

Minutes – ECC Board meeting 21st March '24

Present: Sara Twaddle, Roddy Macfarlane, Joe Kalaher, Phil Ashhurst, John Boyle, Karen Pettit, Sandra Wilson, Alistair Danter

Apologies: Billy Shanks, Kenny Mackinnon, John Lawrie

Minutes of last meeting – approved

1. Matters arising / updates

- DTAS no further contact - AD to follow up
- Play park drainage – KM has confirmed + supplied public liability insurance
- Slipway proposal received from Jock Gordon
 - 2 hours – walk over potential sites & initial discussion with yourself / members of project team
 - 6 hours – written report on what we have learned at Staffin, land ownership issues, design considerations, consenting process including environmental impact assessment & ongoing environmental obligations, timescales, economics & funding, useful contacts, and views & suggestions on your own project
 - 2 hours meet & discuss with your project team
 - £45 / hour + expenses. Timescale needs to be flexible as we have plenty on here with our own project, however I would hope to complete the above scope of work by late May all being well.

Meeting agreed proposal, action AD to contact + confirm with JG

2. Shop updates

- KP + ST working on draft business plan, to be presented at May / June meeting
- Funding strategy paper produced by AP (annexed) approved
- Next steps include
 - a) Asbestos demolition survey – contractor to make a site visit next week, ST to meet on site
 - b) Application for permission to demolish

3. Hardship fund (paper attached) – Meeting noted points raised in paper + agreed that ST should make further investigation into potential model + legal issues that would ensure confidentiality for applicant, no conflicts with national benefit system. Action ST

4. Social club discussion – meeting discussed merits of developing a social club for locals + recognised merit in the suggestion. Development of a club using the Hall fits with Hall committee's desire to see increased usage of the hall but may require additional facilities / extension etc. ACTION – AD to research options + issues + make contact with Dunvegan Hall / Trust to see how their "Revolting Crofters" events are managed + prepare a paper for a future meeting.

5. Windfarm update

- Harper Macleod appointed to advise Edinbane, Struan and Dunvegan regarding an appropriate legal vehicle to enable the 3 communities to take a share option in the Wind 2 project with approved planning permission on Ben Sca
- Brookfield (Greshonish peninsula site) recently attended Skeabost and District CC meeting to update the CC on process progress; they are planning to submit the scheme for planning this summer

6. Development worker's report - approved

7. Finance report

- Actuals vs budget report noted
- A new budget for '24 should be prepared for April / May meeting ACTION AD
- Shop Council Tax / Non Domestic rates issue
 - There is outstanding confusion regarding whether ECC should be paying Council Tax or non Domestic rates
 - 2 demands have been paid £ 2,640.98 (Nov '23) and £ 1,303.26 (March '24)
 - On 14th March '24 the sum of £4,765.88 was seized from ECC's bank a/c
 - Correspondence covering the issue has been sent to THC Finance operations department (annexed) ECC currently waiting for a response
 - AD, ST, RM meeting the "Assessor" on 22:03:24

8. Applications

- None received to review but 1 expected within next few days, ACTION AD to circulate for approval
- Hall committee reported that they would not wish to be used as a vehicle for funding applications

9. Grass Cutting contract:

- 3 year contract up for renewal + will be advertised in WHFP next week
- BS agreed to be contact for applicants
- Contract to cover village grass cutting + Karen's Track maintenance
- Community request that contractor does not start work in village before 8 am

10. Karen's track updates

- A large stone from Uist has been transported to Inverness. Hearach Memorials will be carving memorial to be agreed with Karen's family, stone should be ready May / June
- AD has met with Gus Nicholson + agreed location of 2 milestones to be positioned along the track ACTION AD to liaise with Duncan Macrae to install.

- Proposal for opening – procession with piper, Karen’s sister to cut ribbon, community to follow piper from Fanks road end to 2nd bridge where refreshments will be served

11. AOCB – none

12. DONM 25th April – Agenda will not include shop. Shop focussed meeting on 17 May.

1 Hardship fund

Establishment of a hardship fund

A hardship fund was run by Skye and Lochalsh CAB on behalf of ECC during the pandemic (appendix). The reasons we used CAB were:

- a) It distanced ECC from the process
- b) The process was handled by CAB who have experience + are aware of implications for those in receipt of benefits
- c) CAB produced a report on each applicant + a recommendation, we didn't know any of the applicants by name They reported + made recommendations on all applications
- d) Personal / individual donations made by Charities of this nature are problematic for OSCR

CAB are no longer able to support such activities, even with funding. Dunvegan Trust also ran a scheme using numbered vouchers available from the Post Office, but they no longer do so.

