



Annual General Meeting

25th January 2025,

11am, Creich Hall

Present:

Cameron Anson (Chairperson), Martin Putsey (Director), Rutger Emmelkamp (Director), Owen Claxton-Ingham (Director), Fiona Mailey (Director), Jenny Jeffree, Tony Jeffree, Alex James, Rosie Burgess, Nigel Burgess, Sue Murdoch, Lea Anderson, Peter Skinner, Sandy Brunton, Janet Claxton, Rob Claxton Ingham, Alesha Daniel, John Faithful, Floortje Brandsteder, Hana Werner, Lorriane Ironside, Jane Griffiths, Judy Gibson, Miek Zwamborn, Monica Haddock, Rachel Marshal, Rowan Wardle, Douglas 2--=Wardle, Jon Lloyd, Wendy Lloyd, Michael Ritchie, Lynn Kitching, Teifi Davies, Tom Cronin, Anne Baxter,

Staff: Sarah Robinson-Frood, Mags Brennan, Saskia Davidson, Leigh Eisler, Matthew Burgess, Lorraine McCafferty, Keziah Rose, Andrew McKeand

Apologies: Hannah Fisher, Jane Brunton, Morven Gibson, Ailidh Lennon, Matthew Oliver

Chairpersons Welcome

Cameron Anson welcomed everyone to the meeting and gave a summary of SWMID's activities during the 2023 to 2024 financial year.

Bendoran

The boat storage facility secured several annual tenants interested in long-term storage, while visitors utilised short-term storage and the launch slip.

By mid-summer 2023, entrance redesign at Bendoran improved access to the car park and boatyard.

Bendoran Watersports continued offering guided sea kayaking, sailing lessons, and free sessions for locals through the Bendoran Water Activities Club.

Tiroran Communiy Forest

Timber felling began in spring 2024, finishing by late autumn. In late 2023 and early 2024, the Community Forester and sessional workers replanted 36,380 trees, including future timber species (oak, beech) and native broadleaf woodland (hazel, rowan, oak).

Feasibility studies for the Forest Cabins and Hutting sites were completed, while the Woodland Crofts application process continues.

Since spring 2023, locally sourced timber products have been sold, adding community value and reducing carbon footprints.

The forest also hosted events, including a "Tree and Cake" afternoon and a well-attended Halloween gathering.

Ross of Mull Community Garden

The garden remains a popular gathering spot, hosting year-round events like school visits, plant swaps, and a Harvest celebration. Mull and Iona Ranger Service supported gardener Lorraine, who, alongside Saskia, is planning next season's events.

Columba Centre

South West Mull Makers had a strong season at the Columba Centre. Rural Housing Scotland vacated its office space due to staffing changes. SWMID took over management of the Ross of Mull and Iona Community Gym, rebranding it as the Columba Centre Gym. Future plans include increased promotion, a new booking system, and a review of space use for the community.

Aird Fada Seaweed Farm

The 2023-2024 season was the first at Aird Fada Seaweed Farm to handle all operations in-house, from deployment to harvest. Challenges included mechanical issues, transport, and weather. Seeded lines were deployed in October 2023, leading to a successful harvest over five days, concluding on May 4. Lessons learned continue to inform future planning.

Staff

2023 -2024 brought some significant changes to our team. Celia Compton moved on to a new role with Scottish Crofting Federation in February 2024. Recruitment for her successor began early in 2024 and Sarah Robinson Frood was appointed as CEO in May 2024. We also said goodbye to our Community Forester, Philip Yelder and Business Development Manager, Neil Harvey. Leigh Eisler continued as Project Officer for Aird Fada Seaweed Farm as did Saskia Davidson, our Administrator, Mags Brennan, Finance Manager and Lorraine McCafferty, our Community Gardener. Recruitment for an additional Sawmill and Forestry worker is planned for late spring 2024 to work alongside Matthew Burgess who is also still employed in this role.

We continued to offer flexible working throughout the year with a mix of home and office.

1. Minutes of 2024 AGM

Sandy Brunton proposed that the minutes be accepted, Martin Putsey seconded the motion. The minutes were duly accepted.

2. Year 2023/2024 Finance Report

Owen Claxton-Ingham, Director reported on the 2023-2024 Management Accounts.

Turnover

During the year under review the turnover of South West Mull and Iona Development was £30,294.

