in the period, a total of 699 croft visits to date. Not every enquiry needs a visit; many are advice only.

MOREwoods :

On Lewis & Harris 9155 trees are going out to 14 MOREwoods Projects. Many have been delivered and the remainder are scheduled to be delivered between now and mid April. There was one last minute cancellation due to personal circumstances. Most of the trees are being supplied by Starks Ark and some were sent up from a mainland nursery to make up numbers. Unfortunately we had to reject a lot of the trees that came from the mainland as they were in poor condition or too small but Frank at Stark's Ark has largely been able to compensate for this by supplying more trees to the Woodland Trust that had originally been reserved for the North Harris Trust. We are very grateful to Frank for making this extra effort to the support the Croft Woodland Project.

In Barra and Uist, 4340 trees plus sundries were delivered as three bulk orders from two mainland nurseries and from the Isle of Eigg tree nursery (a Twitter post about this saw 28.5K views). Deliveries were made to Tagsa Uibhist in Benbecula and to Garadh an Bagh a Tuath in Barra. Viv divvied up the plants and sundries, with some paid assistance (involving registering the assistants as suppliers and helping them invoice for their time with a Purchase Order), and delivered them to crofters and community groups over the period 11th- to 13th March (Uist) and 18th to 22nd March (Barra – delays due to ferry disruptions). Planting is ongoing. There are six MW schemes in Uist (one person had to withdraw for health reasons) and five in Barra. It's hoped that developing the Uist tree nursery will be a very positive step for supplying future schemes.

SRDP (Forestry Grant Scheme):

On Lewis, the scheme at Scaliscro (9000 trees) is now complete and the Scladale project (10650 trees) is near completion. They have struggled to source their last batches of trees after one nursery was unable to supply trees due to losses at the nursery but hopefully they will be able to source trees in the next few weeks to complete. The project at Lickisto (1800) trees is complete and around half of the 6940 trees required at the Torastay site have been planted. Fencing is underway at Calbost but had to be paused until later in the year due to wet ground conditions. Fencing is starting at 17 Lemreway and the 0.73 ha application for 8 Lemreway was approved in early March.

The 36 hectare Crobeg Woodland Improvement Grant application was approved in early March and tree planting will start there in April. This is the first Woodland Improvement Grant approved for the Western Isles!

Planting is almost complete for the scheme at Carinish, N Uist, but it wasn't possible to source the 450 necessary willow plants of the correct genetic provenance. These have been ordered for November 2024 which will enable the planting to be finished. Viv submitted a request for Variation to the FGS contract and negotiated a year's extension for repayment of the loan.

Two applications for further schemes have been submitted: one on Grimsay and one on Eilean Flodda, Benbecula, each around 1 hectare in area. These should be approved by the end of March. Fencing, mounding and planting should be completed by the end of March 2025 for one scheme, and the end of March 2026 for the other. Viv met with Donald in Inverness to discuss the new applications, and he will visit Uist on March 26th and 27th to visit these two, along with sites which have been planted, and further ones in development.

Free Crofting Tree packs: 2023/24 planting:

One pack was delivered to East Camp Trust in Benbecula.

Four community tree packs are going out on Lewis to Garrobost Mill, Point Football Club, Galson Estate Trust and UHI. One is going to the Harris Mutual Improvement Association to

be planted at the Tarbert Community Centre. In total 1360 trees will be planted through community tree packs on Lewis & Harris this season.

Community events:

In Barra, a community planting day, planned for 21st March at Northbay was regrettably cancelled due to adverse weather. The background work of preparing a poster, Risk Assessment, Registration form will be useful in future. The Barra community planting day will be rescheduled, and one is planned for South Uist on 10th April.

Folk who are receiving trees via the Carbon Neutral Island project in Barra had the option of attending an online session on the basics of site section, planting technique and aftercare on 13th March, delivered by Viv: 9 people joined this meeting. Viv prepared slides and a crib sheet for this talk which were circulated among attendees. Sadly a 'demonstration' practical planting event on 22nd March had to be cancelled due to adverse weather.

Planting totals:

In Uist and Barra, 5340 trees are scheduled for planting this 2023/24 season through MOREwoods, a community pack and two community planting days. In addition, the Carinish FGS scheme has so far planted 1760 trees: a total of 7100 new trees in the ground.

