

**Mull and Iona Community Trust  
Minutes for the 304<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting  
Monday 19 February 2024**

*Meeting started at 1000*

**Present (in person or by MS Teams):** John Maughan (JM), John Innes (JI), Sue Hawkes (SH), Dave Currie (DJC), Sandy Brunton (SB), Donella Fernyhough (DF), Jane Griffiths (JG), Ian Jones (IJ), Robbie Cameron (RC), Mark Strevens (MS), Barry Whenman (BW), and Derek Crook (DCr)

**In Attendance:** Moray Finch (MF) and Phil Rodgers (PR)

**Apologies:** Heather Waller (HW), Rob MacManaway (RM), Sian Scott (SS) and Mairi Greig (MG)

### **1. Welcome, Apologies and AOB**

SB welcomed everyone.

Everyone had access to papers for this meeting.

RM was unable to attend but confirmed agreement with the funding applications detailed in the Fundraising Managers Report

### **Approve Minutes**

#### **2.1. Approval of previous minutes – Monday 11 December 2023**

Date changed to correct date. No other errors to correct.

DF proposed; JG seconded.

*RC Joined the meeting.*

#### **2.2 Review actions and matters arising from previous minutes**

Item 1; (CF) SS to set up young islanders network meeting.

Item 2; (CF) Phil to arrange further accounts training.

Item 3; (CF) SS has contacted DTAS, but hasn't heard back.

Item 4; Done.

Item 5; HR meetings have taken place.

Item 6; Strategy meeting took place.

### **3. Declarations of Interest and Register of Related Parties**

No changes were advised. SB reminded everyone to notify MF of any changes.

### **4. Finance**

#### **4.1 Finance Reporting**

PR: Overview of MICT's financial position as at end December 2023.

Highlights:

- Capital projects contributing to negative cashflow balance.
- MESS shops surplus, expected to increase before the end of the financial year.
- Wage figure presented clarified as amount paid in wages for the year to date. PR to make this clearer in future reports. Actual vs. Budget report notes added.
  - Ulva Ferry Shore Facilities Project currently showing over budget.
  - Well-being Project showing over budget due to project being extended;
  - Ranger service showing a surplus against the budget but expected to break even by the end of the financial year.
  - Affordable housing trading - mortgage increases higher than budgeted.
  - MESS shops sales income higher than budgeted?

Question about whether any projects will be under threat this year due to pessimistic Scottish Government financial projections. Answer is most likely yes, and any deficit should be covered by designated funds already agreed, but this may not cover everything.

*JI joined the meeting.*

Noted that all organisations on Mull, and more generally Development Trusts in Scotland, will be in a similar situation. MICT is lucky to be income-generating.

#### **4.2 Donations & Membership**

### **Actions from Board Meeting**

1. (CF) SS to set up Young Islanders Network meeting
2. (CF) PR to arrange date for additional accounts training
3. (CF) SS to follow up on Director Training date from DTAS
4. HR and Finance committee to meet regarding changes to grades
5. SS asked to provide reasons for not receiving grants in future reports
6. KD to speak to SS re: youth engagement video and RC's involvement
7. KD to check with Matrix about security issues and disclaimers

Three new members, one is a volunteer in Bunessan Castaways.  
Good to see new members.

## **5.0 HR and Policies**

### **5.1 Policy Reviews for approval**

Sickness and Absence policy review. Changes recommended by HR Standing Committee. *Board discretion can be applied for long term sick situations for those employees with more than 60 months' service.* Professional advice confirms that backdating policy change is acceptable providing policy is being enhanced rather than stripped back. Discussion about *discretion* element in policy changes, some feel that it opens MICT up to dispute and others feel that it makes policy flexible enough to deal with unknowns. After discussion it was agreed that discretion be retained, accepting this will mean that the board has to be prepared to make difficult decisions as these cases arise. DF proposed that the board accepts the discretionary changes to the Sickness and Absence policy; JI seconded the proposal. All agreed to accept the policy.

MF sought board approval to apply this discretion to the current situation. All agreed.

### **5.2 Updates from HR and Polices Standing Committee**

#### **5.3 Living Wage and Cost of Living Increase**

MF provided background. HR committee continued what MG had started when Living Wage Foundation announced increase in the living wage last year. A percentage increase for grades 1 and 2 and a fixed amount increase for the other grades was proposed, this went to the Finance committee, who noticed that the fixed amount increase would cause an overlap between grades 2 and 3. To avoid overlap of grades, a fixed percentage increase for all grades along with a restructuring of all grades was suggested. Grade 2 will become a flat grade to reflect the living wage rate. Other increases are less straightforward.

It was noted that to continue receiving Scottish Government Funding, MICT has to remain a Living Wage Employer and comply with the 10.1% increase for grades 1 and 2. The 4.5% increase slightly exceeds the CPI increase of 4.2%. The impact will be around £25,000 additional spend in the next financial year which is included in the budget.

