

Minutes**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING****Soirbheas**
Investing in the communities of Glen Urquhart & StrathglassHeld at Balnain Hall, Balnain on Thursday 27th June 2019Directors
Present:
Other
Members

Alan James (AJ), Fraser Mackenzie, Jack Meredith, Morag Fraser, James Murray,

Erik Trelfer (ET – Co Secretary), Neil MacInnes, Louise MacDonald, Heather & Edward Redmond,

In
attendance:

Carol Masheter (CM – Community Development Officer), Jim Barr (director Soirbheas Trading Ltd), Colin Gray (Frame Kennedy -Treasurer and Accountants to Soirbheas), Eilidh Todd (SSE)

Apologies:

Craig Turner, Pam Lucas

The Chairman Alan James opened the meeting by thanking the volunteer board for all their efforts during the past year and also Erik Trelfer for Company Secretary and board minute duties, Carol Masheter for her invaluable work as Community Development Officer and all others who had provided help and advice from time to time. He introduced Eilidh Todd who was representing SSE who had kindly agreed to provide the independent Judging for the Photo Competition.

PHOTO COMPETITION – Photo competition entries were projected onto a screen and Eilidh Todd of SSE related how impressed they were at the standard of the entries and it had not been easy to make the final decisions on the winners. She announced the winners and the winning photos were displayed on the screen. Winners received a £50 cheque and nomination of a local organisation of their choice to receive £100.

Our Landscape & Wildlife -ADULT WINNER – IAIN MACDIARMID + £100 donated to the Glenurquhart Centre; UNDER 18 WINNER – SKYE HAWKINS + £100 donated to Strathglass Youth Club; UNDER 12 WINNER – RUARIDH TODD + £100 donated to Cannich Bridge Primary School Parent Council

Our Community and Activities - ADULT WINNER – DAN THOMAS + £100 donated to Glenurquhart Shinty Club; UNDER 18 WINNER – SKYE HAWKINS + £100 donated to Strathglass Youth Club; UNDER 12 WINNER – ISLA STRACHAN + £100 donated to Cannich Bridge Primary School Parent Council

Our Landmarks and Iconic Buildings - ADULT WINNER – WILF WEARING + £100 donated to the Glenurquhart Centre; UNDER 12 WINNER – KAYLEIGH HAWKINS + £100 donated to Cannich Bridge Primary School Parent Council

The Chairman Alan James then moved on to the formal Annual General Meeting matters. The meeting was quorate and there being no questions or queries on the **Minutes of Previous AGM:** Thursday 28th June 2018 (a draft of which had been made available to members via the Soirbheas web-site), the minutes were proposed and seconded by Jimmy Murray and Jack Meredith respectively and adopted and signed off by the Chairman.

DIRECTORS REPORT & ACCOUNTS – REVIEW OF THE PAST YEAR

In this the 5th year of the Soirbheas Grant Programme grant distributions had exceeded £80,000, the highest ever figure and some £30,000 more than in the previous year. Fourteen Tier 1 Grants (up to £500) were awarded during the past year totalling £6,000 and included awards to Cannich and Balnain School Parent Councils towards transport costs for school trips.

Six Tier 2 grants (up to £10,000) were made totalling £43,500. These included some very worthwhile projects such as new playground equipment for the Childcare Centre and customised electric bikes for the Sheiling Project who are use them to transport the children out to the

facilities. With more money now flowing in the board decided the time was right to launch the Tier 3 grant programme – (for larger projects) with funding up to £30,000. As these projects are more complex there is a two stage application process, the first stage being Expression of Interest which enables close liaison with the Community Development Officer in the early stages to assess suitability and viability and so will avoid community groups having to do a lot of detailed work on something which might never make it to the second stage. It is hoped this closer working together in the early stages will prove beneficial to all parties.

The Apprenticeship scheme launched last year is financed with part of the income from SSE's Blaraidh wind farm. There are currently two apprenticeships being supported, one at Tomich Holidays and the other at Glenurquhart Care Centre. The board agreed this year to make some improvements to the apprenticeship scheme which it is believed will make it more attractive to employers. The grant has been increased from £15,500 to £22,000 over 3 years and some of the rules have been relaxed to encourage more applications and better meet employer's needs.

