

Minutes from Board of Directors' meeting of Coigach Community Development Company,

Monday 8th August 2011, 7pm

Present: Iain Muir (Chairman), Ann Macleod, Anne Macleod, Ian Macleod, Ben Walton, Phil Shaughnessey, Richard Williams (for part of meeting), Steve Husband, Julia Campbell, Peter Muir (Local Development Officer), Linda MacLeod (Local Development Officer)

Apologies from: Nick Clooney, Joseph Peach (Junior Representative)

1 As it was the first meeting since our AGM, a Chairman was proposed (in accordance with article 38 from our Articles of Association). SH proposed Iain Muir as Chairman, and PS seconded this. There were no other nominations

2. The minutes of the previous meeting, 16th June 2011, were approved – proposed by AnnM, seconded by JC.

3. Matters Arising. Polbain Path: LM has been in touch with Phil Waite, HC Access Officer, to suggest a meeting between Mrs Rex, PW and CCDC. PW is happy to progress this. *Action:* LDO to liaise with Phil Waite. **Freedom of information request:** PM had requested from the Crofters Commission under the Freedom of Information Act copies of all information on crofts 115 Achiltibuie/Polglass. The information received was passed to Alastair Fraser to study and he noted an inconsistency in the records. Crofters Commission records of croft 115 & 116 up to 1978 record the size as about 3.9 acres arable and 2 acres outrun. Thereafter there is a gap of 19 years in the correspondence. In 1997 croft 115 & 116 appear in the Register as 3.96 hectares arable and 0.9 outrun. The latter appears to be a correct conversion from acres, while the arable area is brought forward unconverted. There may be a justification for the enlargement, but none in information given to us. These findings would support the belief that much of the area below the old hall is actually common grazing. The Crofters Commission were told of our findings and they in turn informed us that the matter has been passed to their Regulatory Team. *Action: PM ongoing.*

4. **Staffing.** LM has handed in her notice as LDO for CCDC due to family circumstances. After discussion with Lindsey Simpson at HIE it has been agreed that a short-term contract (until November 2011) be offered to Julia Campbell, who has accepted the post. IM thanked Linda for her work to date and welcomed JC to the post. JC is currently a Director, and it was agreed that she would stand down as Director at the end of the meeting. Prior to taking on the LDO post, LM was an elected Director, and is keen to stay involved as a Director. At the next board meeting LM will be co-opted as a Director. At this point Richard Williams joined the meeting.

5. **Finance update.** It was agreed that finance should be a regular item on the agenda in the future. Currently we have £3947.76 in our account, most of which is due to pay for the bird survey. LM had received a cheque from the now defunct Ross-shire Renewables group for £357.40 which she gave to our treasurer, BW. Our thanks to Tommy Beavitt who passed this cheque to us. *Action: LDOs to include a Finance update in future agendas.*

Fundraising for the Hydroponicum. £1,500 has been informally pledged so far. We have to raise at least £4000 as our contribution to the purchase of the Hydroponicum site. Options for fundraising were discussed, and it was agreed that JC, LM, AnnM and BW would liaise to organise fundraising efforts. It was felt that any fundraising should be ring-fenced to be spent on this project only, or on any future projects focusing on land, housing and workshop units. *Action: JC, LM, AnnM, BW*

6. **Hydroponicum.** Ballot results have been received: a response rate of 73%, with 91.9% voting 'yes' and 7.5% 'no'. One spoilt ballot paper was received, and no proxy votes were requested.

PM has engaged in discussions with Albyn housing, and he and AnnM are due to meet with them on 11/8/11 to progress ideas. Potential allocations policy was discussed and it was agreed that this is an important issue to CCDC and we will seek to ensure that we have input to this to ensure that allocations reflect community need, for instance, six children are needed to ensure that our primary school remains a two-teacher school.

In terms of financing the purchase of the Hydroponicum, it is hoped that we will be successful in securing a grant of £32,000 from HIE, £4,000 must be raised by CCDC, and we will need to take on a £44,000 loan. There are a number of finance options to

consider. Rental income from workshops could service a loan while the options to repay a loan include selling land for housing and possible income from renewable energy projects

Pam Noble from HIE has visited the site. HIE require a feasibility study, which they will fund. This study will include a business case which will help us produce a strong case for funders. Reasonable legal fees will also be paid by HIE.

SH raised a concern that in looking at workshop provision we are aiming at too high a specification which we may not achieve. IM reassured SH that the aim is to achieve units that fit with local need.

JC had canvassed the opinions of local ATA members on a possible laundry business on the site, and received a very encouraging response. JC has also received a letter of support from Bill Drake, Coigach Heritage Group, for the consideration of the Tacksman's house in development plans.

SH suggested North Harris Trust as a contact, as they have just built two two-storey semi-detached and six detached houses, and are also selling plots.

7. Energy sub-group. Wind: The CARES loan application is still being processed but we are hoping to get the go-ahead to proceed with our project before the end of August. **Hydro:** consultants have to be selected this week, and a meeting was arranged for Friday to make a shortlist. Selection criteria are to be drafted prior to this meeting. **Wind/hydro priority:** regarding the grid connection, a sequential approach was agreed as the best option. The wind project will apply for grid connection first, and in the meantime the hydro project will be progressed. SH is to -seek to obtain the three years of data that SEPA hold to help to ascertain the size of the hydro project. *Action: SH*

8. Land and housing sub-group. It was agreed that a reminder letter should be sent to the common grazings committees previously contacted asking for feedback, informing them that initial feedback from townships include shareholders making an apportionment that could become available to the community for housing, and examples of other areas who have used this approach, such as North Harris and Callanish. *Action: LM to draft for sub-group.*

9. **Pier and Harbours.** LM has emailed Colin Findlay to inform him of our intentions re piers and harbours and to invite his input. Three tenders have been received from our invitation to tender, and a bidder is to be decided upon. Action: LM to organise selection meeting.

10. **AOCB.** IM raised the issue of ensuring our constitution covers all the activities we intend to do in the future, eg have charitable status, trading arms, appropriate articles of association, etc. Action: LDOs.

LM reported back from the e-commerce course run for us by Business Gateway. Eight people attended and it was felt to be a very worthwhile course. Requests have been made for further training and Linda is to take this forward with Business Gateway. Action: LM

RW informed us that CALL has appointed a project officer. Their next meeting will be in late September.

AnneM brought up the issue of public comments being published on our website. It was agreed that CCDC needs a policy for the publishing of comments on our site, to ensure the inclusion of constructive comments. IM is to draft a statement to put up on the website. Action: IM

Possible names for future trading arms of CCDC were discussed, and PS suggested registering domain names for future use. Action: LDOs

IM has received letters from Mr Peter Rex and Mr R Christoffersen, has responded to both of these letters, and has received encouraging replies from both. It was agreed that Correspondence be included as a regular item on future agendas and a correspondence file be set up. Action: LDOs

11. **Date of Next Meeting:** A date was set for 19th September 2011 at 7pm.

The meeting closed about 9 pm.

(there was no July meeting: the proposed meeting for Thursday 18th July was postponed till 8th August)