



**Annual General Meeting
13th January 2022,**

7pm via Zoom

Present:

Cameron Anson (Chairperson), Stewart MacDougall (Vice Chair), Brik Halcrow (Company Secretary), Martin Putsey (Director), Julie Ward (Director) David Greenhalgh (Director) Neil Harvey (Director), John Clare (Director), Hannah Fisher (Director), Richard Hawkes (Director), Miek Zwamborn, Rutger Emmelkamp, Janna Greenhalgh, Jenny Wright, Sandy Brunton, Marilyn Granger, Martin Granger, Renuis Derbidge, Charlot Buschgens, Norma MacInnes, Ed Howarth, Emily Wilkins, Terry Hegarty, Jon Lloyd, Matthew Burgess, Wendy Lloyd, Nigel Burgess, Rachel Wardle, Jane Griffiths, Gill Morley, Judy Gibson,

Staff: Morven Gibson, Celia Compton, Saskia Davidson, Philip Yelder, Leigh Eisler

Apologies: Jane Brunton, Martin Caldwell, Anna Mockford

1. Chairpersons Welcome & Activities Report 2020-2021

Cameron Anson welcomed everyone to the meeting, followed by a summary of SWMID's activities during the 2020 to 2021 financial year.

i) Covid Community Support

SWMID was part of the island wide response to the pandemic, including distributing hand sanitiser; setting up a telephone support service, and taking in and distributing community donations for the purpose of providing financial relief to individuals.

We were involved in a Community Land Scotland project called "Owning Our Future" with Alasdair Satchel. Alasdair created podcasts from interviews with local people about their experience of Covid and how they felt community ownership was of benefit in moving forward out of lockdown.

Both Tiroran Community Forest and the Ross of Mull Community Garden provided a place for people to go when travel was restricted.

By the end of the period we had secured a grant from The National Lottery Supporting Communities Fund to employ a Community Gardener for three years.

ii) Bendoran

We received an award from the Islands Green Recovery Fund for basic groundworks at Bendoran to make the site safer and more fit for purpose.

Covid restrictions meant that Bendoran Watersports and the community club, Bendoran Water Activities Club, were not able to start offering sessions during the period to end March 2021. However, both were ready to go in Spring/Summer 2021.

iii) The Columba Centre

The Columba Centre was closed from the start of lockdown until October 2020. Mitigations were put in place to allow the South West Mull Makers and the Ross of Mull Community Gym to re-open at the start of October. The SWMID staff returned in February 2021.

iv) Aird Fada Seaweed Farm

Behind the scenes we were working hard to ensure all paperwork and funding was in place by the end of the period, ready to progress the project in summer 2021. This included a grant from the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund, a private donation and our Marine Licence in place.

v) Staff

Our staff team remained static during this period: Morven Gibson, General Manager; Celia Compton, Finance and Project Manager; Philip Yielder, Community Forester; Saskia Davidson, Administrator. Due to Covid lockdowns, office-based staff worked at home for most of this period, with some staff taking furlough at times. All Board and subcommittee meetings took place online.

vi) Looking forward

Going forward into 2021-2022, SWMID continues to grow, both in terms of projects and a bigger and more dispersed staff team. There are exciting times ahead!

If anyone is interested in being involved with SWMID in any capacity, volunteering, or becoming a director then they are invited to get in touch!

2. Minutes of 2021 AGM

David Greenhalgh proposed that the minutes be accepted, Sandy Brunton seconded the motion. The minutes were duly accepted.

3. 2020/2021 Finance Report and presentation of 2020/2021 approved Management Accounts

Brik Halcrow, Company Secretary, reported on the 2020-2021 Management Accounts.

i) Covid-19

Covid-19 impacted our income at the start of the financial year, April 2020. However, this was mitigated by our successful application to the Scottish Government's Third Sector Resilience Fund for a grant to cover core costs until timber income was restored.

The UK government's furlough scheme covered salaries for staff who were unable to work due to child-care.

We received a number of Covid recovery grants:

- NatureScot for a community tourism survey;
- HIE Digital Enablement Grant to update our website;
- Scottish Government's Islands Green Recovery Fund for groundworks at Bendoran;

We were intermediary for various Covid crisis funds:

- National Lottery to fund the Ross of Mull and Iona Transport Scheme for their Covid crisis response;
- Two local funds for families and individuals in need of support.

Historic Environment Scotland granted us a rental payment holiday that we were able to pass onto our sub-tenants, as their income was reduced by Covid restrictions.

ii) Other grant funding

Other grant funding received during this period, included:

- 50% of General Manager's salary from Highlands and Islands Enterprise;
- Leader funding towards the costs of our Community Forester
- development funding towards the Community Garden
- private donation to help fund start-up costs for the seaweed farm at Aird Fada.

iii) Expenditure

Salaries were part funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Leader and the Third Sector Resilience Fund. The remainder of the salaries were paid directly from forest income.