Proposal for approval today: 10.1% increase for grades 1 & 2, and a 4.5% increase for all other grades.  
SH proposed, DJC seconded.

HR committee and Finance committees will meet early March to discuss review grade structure and to restructure it to a more logical arithmetical formula to produce consistency.

*Break for 10 minutes*

## **6.0 Strategy Standing Committee**

Nothing to report.

## **7.0 Special Items**

### **7.1 General and Deputy Managers' Reports (for information/discussion)**

MF gave a brief update on MG's progress. Everyone is thinking of her and wishing her well.

Electrical condition reports are getting done. Defects have been discovered and fixed at Ulva Ferry and Pontoon, and defects have been found at An Roth, and they will be fixed once the report has been received.

The work to upgrade the water supply at Lagganulva is almost complete. There is a small leak to repair, and text alert system needs to be setup.

MF has holiday in April and will not be available during that time.

Discussion of current interest rates on savings in Charities Aid Foundation (CAF); reserves exist to sustain MICT for 6 months. Interest is drawn down as unrestricted funding.

Mooring chain is okay for now – next assessment is in April.

Sale of container yielded better results than expected.

## **Deputy Manager's Report**

No report this time.

### **7.2 Fundraising Officer's Report**

#### **7.2.1 Approval of grant funding offers**

1. Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund, Argyll & Bute Third Sector Interface- Room and community bus hire for Mull Musical Minds and Mull Safe and Sound. Application value: £4,987.
2. First Co-op Community Fund payment: £1,529.30.
3. 2x Stage 1 applications to the Scottish Land Fund worth £569K for feasibility work in relation to affordable housing in Salen and Fishnish. £26,041.
4. Bank of Scotland- Reach for Ulva Ferry Community Transport. £ 7,551.
5. A&BC Crown Estate fund- Nonhebel Park Phase 2 £40k.
6. HIE- Nonhebel Park Phase 2 £40k.

RC proposed, MS seconded

#### **7.2.2 Approval of grant funding applications**

1. NatureScot Nature Restoration Fund – Ardura biodiversity action plan over 2 years - £ 122,733. Note at the last minute NatureScot told us there may not be any budget available to support this fund in 2024. Decision taken to submit on this basis.
2. Partnership fee for CVH Spirits- Ardura biodiversity action plan- £20,004.
3. Scottish Land Fund application for MICT’s purchase of Dervaig Community Orchard and Tree Nursery - £15, 624.
4. Highland and Islands Environmental Fund- Ardura biodiversity- £11,915.
5. A&B Council’s Early Learnings Grant- Ranger Service to support Ardura Acorns group- £4,691. Note at the last-minute A&B Council told us there may not be any budget available to support this fund in 2024. Decision taken to submit on this basis.
6. Patagonia- Ardura biodiversity- US\$13,645.00.

DJC proposed, JG seconded.

Asked to have SS list reasons why grant applications were unsuccessful.

### **7.3 SW Mull Infrastructure Email 09 Jan refers (for information/discussion)**

The board felt that the infrastructure issues are not within MICT’s remit, but are issues more for the community council. MCC hopes to have various businesses to meet quarterly with the Community Council to discuss infrastructure. Water and sewage are big concerns for those on the Ross of Mull. A formal response isn’t necessary at this time, as MF did get in touch informally.

### **7.4 EV Charging points, Dave Currie (for information/discussion)**

Provision of EV charge points at village halls is still desired, but nothing is now planned due to government budget cuts. Private businesses are encouraged to install them for locals and visitors alike. MICT is not in a position to fund any EV chargers at this time.

*Break for Lunch.*

*Meeting resumed at 13:21 with staff members Jan Dunlop (JD), Kathryn Dyer (KD), Alicja Newbrook (AN), Kate Payton (KP)*

## **8.0. Steering group reports (submitted in advance for information/discussion)**

### **8.1. Ardura (MF)**

MF shared FSC Ardura Video.

SB will attend a media launch for the Triple Wood Launch event in London on 28.02.24, and he will hope to share the video there.

MF reports on TreeStory news: Scottish Forestry are positive to request to harvest remaining 40 hectares this year. This will make a material change to the budget this year.

### **8.2. Ardura Biodiversity (RF)**

Oak seedlings moved from future forest shelter space during work party. Shelter now has planning permission. TSL will begin clearing the space soon, March or April.

### **8.3. Childcare/Out of School Care project (MG)**

Nothing to report at this time.

### **8.4. Nonhebel Park Phase 2 (MF)**

Heading to completion end of March 2024. Planning application necessary for additional 10 ft. container.

### **8.5. MESS (HC & EB)**

Community Fridge working again in Tobermory. SB asked if it can be actioned in other places; this is possible if there are volunteers to take it on.

