



MEETING OF THE WESTERN ISLES DEVELOPMENT TRUST (COMPANY NUMBER SC271462)

Meeting of Western Isles Development Trust held at committee Room 4, Council Offices, Sandwick Road, Stornoway; VC to Balivanich Council Offices (Committee Room); and VC to Tarbert Council Offices at 5pm on Thursday 28 November 2019.

PRESENT

Nominated Members

Norman A. MacDonald (Director and Nominated Member) Chair
Carola Bell (Director and Nominated Member) Vice Chair
Norman MacDonald (Director and Nominated Member)
John MacKay (Director and Nominated Member)
Fiona Stokes (Community Land Scotland Nominated Member)
Sheena Stewart (Director and Nominated Member)
David Muir (Director and Nominated Member)

Elected Members

Andrew Walker (Elected Director for Uist and Ordinary Member)
Kirsty MacCormick (Elected Director for Uist and Ordinary Member)

APOLOGIES

Calum MacKay (Elected Director for Harris and Nominated Member)
John Mitchell (Elected Director for Harris and Ordinary Member)
Donnie Morrison (Elected Director for Lewis and Ordinary Member)
Andrew Mackenzie (Elected Director for Lewis and Ordinary Member)
Iain Archie MacNeil (Director and Nominated Member)
Donald Nicholson (Director and Nominated Member)
Iain Maciver (Director and Nominated Member)

IN ATTENDANCE

Allan MacDonald (Chief Executive's Office, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar)

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

The Chair welcomed the directors to the meeting. The meeting was quorate.

2. MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF 31 October 2019

The Minutes of the meeting of 31 October 2019 were approved.

3. MATTERS ARISING

There were no matters arising.

4. MAIN FUND EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

- i. Community Energy Scotland

Carola Bell and Norman A. MacDonald both declared an interest and left the meeting during discussions and the decision. David Muir took the chair for consideration of the item.

It was noted that the applicant should involve Uist Energy in Motion and show evidence of partnership working. Applicant also required to demonstrate why it should receive a sum greater than the indicative maximum amount (£10,000). Otherwise the project appeared as though it could be very beneficial.

- **CES to be invited to submit full application.**

ii. Gàrradh a Bhagh a Tuath (Am Bothan).

Carola Bell and Norman A. MacDonald returned to consider this item. Norman A. MacDonald took over the chair.

The Board were happy to invite a full application and added that the applicant should be asked to provide more information on energy efficiency.

- **Gàradh a Bhagh a Tuath to be invited to submit full application.**

5. MAIN FUND APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING

There were no applications for funding.

6. SMALL GRANT APPLICATIONS FOR FUNDING

i. Benbecula Community Leisure Area Group (Walking Bus)

- **The grant application for £1,800 was successful**

ii. Urachadh Uibhist (Outdoor Activity Space @ CKC)

Sheena Stewart declared an interest and was not present at the discussion or decision.

- **The grant application for £2,000 was successful**

iii. Stoneybridge Community Hall (Resilience Centre)

- **The grant application for £2,000 was successful**

iv. Taigh Chearsabhagh (Ceol Uibhist a Tuath)

- **The grant application for £2,000 was successful**

v. Comunn Eachdraidh Eirisgeidh (Eriskay Pony Society Project)

The Board felt the project was too large and given there were no funds in place as yet it was not appropriate for WIDT to contribute at this early stage.

- **The grant application was unsuccessful**

vi. Uist Gifts & Information CIC (Renovation and Secure Storage)

The Board felt there was not enough information provided however the group would be invited to re-apply.

- **The grant application was unsuccessful**

vii. Comunn Eachdraidh Uibhist a Tuath

This item was carried forward from the last meeting. It was decided that the applicant should be granted £1,700 towards the application (and not the sum applied for) as the applicant required to make a contribution.

- **£1,700 to be contributed to the project**

viii. The Board took the opportunity to discuss the Small Grants Fund and made the following decisions:

- **There is no question of more funds being allocated to the scheme until it reopens in September 2020.**
- **A press release should be circulated advising that the fund has now been fully committed (although £3,400 remains). The press release should make clear how successful the fund has been.**
- **The following should apply to the fund once it is reopened next year:**
 - **The fund should be renamed the Small Projects Fund.**
 - ~~**Further conditions should be added requiring applicants to agree in the application form that they have all other necessary funding and relevant consents in place before accepting a grant from the Small Projects Fund and this will be assessed at the consideration stage. The Board must be sure the project will go ahead.**~~ Deleted pursuant to decision at January 2020 meeting.
 - **Once an organisation has received funding under the scheme it will not be eligible for further support under the scheme for a year.**

7. CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION

- **Report was noted.**

8. REQUEST FROM NORTH UIST DEVELOPMENT COMPANY TRADING LIMITED

The Board did not understand why the borrower repaid the loan early. When the project was initially scored, the applicant benefited from requiring a loan. It was not clear why extra cash flow was necessary given the borrower had repaid much of its loan early. It would be unreasonable to convert the loan to a grant at this stage, thereby potentially prejudicing the initial assessment. It would also be a bad precedent to set. However the Board felt it would be acceptable to waive the interest on the sum repaid early to assist with the project.

- **The request to write off the loan was rejected however the Board agreed to write off any interest due on the sum repaid early.**

9. REQUEST FROM COLL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST

Carola Bell and Norman A. MacDonald both declared an interest and left the meeting during discussions and the decision. David Muir took the chair for consideration of the item.

The Board discussed the request from CCDT and agreed they needed to show confidence that the interconnector would go ahead and support schemes to take advantage of that opportunity. It was also noted that the bird survey would be of value to the community whether or not this particular project proceeded. The Board stated that it recognised it was taking a risk by agreeing to a write off clause in the loan, however, WIDT was set up to take such risks in order to encourage renewable energy schemes in the islands. If WIDT did not allow this clause to be included the grant committed to date would be lost. The company would be required to keep WIDT informed at all times on developments.

- **It was agreed to:**
 - **include a write off facility in the loan agreement; and**
 - **allow CCDT to draw down from the loan facility as needed; and**
 - **allow repayment to be delayed until the project is producing electricity or 2026 (whichever is earlier).**

10. WEBSITE PROPOSAL

The Board discussed the proposal and were supportive. WIDT would need to provide the information for the site. Kirsty MacCormick had earlier noted that it may be expedient to consider a system for applying for grants whereby a series of questions had to be answered online in order to ensure the prospective applicant was eligible before it was able to submit an application. That suggestion would be raised with the website designer although it was noted that the designer had not referred to that level of interaction in her proposal. Directors would need to assist the designer in setting up the new site. It was proposed that David Muir, Fiona Stokes and Donnie Morrison would do that.

- **The designer's proposal was agreed.**
- **David Muir, Fiona Stokes and Donnie Morrison would assist the designer with the process.**

11. MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION IOCHDAR COMMUNITY COUNCIL

- **The membership application was approved.**

12. REQUEST FROM OUTER HEBRIDES HYDROGEN STUDY

- **The request from the body was approved. It was not necessary to repay the surplus as that was to be used to further the project.**

13. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

- **30 January 2020 at 5.00pm**

14. AOCB

- **Carola Bell indicated that this would be her last meeting as nominated director for Community Energy Scotland and David Wake would be representing the organisation from the next meeting. The Chair and other directors thanked Carola for her invaluable contribution to the WIDT since she became involved at a very early stage.**

END.