On Lewis and Harris approximately 32,765 trees are due to be planted by the end of the season with 9155 planted through MOREwoods, 1360 planted through Community Tree Packs and 22250 through FGS projects.

This will bring the total project total to 211,420 trees planted to date smashing through the 200,000 tree threshold!!

SSE Compensatory Planting

Following a meeting and site visits with SSEN in late January, Robin has passed on the details for five potential compensatory planting projects to SSEN with the crofter's consent. These are projects where due to the rough terrain and remote locations, FGS projects would not have been viable due to the costs involved but SSEN may be able to fund these projects which seems like a good option. Two sites are in Gravir, and one in Ardroil, Rhenigidale and Leverburgh making up approximately 10 ha of potential woodland creation in total.

Nursery Network:

Viv continues to support the Uist Community Tree Nursery, working with on-the-ground- staff at Tagsa Uibhist. A contractor is working 3 hours a week until the end of May 2024 to supervise the nursery through the winter and prepare for and carry out next year's spring sowing and development work.

Storas Uibhist had initially supported this project, and a further 750 trees, grown from locally-collected seed, will be supplied to them for planting on the estate next winter.

Currently there are around 3000 young trees growing on in rabbit-proof holding boxes: rowan, alder, downy birch, eared willow and grey willow. The aim is to grow between 6000 and 10,000 annually, which would supply MOREwoods planting and tree packs. There is a core group of twelve volunteers (some of the Uist Woodlanders) who are helping with the more time-consuming tasks at the nursery, and with seed collection. A good quantity of birch and alder seed is in cold storage, including Barra seed, in addition we have some rowan and hawthorn seed and a few hazelnuts are stratifying in damp sand to break dormancy.

We were much saddened by the death of Alasdair MacGillivray who has always been a great supporter of the CWP and the tree nursery work.

Woodland Trust has partnered with Trees for Life to support tree seed collecting volunteers at several hubs in the west of Scotland. Roz Birch is doing a great job of delivering training and keeping volunteers informed, including an online session with Western Isles volunteers on 21st

February. Roz visited Uist, Harris and Lewis in early March to become familiar with our situation and to meet nursery staff at Stark's Ark and Horshader Trust. Craig Shearer is still on contract to Woodland Trust until the end of May, supporting small nurseries with the practical aspects of setting-up and efficient development; Viv had a meeting with him to discuss some aspects.

Woodland Survey:
Viv has been in touch with NatureScot and RSPB staff in Uist, and had a meeting with the botanical recorder, to gather existing information on the location of native trees so that new survey can be planned, to use time efficiently. In Lewis and Harris, we will look at appointing a contractor to keep this part of the work going.

Promotion:
Viv is intending to promote the Croft Woodland Project in Uist and Barra this year, as the number of enquiries has fallen.
Fb pages: 'Western Isles Trees on the Croft' post and 'Croft Woodland Project' posts.

Training:
Viv is considering a 'how to look after your young trees' event. The Croft Woodland Project has now been active for eight years, and many of the early plantings will benefit from some maintenance.

General:
Viv had a meeting with Emma Stobart, Species on the Edge officer.
Woodland Trust Scotland: monthly recording updates, online Outreach team meeting and Scotland team meeting.



And finally, thanks to Robin for all his hard work over the past two and a half years – very sorry to see him go

The Report was noted.

6 EMERGENCY SUPPORT UNIT: PROGRESS REPORT

1.0 General Summary

We have now taken around 375 referrals and so far helped over 237 eligible households with grant assistance, distributing approximately £235,750 in the period from around 1st January 2023 to mid Mar, 2024. Since the previous board report at the middle of March we have seen a steady flow of referrals into the Energy Support Unit. Most clients we have encountered in the last quarter, have been eligible households.

1.1 Referrals

The referral rate has been steady over the winter as households began to experience colder outside temperatures. This does tend to focus the minds as the heating season gets into full swing and increases the need for uptake. In addition, OFGEM announced that the energy bills Price Cap would be moderately reduced, as of Jan 1st 2024 with a further reduction due on the 1st April 2024 (the OFGEM announcement of course is somewhat misleading as it refers to a UK average which is deceptively low for electrically heated island homes. However it should be noted that electricity prices for standing charges have risen 13% (a 147% increase on 2021). It should be noted that 'average' prices stay 60% (or c.£600pa) more than they were three years ago with energy debt at an all time high.

