

Minutes

STEERING GROUP MEETING



The Community Wind Energy Project for Glen Urquhart and Strathglass

Registered Scottish Charity No: SC041340

7.30pm 24th February 2011 – BALNAIN HALL, GLENURQUHART

Attendees:

Mary Brook, Neil MacInnes, Pierre LeBrun, Andrew & Tanya Castell, Bill McDermott, Steven Watson, Laura Nicolson & Erik Trelfer

Apologies: Anne MacDonald, Edward Redmond, Paul & Kate McKinley,

Agenda topics

Minutes of Meeting 27th January 2010

Discussion: the minutes of the previous meeting were agreed amended and signed

Community Energy Scotland

Steven Watson

Steven had been asked by Anne to set out a 3 page document on how we might address the deficit in community responses and engage them in determining what the communities priorities for funding projects might be. One possibility is to add further income generation projects to provide inward investment and so boost revenue available to other community projects. Bill was very keen to see micro-hydro opportunities in the Glen harnessed in this way. We are aware of projects GULUP are planning (including micro-hydro), and Glen Urquhart Greenspace, but we need to know what the community's priorities are.

There was some discussion about the acrimonious disputes that have occurred within some communities who are recipients of turbine revenue payments. CES strongly recommended having priorities for funding set out before the revenue stream begins in order to avoid such disputes. We have always recognised this danger and have planned to avoid disputes by having an Allocations Committee drawn from our Membership and/or Directors to consider applications for funding from the community and control this aspect. Steven acknowledged that our circumstances were slightly different as we will own and control the revenue stream. The communities that are having these disputes did not initially have the formal structure to administer the funds and so rival recipients are all vying for the money. Highland Council have expressed concern about this as it can be very divisive for communities. They are already making suggestions that they (or worse still Scottish Government) should take over the receipt of community payments from windfarm operators to ensure a fairer means of disbursement to the whole community.

Discussion moved on to planning and it was decided that we should run 4 or so community workshops to raise our profile and communicate where we are with this project. The main objective will be to obtain community views on what they want us to support. Whiteboards could be used to elicit people's ideas and an attitude survey to specific outcomes carried out so that we can get some idea of the ranking or priority people attach to each of them. We could suggest that a designated sum or percentage of annual revenue income could be 'ring fenced' for small community projects to see if that was felt to be a good idea for example. Steve and Laura agreed to attend one each of these events

Steven suggested we should take the opportunity to visit some more projects as there are always valuable lessons to be drawn from others experience. To this end he mentioned that there are funds available for the costs of such visits from Development Trust Association Scotland – max £1,000 – but we should go soon as funding ends in May. Westray was suggested as being worth a visit and Bill suggested Fintry as they are now looking at micro hydro for inward investment (although we would not need funding for the latter).

Steven mentioned the Investing for Community Benefit report now available on CES website – it includes 10 case studies of community groups that secured assets or revenue and then invested it in local development measures.- worth looking at. Laura reminded that the CES interactive coaching (telephone conferencing) had been successful and recommended getting involved with it – a useful forum for exchanging ideas, tips etc.

Steven indicated Social Investment Scotland may be useful to us for mezzanine funding. Anne is already aware of this and has been exploring it following the recent director's meeting with Co-op who had also suggested it. As we understand it SIS will provide a tranche of funding alongside the Co-op's – they accept the bank's due diligence so no separate negotiation required. Not known what interest rate they are offering.

Current Situation

Mary Brook

We have had no word from Mike so do not know if any progress has been made regarding grid connection and have heard nothing from Scholes yet regarding the Figures. We cannot do much more without the figures. Andrew mentioned that the grid connection should also be considered warily as he is aware of a similar situation where verbal assurances have been made and then later reneged on. Until we have it in confirmed in writing it can't be counted on.

Although we have planning consent, no-one has studied it and Mike has made no comment on any Planning Requirements that may have been attached. We need to check into this. The Planning consent is available on the HRC web-site so can be freely viewed.

Current bank account balance is £1747.58 (before the recently drawn cheque comes off for latest accountant's invoice)

Matters Arising and Any Other Business

Steven and Laura left the meeting and discussion ensued regarding the community workshops. Andrew & Tanya agreed to read up on what was done last time and come up with ideas for the white board content and circulate to us. Suggested venues for the meetings are Tomich (possibly the Hotel), Cannich (Bog Cotton?), Balnain Hall and Drumnadrochit (school?).

Tanya asked if there was anything more she could take on and suggested a meeting with Anne & Erik to explore this.

Conclusions: N/A

Action items:

Work on Workshop ideas & whiteboard content

Send Tanya copies of relevant agreements & reports etc

Person responsible:

Andrew & Tanya

Erik

Deadline:

soon

soon

DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS: Thursday 24th March 2011

Chairman:

Clerk to the Board:

Erik Trelfer

Date: