

**- Minutes of AGM Meeting for
North West Mull Community Woodland Company Ltd
Meeting held on Monday 14th May 2019 @ 7.30pm**

Present: Colin Morrison (CM), Andy Mayo (AM), John Addy (JA), Pippa Gatty (PG), Belinda Hale (BH), Jean Lanteri Laura (JLL), Tricia Evans (TE) Rhuri Munro (RM) Rebecca Munro (BM) Mike Hale (MH), Mike Shilson (MS) Kirsty Shilson (KS), Caroline Wood (CW), Mathew Reade (MR), John Austen (JA), Jo Austen JoA), Catherine Evans (CE) Joan Hepburn (JH) Jan Morrison (JaM) John Morrison (JM) Tracy Mayo (TM) Nick Turnbull (NT) Basil Barton (BB) Gavin Wigginton (GW) Linda Paterson (LP), Janine Allen (JaA), Chris Baker (CB), Nicky Adcock (NA), Peter Leach (PL), Avril Lowe (AL), Andy Morthley (AM), Ann Evans (AE), Gregor Munro (GM), Pat Morrison (PM), Iain Morrison (IM), Rae Tiernan (RT) David Clowes 9DC)

Also Present: Helen Murray (minutes)

Apologies: Ian Hepburn, Craig Whittaker, Iain Thompson, Neil Hutton, Cath Mayo, Ian Lowe, Lynne Addy, Nick Evans

CM welcomed everyone to the meeting.

1. Minutes from 2018 AGM – these were emailed to all members with the AGM notification. They were displayed on the screen for all to read. **MS** asked why the accounts for Ulva and the Charity were not separated as he thought separate accounts were agreed to at the last AGM - **CM** advised we may do this at some point in the future but have not agreed to do it yet **AM** advised that internally they are separate on Sage but for the report to OSCR they have to be a consolidated set of accounts.

No other comments so **MH** proposed the minutes and **DC** seconded.

2. Chairman's Report

CM thanked all the directors for all their continuing hard work, especially **AM** for being treasures and for his tenacity over the micro-hydro project. He succeeded in creating a partnership with Hydrover to get the scheme up and running, now in its second year of production. **AM** is now leaving the board as is **IT**, as he is spending most of his time in Sweden, farming crofting and fencing input.

Has been a very busy year for the board, various projects ongoing and also the purchase of Ulva on 21st June 2018. **JA** will report on Ulva shortly. Brilliant to see a huge amount of local and indeed worldwide support for the project, as well as excellent political support with events in Holyrood and Westminster both attended by politicians across the political spectrum not just one party. Various agencies and organisations have visited to see what our plans are.

Island Woodfuels - Malcolm has continued to run the Woodfuels business delivering cut /split logs and woodchip which has had ongoing challenges partly due to the split base operation at West Ardhu and Crannich. The woodshed is coming – need to complete the electrical installation, fireproofing and water tanks before we apply for completion. Should simplify running the business.

Micro Hydro - 1st full year of operation – exceed expectation helping to underpin the basic running costs of the charity.

Housing – working with Rural Housing Scotland to bring forward the project to deliver housing at West Ardhu. Finances look challenging, and it's a difficult site but looking at different models.

Fence/Replant – have re-fenced Langamull North in preparation for restocking. Having taken the decision not to use neonicotinoids for weevil control, it's clear that the longer we leave the area fallow prior to replant we will have better control of the situation. Getting to the point now where we have to replant, have set up a sub-committee, various issues have held it up but almost resolved now.

Staff – Craig, who came in as Development manager, has left the position, helping on an adhoc basis as he felt there was not enough to do, but is helping as and when which is helping to save us money. Malcolm will be leaving us and

is being replaced by Eve Coles, and Helen remains as administrator. Ben Sunderland, Ulva Dev Mgr., has moved on by mutual agreement. It became clear during his probation period that the role was not for him so we are recruiting again.

Crofts – crofters continue to develop their areas, many are fenced, and we need to deer fence to allow more work to continue.

Eagles – didn't nest in West Ardhu this year so no trips, which will impact the eagle fund in the future, but there is some left and numerous good causes have benefited this year.

Archaeology – continues each year at Kildavie, they are coming in September for 2 weeks.

Burial Ground – continue to work towards this but rules have changed regarding the required depth which is now deeper than at the proposed area so we need to find another suitable site.

Peatland Restoration – currently on hold as it was going to cost a lot of money, with no funding available.

Thanked all Directors and staff for their efforts over the year. Are there any questions? **CE** – dervaig toilets? **CM** – difficult to get funding for these, so it's still a project but now progress as yet.

JH – can you explain further regarding the burials issue? **CM** – unfortunately SEPA now need a lot deeper site. **JM** – they also require a further water survey. We just need to find another site.

3. Ulva – JA

Less than a year since it came into community ownership and a lot has happened, we try to keep everyone up-to-date with our newsletters. We purchased the island with the objective of stimulating the social and economic development of the island to provide a sustainable future for future generations. The highest priority is to improve the housing stock and get more people living there. All the houses have now been surveyed and detailed renovation plans have been drawn up. We plan to have a mix of leasehold, owner occupiers, inc. self builds in due course, all with a mechanism to protect the community's long term interest. e.g. a minimum residency or retaining a pre-emptive buyback right. We carried out a survey about living on Ulva and got over 500 positive responses so there is a demand. Now have a lot of work to do with the council and other to find a way thru the planning and funding maze. Another high priority is to revitalise and expand agriculture and enhance biodiversity and habitat protection at the same time. We have are carrying out a land use options assessment to help us assign priorities and to help us take forward various options to get the right balance between agriculture and bio diversity. A study is underway at the moment which includes a national vegetation classification survey being carried out as well as a phase 1 habitat survey. We have also commissioned a study of the agricultural potential and management options.

We have submitted an Agricultural Environment and Climate scheme (AECS) application which would see us getting cattle onto the island this autumn with a 5 year programme starting in Jan 2020 setting out a grazing and stock management plan to improve the quality of the ground whilst targeting specific wildlife objectives. E.g. some field managed to encourage corncrakes, others for their wildflowers, or wetland birds and so on. One of our priorities is to restore agriculture to the old township lands which over the past 20 years have become smothered in bracken due to neglect and reduced grazing. Ass AECS is accepted, this 5 year programme will allow us to further agriculture on the island without committing long term to a particular model of dividing up the land into crofts, small holdings etc. We can work on this model during the 5 year period.

Management of the deer herd is important, getting the numbers down to a sustainable level, as well as habitat improvement it will reduce comp with agricultural grazing. We employed a professional stalker, who installed his own chiller at Ulva Ferry, he took out 120 deer but the recent helicopter survey show at least 350 still there. We are sure have a sustainable Ulva venison business to work on in the future.

Visitor numbers have increased from c1000 to approx. 7000! This year looks to be even busier. The Ulva garden team are busy in the old gardens of Ulva House and the footpath network has had all 70 signposts replaced. The culverts and drainage ditches have been cleared and potholes filled. – All this work carried out by unpaid volunteers,

members and friends of the company, residents of Ulva and members and friends of the board. A huge thanks to everyone.

Increasing visitor numbers means we are looking at new toilet facilities. Sheila's cottage has been tidied up and Historic Environment Scotland have agreed to fund a full re-thatch of the cottage which will happen later this year. The "big house" is a challenge to look after and find a sustainable use for. Above all it needs to become an asset for the island not a liability. One possibility is for it to become a heritage centre and we have submitted an application to the Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund to use part of the 2/3 of the building for exhibitions and as a cultural resources centre and the rest as up-market self-catering to provide income to sustain the project. Alternatively, we could look for someone to take it on as a guesthouse, restaurant with rooms etc.