1.2 Processing

Over the early winter months, we have managed to clear many of the outstanding cases on the earlier part of the database (by obtaining their evidence) while continuing to raise awareness and reaching those not on digital media. We have worked with TIG and the carer network to identify clients and have continued to market on social media and
and has helped take us over the £235k mark as a total distributed.

1.3 Partnership Working

Early in February 2024 we linked with the utility OVO's Head of Vulnerable Care to establish a more effective route for raising and resolving customer issues. The aim is to have the ESU added to agencies which can access their recently formed charity agency line for the North of Scotland. We also discussed specific client cases and have had OVO action some remedies as a result. We also met with Warm Works representatives who are now based in Stornoway to operate the Comhairle's/Scottish Government's Area Based scheme. We have agreed to forward referrals into their system for works which are now available to eligible clients. In addition, we also met Donald Morrison of Home Energy Scotland to discuss the criteria they use for assistance and the various areas which they can give assistance on. We has subsequently referred a number of clients into their system.
We recently made a link with a project based in Martin's memorial church Shed which deals with a range of social issues including food and fuel.

1.4 Reach of HSF Assistance & Feedback

Of the cases closed to date we are successfully assisting with funding support 75% of those households. On average these are receiving around £950 towards their bills. The feedback from customers has been exceptionally supportive and all have welcomed the support even where they have not qualified for the HSF.

1.8 Marketing
We have continued to raise awareness via posters and social media and attending events. We still intend to issue a circular via Royal mail to all PST post codes.

Stewart (representing PST) chaired a session on 'People, Energy & Homes' at the online national Fuel Poverty conference for Energy Action Scotland in March.

We have attended the Climate Hebrides 'Our climate story' event in Stornoway and as the ESU we attended the Outer Hebrides COP climate event in Uist to participate in the discussions around adaptation and mitigation strategies/actions.

Working with Jo Macleod, PST's marketing officer, we have also targeted some social media posts to help continue raise awareness. The ESU was also recognised in the national database set up by the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Research Unit (SPIRU) which is an interdisciplinary research group based at Glasgow Caledonian University working to investigate and develop effective responses to poverty and inequality. With the support of community projects around the country, the group is developing a free-to-use online resource to raise awareness and share practice about local initiatives that aim to tackle poverty locally. The ESU was included and published as an exemplar project.

1.9 Small Works Advice
We have seen an increase in demand for advice relating to small works. A number of clients have been struggling to get contractors to attend or to have had quotations and were seeking some simple advice as to whether they were being taken advantage of or whether the quotes represented value for money. We have assisted where possible. We have also been asked by some clients to look at dampness issues and offer advice as to what the causes are and remedies might be.

1.10 New Activity
We have now commenced our undertaking of EPC's of the stock in the database to ensure the national database is a robust reflection of the 'on the ground' reality.

1.11 Future Item of Note & Concern
It should be noted that OFGEM have once again reiterated that the switch off or cessation for the radio tele-switch, Radio 4 signal, (that is the signal controlling the meters for the Total Heat Total Control tariff) will go ahead, albeit it will be delayed to mid 2025. If this occurs this will have profound effects for those electrically heated homes.

1.12 Winter Packs
We have begun our distribution of the winter packs to eligible households. We have done this in a very targeted way utilising our database to prioritise the most needy and reach them with a complement of appropriate measures. We have shaped the scheme to try to avoid duplication with other schemes in operation. We are offering Dehumidifiers, warm over blankets and air fryers.

Clients receiving the packs have agreed to provide feedback once they have had the items for a period of time. Early indication is that each of the items are very well received. The dehumidifiers in particular are seen to be particularly effective, and the first few clients think they are "brilliant" and "just amazing at getting rid of the moisture". So, this is definitely worth continuing to support and monitor.

The dashboard below gives us a breakdown:-

No of clients	27
Cases open	11
Winter packs delivered	15

Item	Allocated	Qty remaining
Pro Breeze (PB-06-UK) 12L dehumifier	18	7
Statesman SKAF08017BK Digital Dual Zone Air Fryer 8L	11	14
Beurer HD 75 large (130 x 180 cm) over-blankets	14	11
		32

Item	Delivered	Qty remaining
Pro Breeze (PB-06-UK) 12L dehumifier	13	12
Statesman SKAF08017BK Digital Dual Zone Air Fryer 8L	3	22
Beurer HD 75 large (130 x 180 cm) over-blankets	6	19

As part of the winter pack scheme we have temporarily utilised Muirneag's mobile trailer to store the kit while awaiting distribution. This has been placed at the Aros' rear car park.