Grant income

In April 2023 we received a restocking grant of £18,340 from Scottish Forestry. Scottish Forestry also supported a Hutting Feasibility study with funding of £3000 and a Fairies and Giants event in the Forest was made possible with an award of £1215. HIE provided funding of £547 for a “Tree and Cake” afternoon and a Halloween event was funded by Community Land Scotland. SWMID were able to undertake a feasibility study with a £9400 grant received from Development Trusts Association Scotland (DTAS). New Signs and information boards for a Nature trail were made possible with an award of £1000 from Imagining New Futures – Social Enterprise Academy.

Aird Fada Seaweed Farm received a grant of from The Islands Infrastructure Fund (via Argyll and Bute Council) for £21,360. In addition to this we received a grant of £41,495 from The CO-OP Carbon Innovation Fund to fund another season of growing on the farm while we develop our knowledge and skills. A further £6321 was received from Innovate UK.

Finally, the National Lottery Community Fund continued to support the Community Garden with funding of £8935 received in June 2023.

Donations

The garden also received £479 in donations throughout the year.

Other income

The income from sub-leasing the Columba Centre fell slightly towards the end of this year due to changes in tenants.

Funded expenditure

During this period much of our project expenditure was funded by grants.

£19,664 was spent on trees and contractors for restocking at Tioran Community Forest – the bulk of these costs were covered by grants from Scottish Forestry.

Unfunded expenditure

Salaries were paid directly from forest income carried forward from the previous year.

Other expenditure such as insurance, overheads at Bendoran and the Columba Centre, other expenses relating to staff such as training, IT service contracts, accountancy and legal fees are primarily paid from forest income.

We ended the year with reserves of £300,785.

The 2023/2024 accounts were accepted by the Board at our December Board meeting.

Election of Directors

Rachel Marshall (Director) explained that in line with the requirements of our Articles of Association, one third of our Directors step down at each AGM. They can be re-elected if they decide to stand again. This year it was the turn of Stewart MacDougall, Cameron Anson and Rutger Emmelkamp to step down. After much consideration Stewart MacDougall has stood down and has chosen not to be re-elected. Stewart was thanked for all his commitment and dedication for the time he has put into SWMID from the start. Both CA and RE are willing to stand again. It was proposed by Jenny Wright and seconded by Fiona Mailey that Cameron Anson and Rutger Emmelkamp be re-elected to the Board.

This year we had one new Director joining between AGM's who asked to be considered for re-election – Ailidh Lennon but also Matthew Oliver as a mistake was had at the previous AGM and MO was not re-elected onto the Board. We are delighted they have agreed to stand. Jenny proposed and Fiona seconded that Ailidh Lennon and Matthew Oliver be re-elected.

3. New Structure and Next Steps

CA outlined the new structure, which includes a team of three co-non-executive members (NET) – Matt Oliver, Ailidh Lennon, and Rutger Emmelkamp. This setup will allow for greater focus on SWMID issues while enhancing transparency and flexibility. The Board will remain unchanged.

Moving forward, sub-groups and working groups will continue as they are, but with a clearer structure. Each group will ideally include one NET, one Director, one staff member, and community representatives. These groups will have more autonomy, enabling them to make decisions independently, improving overall efficiency.

Project groups will also be restructured to grant them decision-making authority within a clearly defined remit.

The next 12–18 months will be a period of consolidation, focusing on making the most of existing assets.

Questions from community;

‘Will each group have their own budget?’

It’s still uncertain, but it will be easier if the group is working on a grant that is ringfenced. Discussions will take place as needed.

‘Will the Board still have a say over projects?’

Yes, the Board will still have the final say, but the process will be streamlined by having lead Directors report back from each sub-group.

CA emphasised that when forming groups, SWMID will ensure community expertise is represented within each sub-group or bring in individuals with relevant knowledge where needed.

‘Does the Columba Centre generate enough income to justify renting it, would it not make more sense to relocate to Bendoran?’

No, it has never generated enough income, but having a physical presence for SWMID in the community remains important. Bendoran has accessibility challenges, whereas the Columba Centre is more easily accessible. We are exploring ways to transform the Columba Centre into a more vibrant Community Hub.

‘Any updates for developing Bendoran?’

Any changes at Bendoran will depend on securing funding, and currently, we have no funds available to move forward. The long-term vision includes a complete redevelopment of the site, incorporating upgraded facilities, a café, and more.

Concluding that everyone is content with the new structure, we can move on and keep everyone updated.

4. Staff Stories

Due to a power outage, the planned presentations could not take place. However, the staff provided a brief overview of the past year’s activities at the forest, Aird Fada, as well as events and community engagement.

5. Any Other Business

Are SWMID still moving forward with charitable status?

Yes, the paperwork is signed and sealed but we need to check that the new Board structure doesn't conflict with that.