A hardship fund, if we chose to go ahead with this, would therefore need to be run either by a third party or in house, with local arrangements for applications and confidentiality.

Should we seek to reestablish a hardship fund?

If we agree that this is a good idea then the first stage is to seek advice from OSCR about whether we can actually do so as a charity. DTAS and SCVO may also be helpful. Other questions would then require decisions by the Board

- How much should we allocate?
- Should we set a maximum amount that can be claimed per household per annum
- What criteria if any should be set criteria for use?
- Are there third parties who could undertake this on our behalf? If we decided to run this in house how do we address confidentiality?
- How would we advertise the fund?

All comments and suggestions appreciated!

Edinbane Community Company Covid Exceptional Needs Grant

1. Community fund to assist any resident in the Edinbane Community Company Area who are experiencing financial difficulties as a result of the current Covid 19 Virus
2. Must be resident in Edinbane area. Eligible postcodes are only IV51 9NY IV51 9NZ IV51 9PA IV51 9PN IV51 9PP IV51 9PR IV51 9PS IV51 9PT IV51 9PU IV51 9PW IV51 9PX IV51 9RE
3. The grant can be used to address immediate needs, Groceries, Domestic Fuel, Electricity, Rent and Council Tax arrears, Health needs etc
4. The fund will not be restricted to those in receipt of Benefits.
5. The grant can be awarded to a maximum of £500.00 in any year per household.
6. All applications must come through Skye and Lochalsh CAB. email - preferred, adviser@slcab.org.uk Phone 01478 612032 Mon-Thurs 10-1pm, Mon/Tues/Thurs from 2-4.30pm.
7. Applications to the Community Company Fund for consideration will be completely anonymous.

2. Funding strategy reports + Proposals

EDINBANE SHOP SITE REDEVELOPMENT – FUNDING STRATEGY February 2024 FUNDING REQUIREMENT

The total budget cost of the scheme proposed in the June 2023 feasibility study by KDP was estimated at £2.54m by the Quantity Surveyors. This figure does not include VAT, some of which it may be possible to reclaim on certain elements. This is a significant sum for a small community to raise and will require several large (< £300,000) contributions from major funders. In addition a number of smaller funding sources could be approached for specific elements.

A major issue to take into account is the on-going volatility in construction material costs, energy costs and contractor capacity in the local construction market. This has led to unpredictability in cost estimates and allowances for future inflation.

Due to the scale of investment required to realise the whole development, and in recognition of the potential risk the community would be taking on, ECC have decided to phase construction. Phase 1 will comprise the shop unit and its first-floor accommodation with associated parking and infrastructure. It is likely that this will also necessitate a significant proportion of the overall site servicing and infrastructure to be undertaken at the same time. The estimated cost for Phase 1 on this basis would be i.r.o. £1.2m. We will investigate the possibility of undertaking demolition and site clearance as a separate pre-development phase.

TIMESCALE

ECC is aiming to secure planning consent for the proposed scheme during 2024, so that major capital funding applications can be made in 2024-25 as funding rounds become open. At this stage most large funders will be looking for schemes that are 'shovel ready', so statutory consents need to be secured in advance. It is unlikely therefore that the full funding package will be in place before 2025, as the opening of funding rounds will dictate how quickly it can be assembled. Funding offers are typically secured in advance of tendering the construction contract, a practice which can lead to delays in progress when a project's tender costs significantly exceed the total funding awarded.

FUNDER PRIORITIES AND SELECTION CRITERIA

This project includes a number of different aspects which are likely to be of interest to a variety of different potential funders;

- Rural/island regeneration – local facilities, services, housing
- Economic activity – employment, income generation, spin-off in local economy
- Tourism – visitor facilities, local services and sustainable tourism development
- Sustainability – provision of local services, active travel links, renewable energy, Net Zero
- Community-led development – community wealth building, asset creation, resilience

The choice of prospective funders should be based on their published assessment criteria linked to one or more of the above elements. The spreadsheet attached contains a summary of the current potential likely funders, which will be reviewed and updated periodically.

FUNDER REQUIREMENTS

In addition to evidence of planning consent, most funders will expect to see a fully costed business plan for the enterprise, and possibly an operational plan and policies as well, especially if the shop business is to be run 'in-house' as a community venture. They will also want to be assured that the community has the capacity to manage the enterprise and the asset. It will be important therefore that alongside the fundraising there is a parallel effort to assemble the business case, determine the legal and management structures, raise volunteer and community support. Evidence of these will be required to demonstrate readiness to operate the building and run the business upon completion.

**EDINBANE COMMUNITY COMPANY
DEVELOPMENT WORKER BOARD REPORT – March 2023**

1. Edinbane Links Path

- Confirmed grant funding of £25,000 from Paths for All for redesign of first section (Edinbane campsite to village)
- Redesign by Mike Hyatt to reduce average width to 2.0m and introduce new crossing at campsite.
- Hoped that redesign will lead to cost reduction and ease access agreements with small number of proprietors that have not so far signed agreements
- Possibility of Paths for All capital funding for construction, also interest from Hi-Trans. Ultimately still hope for Highland Council to take on delivery once project 'shovel ready'

2. Lyndale Renovation Path – 'Karen's Track'

- Main resurfacing contractor being chased up to finish in March
- Stonemason to complete remedial works to bridge stonework during summer
- Quotes being sought from other stonemasons for repairs/repointing to undersides

3. Edinbane Shop project

- ECC's solicitor submitted offers to purchase land to front of shop from Highland Council, and additional land for car-parking from croft No. 16.
- Sub-group formed to take forward planning for shop business, management and legal structure.
- Community Enterprise has delivered an Operational Plan framework and initial business outline.
- We will need to commission a full business plan in due course when shop business model is confirmed – currently proposing a CIC as a trading subsidiary of ECC.
- Meanwhile, an asbestos demolition survey has been commissioned to inform demolition contract, subject to prior notification approval
- See updated funding strategy and plan – time to start enquiries and expressions of interest with some major potential funders

4. Village Centre scheme

- Planning application for village green improvements submitted

LETTER TO THC REF CT + NON DOM RATES

Dear Gillian

Shop Property Ref 0409060700 Payment Ref 191988221 (Non Dom)
Cean an Loch Ref 45-046364002-21 (Council Tax)

We refer to your letter of the 15th Nov sent to Sara Twaddle in relation to the property above. You will see that it has 2 references one for Council Tax and one for Non Domestic Rates.

Your letter of the 15th Nov states that the property is “currently registered as a domestic dwelling rather than a non domestic unit”.

As the owner of the property, Edinbane Community Co. is currently being pursued for both Council Tax and Non Domestic Rates. To date we have paid £ 2,640.98 (16th Nov '23) receipt of which has been acknowledged by the Council Tax Operations department AND the sum of £ 1,303.26 (11th March '24) which Council Tax Operations department claim has not been received. The payment was made to Scott and Co.

On or about the 14th March '24 the sum of £ 4,765.88 was seized from our Virgin Bank a/c.

I would like to bring the following points to your attention:

1. Council Tax Operations department have no awareness of this seizure.
2. Your letter of the 15th Nov '23 states that a new bill will be issued to reflect a reduced outstanding balance of £6,820.33:
 - a) It is not clear if this is for monies due for Council Tax or Non Dom rates – based on your letter of the 15th Nov it would seem that Edinbane Community Co. should not be liable for any Non dom rates
 - b) Edinbane Community Co. has not received any bill for the sum of £ 6,820.33

Given your statement referred to above indicating that the property is subject to Council tax and not non domestic rates it is confusing that we correspondence from the Sheriffs officer referring to Council Tax AND also non domestic rates. We have tried to communicate with Scott and Co regarding the matter requesting clarification but receive no response.

As a Community Organisation trying to re-establish a community asset for the benefit of local people this is an extremely unpleasant, distressing and seemingly illogical situation. While you have explained the legislation in relation to unoccupied dwellings it is difficult to understand the logic that is being applied in this instance where the building is dangerous and unfit for habitation.

In our earlier correspondence we referred to the professionally prepared report, paid for by the Edinbane Community Co, outlining the state of the building. Your statement

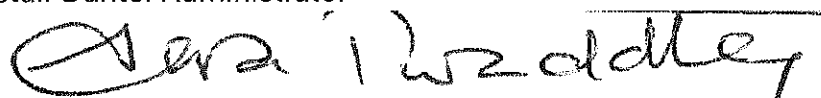
suggesting that the property is subject to Council Tax and not Non Domestic rates would seem to imply that the Edinbane Community Co. should be seeking to use the property as domestic accommodation. It is hard to see how the reputation of a Community organisation could not suffer significantly if this course of action was to be taken. The organisation would likely be accused of acting immorally and illegally.

I would be grateful if you coordinate with Non dom rates, the Council Tax department, the Sheriffs office and Scott and Co. and give the Edinbane Community Co. a single voice explanation of the situation that is clear and understood by all parties. We would also be grateful if you could clarify what debt the seized amount of £4,675.88 is meant to cover and if it is for non domestic rates or Council tax.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A. J. Danter'.

Alistair Danter Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sara Twaddle'.

Sara Twaddle - Chair

Working Budget '23/'24 - Report Feb '24

April - Jan'24

Actual Income for Financial year

Footpath & Cycle Project	£18,750.00
Repaid monies	£3,429.60
Windfarm Income	£85,178.18
Monies in a/c	£34,827.22
TOTAL	£142,185.00

	Budget	Actual	Balance	Comments where o.spend > 10%
Development grants from ECC annual income (1)	£30,000.00	£34,627.00	£4,627.00	
Village Maintenance	£6,500.00	£8,893.80	£2,393.80	O.payment, reimbursed shown in repaid monies above
Village Centre developments (1)	£0.00	£650.00	£650.00	Design costs
Development Worker	£19,800.00	£10,638.15	£9,161.85	
Administrator	£8,000.00	£1,245.00	£6,755.00	
Accountant	£1,800.00	£1,998.00	£198.00	
Insurance	£650.00	£523.85	£126.15	
Hospitality	£2,500.00	£3,328.09	£828.09	Xmas dinner + Hospitality linked with AGM
Meeting Exps/Office / General Exps	£950.00	£1,611.60	£661.60	Contract for photocopier / printer started
Publicity	£300.00		£300.00	
Subscriptions	£15.00	£15.00	£0.00	
Finance Costs	£0.00	£30.10	£30.10	
Website	£300.00	£232.00	£68.00	
General Professional costs Legal related to Housing project etc	£0.00	£540.00	£540.00	Legalities not foreseen dies to nature of project
Shop Development costs -Architect, QS, Engineer,Ground surveys Title Deeds + Valuations(2)	£29,850.00	£35,940.50	£6,090.50	Full budget requirement not known when budget set
VAT Advice, Registration + establishment of Trading arm	£7,020.00	£3,960.00	£3,060.00	
Outstanding Expenditure on Karen's Track	£34,500.00	£9,290.70	£25,209.30	
TOTAL	£142,185.00	£113,523.79	£28,661.21	

Edinbane Shop Redevelopment	NOTES	2025/26	Total
Community Ownership fund (UK Gov)	Closing March 2025, submit EoI at any point, 4 application rounds p.a	£350,000	£350,000
Highland Community Regeneration Fund		100,000	£100,000
SG/RCGF	Next round May/June 2024, get on HC list	650,000	£650,000
SG/Islands Plan fund		300,000	£300,000
HIE		100,000	£100,000
SSE Sustainable Development Fund	Premature for 2023-24 round, look to 25-26 round. Focus on energy measures, esp. net zero and renewable heat incld extra insulation/beyond statutory measures. Match fund with possible LES funding for community bldgs. - check availability.	25,000	£25,000
Other fundraising	Investigate possible charitable trusts etc.	30,000	£30,000
TOTAL		1,555,000	£1,555,000

Target £1.2m

1,200,000

Sleat Shop rebuild (2020)	Funding	
RCGF	312,000	Investigate
SSE	80,000	Investigate
HIE	63,400	
LEADER	100,000	
SCT (house plot sales)	250,000	
Robertson Trust	20,000	
IGRF (Islands Green Recovery Fund)	60,000	Investigate
		Investigate
Total	885,400	

Target £900,000

Brora Heritage Centre	Funding
RCGF	983,000
Community Ownership Fund (UK Gov)	1,950,000
	?
	?
	?
Other fundraising/crowdfunding	
Total	2,933,000

Target

4,500,000