The Community Development Officer, Carol Masheter will be continuing to work hard within the community linking up various groups and encouraging partnership working and collaboration and helping the community to draw up projects that Soirbheas can support. During the year regular meetings are held with the Community Councils to help develop community plans and ensure good communication

FINANCIAL

The Draft Annual Report and Accounts had been made available prior to the AGM on the Soirbheas web-site. Colin Gray of Frame Kennedy was in attendance to answer any queries on these accounts. *The Chairman thanked Colin and his team for their help in providing the services of Treasurer and accountancy advisors.* Soirbheas continued to be in an extremely sound financial position. There were no formal questions on the Directors Report and accounts.

Income to Soirbheas comprises three main income streams:

- 1) SSE Blaraidh Windfarm which is a standard community benefit arrangement and Soirbheas receives approximately the same amount each year regardless of wind performance. (The figure is index-linked for inflation so increases a little each year).
- 2) Corrimony Energy – this agreement operates rather differently as it is a community investment package and so income is dependent upon the performance of the windfarm.
- 3) Green Hydro (Shenval micro hydro) – a community benefit and royalty package – income from micro hydro is a *much smaller amount as this micro hydro plant generates only a small amount of power relative to the windfarms.*

INVESTING IN RENEWABLES – nothing to report currently on new investment opportunities but Soirbheas continues to review any new opportunities that emerge

BROADBAND -Soirbheas continues to receive enquiries from areas within the community that have very poor connectivity. We provide updates to members and the wider community on alternatives to address the gaps in service including access to the Better Broadband voucher scheme that has been extended a further 12 months. Several local businesses are providing alternative broadband services in some parts of the area. Options to provide a service in Struy are ongoing and the charity is still open to supporting initiatives in hard to reach areas.

COBEN (community Benefits for Civic Energy) - Following the development of the Local Energy Plan (LEP) for Drumnadrochit last year Soirbheas secured further funding to undertake a Transport Feasibility Study for Glen Urquhart and Strathglass. This was an action arising from the

LEP and the aim of the study is to identify viable options to improve public and community transport services and ultimately reduce car usage by locals and tourists. A number of partners are involved including Highland Council and local organisations with the goal of increasing the use and availability of community transport. The study will be complete by September 2019 and will include viability of options, costs, potential savings and timescales for each recommendation.

Needs of the Elderly and Vulnerable (E & V) The Elderly and Young partnership and action plan was formed in 2016, and continues to be co-ordinated by Soirbheas. The annual review of the action plan took place with the key partners on 7th February 2019. Again, good progress has been made over the last 12 months including awarding funding for a community sports coach, digital skills sessions taking place at the local library, workshops at the care centre and the new housing project that is nearing completion. For some time Soirbheas has been exploring options to establish a befriending service. A new partnership is being established between Soirbheas, Glenurquhart Care Project and Beaully Cares to support isolated and lonely individuals through a volunteer befriending service. Soirbheas has awarded a £6,000 Discretionary Grant and Beaully Cares will match fund this to allow a 2-year pilot to take place. Recruitment is currently underway for a co-ordinator to manage the volunteers and identify clients. It is expected that the service will start operating later in the spring.

Health and Wellbeing: The Glen Urquhart Health Walk celebrated its second anniversary on 26th February and the group continues to prosper with a core group of walkers attending the weekly walks. New walk leaders have been trained and Soirbheas continues to offer support and to promote the group to encourage new walkers.

Green Living Projects – Tattie Project is now in its 5th year. The aim is to encourage local people to start growing their own food or to grow more. This remains a popular project which engages with a wide range of the community and extends into healthy cooking and waste reduction activities all focused around the humble tattie. Over 2,000 seed potatoes have been distributed: 1,000 to the 3 local schools and Childcare Centre to be grown in their grounds and a further 1,250 sold to the public via the schools and the Soirbheas Tattie sale which took place on Saturday 2nd March. Over 100 people attended the event and funds generated from all the tattie sales will be ploughed back in to further growing projects. Partners in this year's sales day involved Glen Urquhart Horticultural Society and Abriachan Forest Trust's Food Growing Project. As well as growing potatoes, we encouraged people to think about food waste and reducing food miles. It is hoped with a good growing season that over 2 tons of potatoes will be grown as a direct result of the project.

Staffing: Following a review process, careful consideration and some analysis of community support needs by the CDO, the Board decided to increase the staff base of Soirbheas due to the growing demand from grant applicants and community stakeholders. A significant component of the value that Soirbheas adds to the community is from the direct engagement and support of the CDO and so the Board have taken the decision to increase the capacity of the charity to deliver by recruiting an additional staff member. The recruitment process is now underway. Carol works quietly in the background within the community and by freeing her from some of the administration it is expected that she will be able to do more to help community groups to find funding and help in designing projects.

