

Minutes



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held at Balnain Hall, Balnain at 7.30 pm on

Thursday 26th June 2014

Directors Present:	Tanya Castell (TC); Russell Fraser (RF); Suzanne Irvine (SI); Julie Parsons (JP), Alan James (AJ), Erik Trelfer (ET), Louise MacDonald (LM), Donna Green (DG) and Edward Redmond (ER).
Other Members present	Andrew, Castell (AC - director of Soirbheas Trading Ltd) Anne Fraser (AF), Christine Hart, Pierre Le Brun, Pam Lucas, Anna MacDonald, Heather Redmond and Janice Roth.
In attendance:	Carol Masheter (CM), Mike Girvan (MG) Jenny Stirling.
Apologies:	Andrew Crichton, Jon Trelfer, Nigel Fraser, Susan Fraser, Donald Fraser, Molly Doyle, Peter Macdonald, P Trelfer

Minutes of Previous AGM: 13th June 2013 were approved and signed

Prior to the meeting there was informal discussion time with wine or soft drinks and snacks provided for members. The meeting was then opened by TC who welcomed the members and by way of introduction briefly outlined the Soirbheas Vision Statement: 'to have a more vibrant, growing and greener community' and our Values: Communicative – to be open and transparent with our members and the community, Caring – to use our resources to take care of our community and the environment in which we live, Collaborative – we work with the community and co-operate with other grant funders and organisations to deliver the Soirbheas objectives, Committed – dedicated to delivering the Vision (see above) and Credible – we act fairly and with integrity.

CORRIMONY ENERGY REPORT: MG looked back over the last year which had seen the wind-farm finally up and running. He had concerns for a while then as the wind did not blow! This led to the wind-farm operating below budget all through the summer of 2013, and with fixed expenses to pay, things were a bit uncomfortable for him. Worries and doubts about the base wind figures on which the estimates had been calculated began to encroach. Fortunately though, the onset of winter brought with it more turbulent weather and the summer shortfall was totally made up. Over-all the wind-farm had performed well during the period April 2013 to March 2014 generating some 31,733 MW hours (against the targeted 30,870). This in effect meant it had performed at 36.5% of the theoretical maximum (i.e. if the wind blew constantly at the optimum speed all the time). This is a very good result for a Highlands based farm (only Orkney sees better averages at 45% due to their more exposed location). (This compares well with coal or fossil fuel power generation which only manages 31-33% efficiency, and of course with wind power, there is none of the carbon dioxide, sulphur and nitrous oxide pollution nor toxic fly ash to dispose of).

The Enercon Turbines are regarded as the 'Rolls Royce' of the industry and performed well. There are always a few teething troubles after installation and these were all quickly attended to by Enercon. There were two power cuts in December (there can be no production when the grid cannot take any power). In April there was a major breakdown on one turbine. The wide-spread power cut that affected the whole Highland area had damaged the turbine due to low voltage (which can be more damaging to the equipment than a high power spike). It took 2 months to rectify as after the initial repair had been made, it transpired some other part of the equipment had also been damaged by the same event. Overall though, the turbines were operational for 97.8% of their total capability. Insurance makes up any loss of income for those risks that are insured and Enercon guarantee a set level of operational capability under the warranty agreement, so it is a relatively safe investment for the community.

Income hit the target and is on budget but the variable nature of the wind has brought into focus the need for CEL to build a reserve fund to act as a buffer against unusually calm periods. It is intended to build a £1 Million buffer fund over the next four years. This will slightly reduce the money available to Soirbheas in the short term – but it is prudent to set aside this fund as the fixed costs have to be met regardless of actual production level and it will

help to equalise revenue in a less profitable year.

One other concern during the year was the predicament of the Co-op Bank which got itself into difficulty. The financing package from the bank had represented a very good deal and it would have been very difficult if it had been necessary to re-finance at short notice. Fortunately the Bank seems now to be satisfactorily resolving matters.

SOIRBHEAS REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR

Grant Funding: With the income stream from CEL now starting, the first payment arrived at the end of March 2014 and Soirbheas have set aside £20,000 for use on community projects in 2014. Already the first 3 grants have been awarded.

Community Development Officer (CDO): Donna Green was appointed during the year working 2 days a week and her work accelerated the development of the grant funding framework and improved our engagement with the community. However there was far more work needing to be done than 2 days a week allowed and as Donna was unable to extend her hours due to work commitments with her own business, she stepped down at the end of February and Carol Masheter (CM) was recruited as the new CDO working 4 days a week. Carol outlined some of the initiatives started this year:

Broadband – A survey of the community was distributed by Soirbheas at the end of 2013 and a grant was obtained from Community Broadband Scotland for a scoping report to understand what the community requires. As the government do not want to give grants for those who will be getting next generation broadband in the roll out by BT, Soirbheas needs to know what BT's plans are but BT cannot say which specific properties in the area the roll out will cover until much nearer the time when they actually do the work. It is therefore difficult to ascertain which properties will be included at the moment and at post code level, some people in a postcode may get next generation broadband while others will not. Soirbheas is being encouraged to join with other communities around the Loch Ness area to see if a joint approach will be financially viable for those areas not included in the BT roll out.