Forest income also covered many of our core costs, such as insurance, overheads at Bendoran and the Columba Centre, staff training, IT service contracts, professional fees, loan repayments for the purchase of Tioran Forest and forest costs such as van lease. Replanting costs were covered by an award from Scottish Forestry.

Deferred grant from 2019-2020 covered project activities, such as architects' planning application for the work at Bendoran and consultancy for the seaweed farm.

We ended the year with reserves of £192,576.

The 2020/2021 accounts were accepted by the Board at our December 2021 Board meeting. They can be viewed on the SWMID website.

4 Election of Directors

BH reported that Anne Baxter has decided to step down as a Director for personal reasons, she was thanked her for her contribution to SWMID over the past year.

In line with the requirements of our Articles of Association, at every AGM one third of our Directors step down and can choose to be re-elected. This year John Clare, Stewart MacDougall, Neil Harvey and Brik Halcrow stepped down and all were willing to stand again. David Greenhalgh proposed and Martin Putsey seconded that John Clare, Stewart MacDougall, Neil Harvey and Brik Halcrow be re-elected to the Board.

5. Our 2021

CC shared a video she had prepared with highlights from SWMID's activities during the calendar year 2021; including, the installation of our 6ha seaweed farm at Aird Fada in Loch Scridain, first harvest at our Community Garden, welcoming Bendoran Watersports and Bendoran Water Activites Club (BWAC), the installation of a campervan blue waste disposal tank in Bunessan, the increase of our staff team from four to seven members of staff, the Junior Forester Award, replanting and the start of a bike trail at Tioran Community Forest.

The video can be viewed on YouTube. <https://youtu.be/iAHFUCb8Eiw>

6. Young Forester Award

PY shared his presentation about the Junior Forester Award. SWMID worked in partnership with Emily Wilkins of the Mull & Iona Ranger service and hosted Bunessan Primary School at Tiroran Community Forest over four days to help them work towards their Royal Forestry Society: Junior Forester Award. The Junior Forester Award gives children and young people an insight into a career in Forestry as well as learning some practical woodland management skills to help with woodlands in their own community. The award covered six key areas; Tree and plant ID, woodland habitats, habitat creation, woodland management, forestry ambassadors and managing risk. PY thanked Emily Wilkins for spotting this award and instigating it with Bunessan Primary School.

In response to a question about deer management in the forest, PY explained that we have had issues with the deer getting into the forest after gates were left open, resulting in damage to some of our young trees. We are working with our neighbouring estate who have the deer management contract to try and tackle this issue. In answer to a question about disabled access and gates, Philip explained that a couple of the gates have been padlocked but only where there are alternative routes.

It was suggested that it would be helpful to have better signage on the gates of the forest to help make it clear that visitors are welcome.

7. Seaweed Processing Presentation

MG gave a quick update on the seaweed farm. The 6 hectare seaweed farm was deployed in July 2021 with 6km of sugar kelp seeded line put out in October. We are grateful for the support of SAMS, Argyll Aquaculture, Inverlussa Marine Services and local fishermen, who are continuing to help us with the maintenance of the seaweed farm.

As a result of changes to the requirements of our main buyer we are working towards getting processing facilities in place before harvest in late Spring/early Summer 2022.

Thanks to funding through HIE's Graduate Support Scheme, we have employed Leigh Eisler as our Aird Fada Project Officer.

LE shared her research on various options for freezing and drying seaweed. She set out step by step how the seaweed is prepared - washed, inspected and chopped - before either being frozen or dried. The equipment required for these processes includes a polytunnel, food safe storage containers, and a heat source such as a biomass burner, potentially fed from biomass from Tiroran

Community Forest. We have options to sell wet, dry or frozen kelp. The possibility of free electricity for processing/freezing seaweed from the wind turbines at Ardfenaig was raised. MG is to explore this possibility.

8. Any Other Business

In response to a question, CC gave an update on Woodland Crofts. Currently we are waiting to hear back from the Crofting Commission after submitting an application for six sites: as part of this process there will be a statutory public consultation. If the crofts are approved then we will start an allocation process. Anyone who would like to be considered for a croft should submit an expression of interest to CC.

Terry Hegarty thanked SWMID for administering the Covid Crisis fund which enabled ROMICTS to continue to help the community during lockdown.

In response to a question about Bendoran, MG confirmed that there will be disabled parking spaces once the groundworks are completed.

CA briefly updated on the affordable housing project. With the agreement of West Highland Housing Association, we are planning to develop a site next to the Ardmeanach View homes on WHHA's land. A grant from the Waterfall Fund has allowed us to appoint Rural Housing Scotland to secure all the information we will need before going out to tender for a design and build process. At this stage we should be able to apply to the Scottish Government Islands Housing Fund for grant funding to allow us to deliver these homes.

CA thanked Saskia and wished her for her Maternity Leave. He announced that Mags Brennan will be covering Saskia's maternity leave for the next year.