One other project of note achieved under community ownership, is the repairs to the piers and slipways. They were in a poor state of repair for some time, and as they are so important to the local fishing industry and Ulva we were able to get funding from Marine Scotland to carry out emergency repairs to provide a much improved facility. In addition to the purchase funding the Scottish Land Fund also provided revenue funding for the first two years and many of the studies and surveys mentioned have been funded partly or fully by this. In addition they support a development manager post – for which we are recruiting. When we find the right person, we intend this to be a long term position well beyond the two year funding. The issue with finding someone and then having to look again has not stopped work progressing, the SLF have been very flexible allowing us to employ consultants and we have also had to do a lot of the work ourselves.

Finally, Ulva is now in the community forever, we have a lot to do and we cannot do it all at once, certainly not in the first year.

TM – recently visited Ulva and would like to comment that visually it now looks more cared for, new signs etc. show that people are doing things.

CM – thank you John. Reminded audience that the meeting was being recorded – are there any objections to this – none.

4. Election of Directors

CM – we have 1 valid nomination for John Addy. Also received 5 very late concerted, nominations. **CM** felt the need to seek advice from our lawyer on this, the Board has been advised that the 4 late director nominations received late on Sunday evening of 12th May 2019 and the 1 received early on Monday morning 13th May 2019 are incompetent in terms of the company's Articles of Association and as such these late nominations are not able to be considered at the AGM on 14th May 2019. The Board has also been advised not to permit ratification by the AGM itself of the acceptance of these late nominations. The Board has agreed to follow this advice and not accept or ratify these late nominations. However, we have 4 directors standing down, 2 by rotation, leaving a potential for 5 co-options to the Board and I would propose that those wishing to join consider this as an option. Are there any other views?

MS – has there been an election then? **CM** – **JA** was the only valid nomination – there did not need to be a vote. **MS** questioned why not all directors on the report had a date of election – **AM** because they were elected previously – only put a date on for the most recent elected. **MS** **CM** and **AM** had a discussion to clarify the number of directors allowed and how many can be co-opted. **BM** asked the 5 late nominees why they all missed the deadline **CW** – fair question, appreciate they were late. The 5 are involved in other community groups and felt that these should start to work together more so they put in nominations.

there followed some discussion about the situation and various members expressed their views namely **NT RM BM TM & TE**

CM – there is a lot of goodwill, folk want to work together, but with a lot of differences of opinion. The way forward would be for the Board to co-opt more directors and this will be up to them to discuss this and invite people to be co-opted.

5. Finance report – AM

These are the accounts to end July 2018, so include the Ulva purchase. Completion of the hydro project, including connection to the grid.

Income is about £5million – this includes the Scottish Land Fund money for Ulva, a large donation by Macquarie for Ulva and also all the donations and Just giving fundraising for Ulva. Expenditure was also high due largely to the

conveyancing and consultancy fees for the Ulva purchase. There was also a large spend relating to the woodshed and completion of the hydro project, including connection to the grid.

The balance sheet shows that we have, in terms of assets the same in terms of the forests, but now have Ulva also. Have some cash at hand but have significant liabilities with the fence and restock etc. Cash down a little on last year but recovered with a loan from Triodos for the woodshed. Also close to finalising a new loan for the hydro so we can convert the CARES loan plus pay some capital back. CARES loan is from the Govt. to allow us to build the hydro, but has a high interest rate, hence the need to move it. Hydro running well and should generate approx... £20-25K a year for the charity, rising with RPI. These are conservative figures. The new loan should be for 15 years, with early repayment clauses.

RA Clements are our auditors – OSCR insist we report consolidated accounts and so **AM** proposes we re-appoint them for the 2018-2019 financial year unless there are any objections? – None.

6. AOB

JM – can I propose a sincere vote of thanks to AM for his work as treasurer – complicated role and we owe him a debt of gratitude for his efforts. (round of applause). New treasurer to be appointed at the next Board meeting.

CM – as there is no other business, that is the AGM officially closed.