



MINUTES OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
OF
THE NORTH HARRIS TRUST

MONDAY 22nd FEBRUARY 2021

7.30PM – Zoom

1. Apologies: Phil Bertin, Fred Taylor

Present: Calum J MacKay, Barbara MacKay, David Wake, Michael Hunter, Kirsty MacKay, Tim Langley, Donald J Morrison, Robert MacKinnon, Catherine MacKinnon, Diana MacLennan, Roddy MacLennan, Finlay E MacLeod, Hazel MacLeod, Kate Lewis, Karen MacRae, Phil Butterfield, Donnie MacLeod, Paul Russ, Donald MacLeod, Gordon Ness

2. The minutes of the previous AGM were proposed by Kirsty MacKay and seconded by Tim Langley to be a true account of that meeting.

3. Chairman's Report

The Chairman, Calum J Mackay, welcomed everyone to the 18th Annual General Meeting of the North Harris Trust.

A copy of the previous minute and the 18th Annual Report were circulated previously by email. The Chairman's Report is included in the Annual Report and Calum highlighted a few items from his report.

There were some changes among staff and directors during the year. Our Manager, Gordon Cumming, left to take up employment on the Rothiemurchas Estate. Gordon had been employed by The Trust for several years, initially as Land Manager and latterly as Manager. Fortunately, we were able to quickly appoint a very suitable replacement for Gordon. Michael Hunter, who had been employed by The Trust for a couple of years as Ranger, was promoted to the post of Manager. Ian Macsween, who had served the Marig/Scaladale area as director for more than ten years decided to retire. We were pleased that Paul Russ, who lives at Ardvourlie, joined the Board as Ian's replacement. However, Paul has not been able to join a meeting in person since joining The Trust; all meetings since his appointment have been on Zoom!

Karen MacRae will shortly be leaving the Trust to take up new employment with the Crofting Commission and Calum thanked her for her work and wished her well in her new employment.

Towards the end of 2020, The North Harris Trust created the post of Gaelic Ranger. This post was jointly funded by NatureScot and Bòrd na Gàidhig. It reflects the Trust's recognition of the importance of Gaelic within the local community. John Maclean was appointed to this post. Although John is currently unable to interact to any large extent with members of the community, he is busy working on estate maintenance, undertaking beach clean-ups and preparing for undertaking the usual duties of a Ranger once circumstances change enough to allow that to happen.

In March 2020, The John Muir Trust created the new post of Community Ranger for Lewis and Harris. Clara Risi was appointed to this post. She is based in the NHT offices and works with Galson Trust, North Harris Trust and West Harris Trust. Unfortunately, her appointment coincided with lockdown, which meant that her ability to undertake Ranger duties such as guided walks and community volunteer activities were considerably restricted.

The provision of affordable housing continues to be a major talking point in North Harris. Finding appropriate sites on which it is economically viable to build houses is an ongoing problem. It is good to see progress being made on the former police station site, where eight homes are being built by HHP. During this year, the Trust has sold two houses and associated outbuildings in Amhuinnsuidhe and purchased a prepared house site in Meavaig. The plan is to put the money from the sale of the Amhuinnsuidhe properties towards building two new homes on the Meavaig site. There is a real demand for rented accommodation in Harris and it is hoped that progress can be made on this issue in the next year or two.

Calum thanked the directors for their continued interest and for attending virtual meetings in the current circumstances. He also thanked all staff for their hard work throughout the year.

4. Staff Reports

Staff reports were circulated in the 18th Annual Report and Michael, David and Karen talked through their individual reports.

Michael thanked the community for their help with co-operating with affidavits across the estate for the historic claim of the foreshore. Volunteers that undertook gunnera eradication were also thanked.

There has been more youth involvement throughout the year, working alongside Sir E Scott School and with the Scaladale Centre.

David informed that Steven had done a remarkable job in keeping the Recycling Centre operational. There have been restricted hours due to lack of skip provision but sales of crofting supplies have increased.

A joint bid was made by North Harris and West Harris Trusts for purchase of two hydro schemes on the estates to bring them back into full community ownership. This offer, along with a subsequent revised offer, was rejected and the schemes haven't yet been sold.

Maintenance of the Scalpay Bothy was undertaken during the summer months.

Karen undertook footpath surveys across the estate which will be informative for the proposed maintenance team.

5. APPROVAL OF AUDITED ACCOUNTS

Calum MacDonald, CIB Services, gave a brief financial report and informed everyone that the Trust had a strong set of accounts despite the challenges faced during the year. The sale of the Quayside properties has improved the liquidity of the Trust and providing a strong base to go forward.

Calum MacKay thanked Calum MacDonald for his work in preparing the accounts and attending the meeting.

The audited accounts were approved.

6. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

CIB Services to be retained as auditors.

7. CONFIRMATION OF DIRECTORS

The confirmation of directors could not be dealt with due to an oversight to advertise the rotation of directors before the AGM. The retiring director positions will be advertised and an EGM called for the item to be dealt with.

9. QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION

Kate Lewis highlighted that the AGM wasn't advertised on the website or on social media. This will be taken into consideration for future notices.

Gordon Ness raised the question if funds for Quayside were safe to be held in the one bank account and if it would be advisable to spread over several accounts. This was a valid point but, as the money is ringfenced for reinvestment in the Meavaig Housing Project, it is hoped that funds will move quickly. This point will be considered at a Board meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.00 pm