There are now 14 volunteers at the Bunessan Castaways shop, so no staffing problems for the upcoming season. Alicja has joined MESS as bank staff, which will help employees take more of their annual leave, which has been problematic in the past.

### **8.6. Housing (KP/HMcD)**

KP is working on Citi Foundations application – US banking group who fund worldwide housing initiatives; application is for \$500,000.00 (approx. £400,000). This could fund 2 years of housing work. Deadline is 29 February.

Finally got to Iona to discuss housing on the island. Good turnout locally. People need to go onto the Home Argyll waiting list for housing if they are in need; this shows the council how much need there is for housing. Small group visited several sites marked for possible future housing development / staff accommodation. RC would like to be added to the email chain on the Iona visit.

### **8.7. Worker Accommodation (HMCD)**

Planning permission has been granted for Tobermory Rockfield site. MICT’s role on this project is yet to be defined.

### **8.8. Ulva Ferry shore facilities building (CF)**

Ulva Ferry Community Hub open day Saturday 24 February. Ribbon cutting ceremony at 3 pm to dedicate room to Jeannie MacColl.

UFCT providing transport. Project has come in under budget. MF has asked A&B Council to remove the existing Portaloo cabin.

Washing machine and tumble dryer will be used by donation; if they go get more use than anticipated, decision will be made to replace them with commercial models. Office in the building will be rented out, and will be used by the Pontoon Manager as well.

Office and room hire will help make the building sustainable. There is also a donation box for the toilets to help with upkeep and supplies.

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### **8.9. Ulva Ferry Community Transport (AN/SM/MF)**

Recording of usage has been changed since October; this will help give coordinators a better view of how transport is being used, and how it can be improved.

Service every 10 weeks has been free of charge to this point; that is changing. This expense will now be roughly £1500/year for both vehicles. It was agreed that service costs need to be explored, as on-island service may be more expensive than service on the mainland. Most do feel that we have a moral obligation to get the vehicles serviced on the island, but we should get quotes from other Mull-based garages. The vehicles cannot get their MOTs on the island due to weight restrictions.

Question about UFCT pricing – it will be reviewed soon. Currently, it is based on a per-mile charge. Council publishes taxi rates – could we use this as a guide or comparator? AN agreed that this could be part of the discussion.

DF asked: Could we look for local business support? This is a good suggestion that should be explored further.

MF: there has been a suggestion by the Community Transport Association to strengthen the community transport provision in MICT's constitution – this may mean a change to the articles of the constitution at this year's AGM. This could mean introducing a membership scheme for UFCT passengers.

*Short break of 5 minutes*

**8.10. Ranger Service (incl. Eagle Partnership and Friends of Calgary Bay) (JD & EW)**

JD: Support for next year is looking quiet. Nature Scot will support JD's post for this upcoming year. Emily's post is secure for the next year via National Trust.

Application has been submitted to the Council for early years funding for Acorns. Rachel will help out once a month in Ardura; JD also working with Rebecca MacLennan at Home Start Lorn to get kids outside and involved in nature activities.

Bridges at Java need to be replaced. JD is asking local businesses and residents to donate funds for these. Craignure Bay Committee has donated some funding.

There is no funding for a Mull seasonal ranger this year.

Riverfly project will start up in April.

Discussion of mink and trapping. Not something that the Ranger Service can focus on as it will require a large time and financial investment for an uncertain return, but JD happy to give advice and knowledge.

JD attending a peatland course; this may help with funding in the future.

**8.11. Helipad (MF)**

Contractor was onsite to finish the lights. It hasn't been painted yet.

**8.12. Facilities Manager (MF)**

Recruitment is underway.

**8.13 Communications Standing Committee (SS/KD)**

Website is in the works. MS helping with back-end services and contracts, finances. Content organisation is next.

RC: there has been discussion about attracting younger members, and RC did volunteer to help with a video. KD will discuss with SS when she returns.

Cybersecurity discussion. We need to up our security a bit – hold workshops about how to deal with phishing and other scam emails. Password locker/generator also to be explored. Do we need a disclaimer on our emails? KD to check with Matrix. MS and BW have both volunteered to help with security concerns.

**8.14. Mull & Iona Community Councils (JM & RM)**

No questions about Mull Community Council report.

No questions about Iona Community Council report.

**9.0 Discussion items**

No discussion items.

**10.0 Any other business**

**11.0 Date of Next Meeting – Monday 15<sup>th</sup> April**

**12.0 Member's Forum\*** - The Convenor reserves the right to move this item on the agenda depending on items received, and to defer this or any other item to future meetings if time is short.)

*Meeting closed at 1530*

*The next scheduled board meeting will be Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> April in person and on Teams.*

**Signed**

**Name**            **Sandy Brunton**

**Date**

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