1.13 Other Services:
Green House Gas Audit to ISO 14064-1:2018
The ESU having recently completed the training undertook a GHG audit for PST. A formal report is to be presented to the General manager at the end of March but it is worth noting that the organisation in 2023 was effectively 'net-zero'.

2.0 Dashboard

Energy Support Unit Dashboard				
Measure	**Total**	**Subset**	**%**	
Number of Clients referred	375			
No. of home visits completed	251			
No. of cases closed	322		86%	
No of cases open	53		14%	
Awaiting evidence from clients	2			
No of clients receiving funds	**235**		73%	of closed cases
Average assistance	**£ 917**			
Total Amount to be Disbursed	**£ 235,750**			
No of clients fuel poor (SG def)	99		30.7%	of closed cases
No of clients extreme fuel poor	185		57.5%	of closed cases
No of clients not fuel poor	29		9.0%	of closed cases
No of clients -onward only	2		0.6%	of closed cases
Average Depth of Fuel Poverty	22%	of Income spent on fuel		
No of clients signposted	64			Some clients are signposted to more than one organisation
No of clients not eligible	54			some clients are ineligible for more than one reason (e.g. >£28k savings plus less than 10% FP)
Non eligible -Savings over £28k		47		
Non eligible -income over £35.5k		32		
Revised policy eligible -10%-20% FP		99		
Non eligible -below 10%		29		
other reason for non HSF help	3			e.g. client declined or was only seeking signpost
Other clients from outside PST catchment area	5			

Fire Alarm Scheme	Total
Case Referrals	197
Homes Installed	134
Homes Advice given	2
Already Installed	48
Declined	1
Not Eligible	4
Visit Booked	0
Outstanding (Max)	3
No Response	4
Passed away	1
No of Smoke Detectors installed	465
No of Heat detectors installed	132
No of CO detectors installed	144

The Report was noted.

7 POINT AND SANDWICK TRUST by Donald John MacSween

1. Finance

The balance in the PST account is c£797,000, and the balance in the ESU account is c£25,000.

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

The uncertainty about the amount, and payment date, of the much anticipated November 23 gift aid may make it necessary to access Insignis investments from May to aid cash flow., up to a total of £500k.

It was agreed that the Board approve this action if necessary.

2. Grants Sub-Committee: 23 January 2024

The following grants were recommended for approval by the Grants Sub-Committee at its meeting on 26 March 2024.

Organisation	Project	Amount Sought from PST	Match Funding	Grant Sub Rec
Point Junior Football Club	Due to increased numbers, kits for the newest attendees required.	**£1,350**	N/A	**Approve**
Knock Parish Church of Scotland	Installation of audio visual and live streaming facilities within the Church.	**£9,000**	Church Fabric Fund £4,481	**Approve**
Coastal Path Black Sandy	Upgrade and extend 3-metre-wide disability friendly track to the bay east of Black Sandy.	**£62,605**	_	**Defer until May Grants Sub-Committee**

It was agreed to approve the Grant Sub-Committee's recommendations.

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

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

Coastal Trail
Tony Robson is progressing Steinish headland section through Mossend Residents' Association. 400m of path towards the headland has been completed. After four months pursuing Paths for All funding for both Aird, Upper Aird to Sheshader, and the Braighe crossing, funding of £100,000 for each of the above projects has been offered to the trail group and accepted. This is the maximum grant for each. Crown Estates made an earlier contribution of £14k towards some additional Sheshader work. Planning applications were submitted for Melbost-Aignish and Sheshader -Black Sandy but have yet to be determined.

The Crofters Commission have asked the planners to refuse consents (to all) as has the former Aignish Grazings clerk to Melbost- Aignish path. Donald John MacSween, Tony Robson and Alasdair Nicholson have had a site meeting with representatives of the new Aignish representatives including their Chair, Calum MacDonald, and new Clerk Andrew Logan. Point Community Council have continued their support and Sandwick Community Council have written in support of the Braighe development. A copy of the Sandwick Community Council letter was submitted to Paths for All, and their support was cited in statements of justification made to planners by Alasdair Nicholson. Following the engagements with Aignish, Tony Robson submitted a plan variation to planners, showing the path following the sea wall on the North side of the Braighe. In addition, Tony Robson has been liaising with CNES roads department on road safety mitigation measures at Aignish and Aird which is a grant condition. Alasdair Nicholson has asked Paths for All for clearance to proceed with Aird, Upper Aird to Sheshader project as that does not require planning consent.