CORRIMONY ENERGY (CEL) REPORT: Chris Rodgers of Gen Capital Ltd was unable to attend the meeting but submitted a written report. Gen Capital Ltd had been appointed by CEL to undertake the operational management of CEL. The Chairman summarised the report as follows:

Payments from CEL had increased from £80,000 a year to £130,000 following the refinancing of CEL's

loans and last year reached a new high of £160,000 (although this was slightly less than had been anticipated for reasons outlined below).

Increased Operating Costs - Some of CEL's running costs have now increased. The turbines have completed 6 years of operation and so now come into a higher category of charges for cost of warranty cover. Maintenance costs have almost doubled too and although these increases were known and budgeted for they have been steeper than expected. The warranty and maintenance contracts and turbine parts are all charged in euros so with the fall in the pound the currency fluctuations are making these costs more expensive. In real terms these costs have increased from £240,000 to £508,000. It is essential though that turbines are kept well maintained to minimise lost production. The other major cost increase has arisen from a change in the Grid Use System Charges. This is the cost levied for use and upkeep of the National Grid and these charges have risen steeply as a result of the change to charges and have had the effect of reducing the income by around £200,000 per year. Obviously this increase in grid charges was not known or expected so was not budgeted for.

- Despite these two significant operating cost increases the windfarm has performed well and this helped to mitigate cash flow impact. The business felt it prudent to maintain some cash reserves though until the full impact of these grid charge changes are understood.
- The wind farm is performing ahead of expectations.
- Performance does, however, vary each year depending on weather patterns.
- The Base Case output performance for the wind farm was estimated to be 26,293MWs.
- In the Year to May 2017 performance was 27,916MWs. This compares to 29,205MWs for May 2018. The performance for the year to May 2019 was 28,672MWs.
- May 2019 was a very poor generation month due to periods of calm or only light winds. The wind farm produced 840MWs as opposed to 2,008MW for the same month last year.

AGM ELECTIONS AND RESOLUTIONS -A total of 8 voting forms had been received from members prior to the meeting.

- 1) Under OSCR regulation the responsibility for signing off the Annual Report and Accounts rests with the Board of Trustees/Directors.

ELECTIONS TO THE BOARD

- 2) Under the constitution, each year the longest serving one third of the Soirbheas Board must stand down by rotation but may offer themselves for re-election (always provided no more than 6 consecutive years are served). Appointments to the board made during the year by co-option to the Board must be ratified by members at the AGM.

This year two board members had retired having completed the maximum six consecutive years of service. The Chairman warmly thanked Louise Macdonald and Russell Fraser for their dedicated service and time volunteered to help run Soirbheas. The board had welcomed two new directors – Morag Fraser and Jimmy Murray who had been co-opted to the board during the year and now stood for Ratification of their appointments.

- a) Ratify the appointment of Morag Fraser as a director – unanimously elected by the members
- b) Ratify the appointment of James Murray as a director – unanimously elected by the members

ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

Mr Edward Redmond (one of the original founding team of Soirbheas) thanked the directors and Carol Masheter for the great work being done. He recalled that Carol had started part time and the part-time working stretched and stretched as the work load increased so it was good that an additional member of staff on the Soirbheas team would enable her to resume working the hours intended. He was very keen to keep young folk in the Glen and pleased with the apprenticeship project that would help achieve this. Care for the elderly was also a major priority and he was pleased this continued to be tackled by Soirbheas. The befriending project would be well received and meet an important need in the community.

Soirbheas Directors – the board continues to seek more volunteers to help on the Soirbheas board in the running of the community company and the decision making regarding grants. No experience is necessary

and training can be provided to meet individuals' requirements – the most valuable attribute is sound judgement and common-sense but those with an accounting or financial background or minute taking skills would be particularly welcome. Anyone living within the two communities of Strathglass and Glen Urquhart are eligible. Please contact any of the board members if you are interested in volunteering and making a real difference to your community.

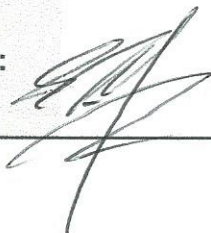
Chair:

Alan James

Clerk to the Board:

Erik Trelfer

Date: 29/10/20

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Erik Trelfer', is written over the date and extends upwards into the 'Clerk to the Board' line.