Green Homes/Green Deal: A survey of homes was put out at the end of 2013 which fed into Soirbheas submission for funding from the Climate Challenge Fund. Unfortunately the proposal was not successful and we were asked to re-submit. This has been done with a broader base, more community involvement and not restricted to just hiring a Green Deal advisor but unfortunately the application was not successful. However the CDO will be looking at what else can be done.

Beinn Mhor: Soirbheas remains neutral from a planning perspective as far as renewable energy projects are concerned. A memorandum of understanding has been entered into with wpd who want to provide the community with better than the normal £5,000 per MW per annum. Financing may be a problem though in current times. We have complied with all the government guidelines on talking early to developers about community benefit.

Community Engagement: There have been two newsletters during the year. Soirbheas have also attended various community events, held two grant workshops and met with community groups.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Copies of the year end report and accounts were made available for members (and will be placed on the web-site for viewing in due course). After relinquishing her role as CDO, Donna Green agreed to join the Board as a director and Treasurer. Donna gave a brief over-view of the year end accounts and opportunity was provided for members questions on the accounts. Whilst the bank balance seems high, it was explained that Soirbheas seeks to maintain a reserve of 20% or 3 months running costs (whichever is the higher) and so reserves have to be included to cover the monthly loan related payments to Social Investment Scotland, salary and ongoing payments to the CDO and the current funds that have been allocated for grants to community groups. However income will only be received from CEL on a six monthly basis.

AGM FORMAL PROCEEDINGS

A total of 8 postal voting forms each accepting all the motions had been received from members prior to the meeting.

1 The motion to receive the Directors Report and Accounts was almost unanimously accepted by show of hands by those present.

ELECTIONS TO THE BOARD

During the year there were two director resignations, Matthew Oosterwijk and Ian Campbell. Special thanks were recorded to Ian Campbell for his work as treasurer and also for preparing the year end accounts.

Under the constitution, each year one third of the Board must stand down by rotation but may offer themselves for re-election (always provided no more than 6 consecutive years are served). Several appointments were made during the year by co-option to the Board and those appointments must then be ratified by members at the AGM.

- 2 Re-election of Russell Fraser – nominated by Andrew Castell and seconded by Ann Fraser
- 3 Re-election of Suzanne Irvine – nominated by Ann Fraser seconded by Andrew Castell
- 4 Re-election of Louise Macdonald – nominated by Julie Parsons seconded by Russell Fraser
- 5 Formal acceptance of resignation M Oosterwijk
- 6 Formal acceptance of resignation I Campbell
- 7 Election of Julie Parsons nominated by Donna Green, seconded by Tanya Castell
- 8 Election of Alan James nominated by Suzanne Irvine, seconded by Donna Green
- 9 Election of Donna Green nominated by Andrew Castell seconded by Alan James
- 10 Election of Edward Redmond nominated by Andrew Castell seconded by Louise Macdonald

After each motion a vote was taken by show of hands (and including the postal votes) and each motion was passed almost unanimously with all those who voted being in favour (with only one abstention).

11 Special Resolution – ‘That the Articles of association of the company be altered by adopting the amended articles of association (that had previously been circulated to members), in place of the existing articles’. A special resolution requires at least 75% of those present to vote in favour in order for it to be passed and again those present voted unanimously with only one abstention for adoption of the amended Articles.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Carol Masheter outlined progress this year advising we have had 4 grant applications in for Tier 1 funding and there are 4 projects currently considering applications for Tier 2 funding. The Soirbheas website is being upgraded so that there will be better access and easier updating (previously the web-master needed to do most of the updating but with the new web-site we will be able to do more ourselves).

We have made several funding applications. Inverness College are undertaking a project looking at rural areas with regard to putting renewable energy generation into properties. There will be a free workshop on 28th August. If anyone is thinking about putting in renewable technology then this may be of help and interest.

Travel – travel patterns (scope for lift sharing scheme as was started on the Black Isle with the million miles project but now operating more widely) and driver training for fuel efficiency initiatives – courses to be run in September/October and will be free.

Energy Savings Trust – Green Homes network event to be held in Drumnadrochit including workshops on October 4th.

Soirbheas Business Plan – this is being updated.

QUESTIONS



There being no further business Tanya Castell invited any questions from members.

Q1 Which organisations have funding applications been received from? Ans: Strathglass CC applied for grant towards their Annual Christmas Party for the Elderly, grant towards the cost of hanging baskets for the community in Struy, Cannich and Tomich. The Drumnadrochit Piping Society have applied for grant towards some second-hand drums.

Q2 Were all these grants for the maximum Tier one £500? Ans: Only one was for the full £500.

There being no further questions CM invited further projects from the community and would be pleased to discuss these and advise on where to find possible match funding sources.

The formal meeting was then closed and members were able to continue to meet with and talk to directors and the CDO informally..

Chair:		Tanya Castell <i>Alan Samos</i>
Clerk to the Board:		Erik Trelfer
Date:	<i>19th June 2015</i>	