The economic significance of PST and Paths for All recent grant awards may be judged by the fact that path spend/commitments (2019-24) now total £928,008 (excluding e-bike capital spend of £46,447). If Sheshader-Black Sandy additional grant of £62,604 is awarded, then direct path spend, from all sources will be £990,612 or £1,064,954 inclusive of path and gross e-bike spend of £74,342, which is all money circulating in the local economy.

Sandwickhill School
A steering group was initially set up to take this forward and open a bank account. In 2023, a full charity constitution for the group was approved by OSCR. Advice has been given to the group to include renewables from the start of any development and inclusion of a shop facility should be on the premise of a community managed and owned shop hosted within the building. Alasdair Nicolson encouraged the charity to pursue dialogue between them and An Lanntair to facilitate further prospective partnership action. This has occurred and seems positive. Alasdair attended a meeting in March with Donald John MacSween which discussed the report from the HIE consultants. It is suggested that the HIE funded report is not the way ahead and other avenues will be explored with local input.

Garrabost Mill
Tony Robson reports -
Wheel now painted and turning, after disconnection from mill mechanism.
New bearing fitted on one side.
Wooden buckets being installed.

Area around wheel now tidied up with rock armour and a water sump formed in downstream lade.
Fencing of feu commenced.
Outbuilding roofs including engine room, insulated, and lined. Not the kiln shed though.

All internal walls in outbuildings have been lime pointed, where possible.

Garage floor has a new concrete floor and BF8611, a 1922 Model T Spike lorry, imported from Michigan USA is safe inside the garage, labelled AF Morrison, The Mills, Garrabost.

Drainage of site now complete with all runoff water heading to water sump; water from this sump can then be used to pump over the wheel with slow rotation for display purposes.

Cattlegrid installation, fencing, floor restoration work continues.

Communities Leading Tourism
At the beginning of the month Alasdair Nicolson attended the annual meeting of SCOTO, the Communities Leading Tourism network in Dumfries, which included a number of visits to local projects. Afterwards he gave feedback on a visitor facility at a Multiverse Centre made from three containers clad in wood, providing toilet, ticket offices, and coffee stop and meeting point which fitted into the landscape. This dealt with around 10-12,000 visitors per annum currently and cost about £100,000. Crucially it enabled the park to open to visitors much more quickly and could be the sort of initial solution for Garrabost?

Other
Several support meetings have been followed up to engage with groups who have approached PST for assistance. This has included Lewis and Harris Piping Association who were able to gain WIDT funding and The Western Isles Book Trust who were pointed to a number of sources of funding.

Cruise Ship Tourism Meeting
Donald John MacSween, Nicola MacSween and Alasdair Nicholson attended a seminar on the above where there were updates on progress with the deep-water terminal and some discussion on the transfer of passengers into Stornoway.

Point Community Hut
Help was requested by Chris Tom Mackenzie on the formation of a community hut project. Alasdair Nicholson met up with CTM recently and gave advice on charity formation for the prospective group.

4 Land Adjacent to Aros

Negotiations for the purchase of land at 26 Knock, adjacent to Aros an Rubha, are nearing completion, more than a year since agreement was reached with the crofter.

5 Extension to Aros an Rubha
Work is due to begin on the extension to Aros on the 8th of April, O'Mac Construction are the contractors and work is expected to be completed within 18 weeks.
There should be minimal disruption to the daily operation at Aros, with the site being accessed via the new car park being formed on land purchased at 26 Knock.

6 Resilience and Forward Planning
The recommendations on resilience and forward planning in the Impact Hub report are being addressed by the HR Sub-Committee and there will be a report to the Board in due course.

7 Hydrogen Portable Training Unit

I have met with Joe Macphee, Director of External Engagement and Growth at UHI and he has informed me that they are ready to order the Training Unit, which will be owned by PST, but given on loan to the college for student training. The college also intend to have a dedicated room with the 3d printers purchased with grant aid from PST.
A press release and photo opportunity will follow.

The General Manager's Report was agreed and noted.

8 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

14 May 2024**.**