

# **Cruach Mhor Windfarm Trust**

**Minute of the Annual General Meeting** of the Trust held on Wednesday 14th May at 4pm in the Colintrave Village Hall.

## **1. Sederunt**

Alex McNaughton (Chair) , Charles Dixon Spain, Michael Russell, Ros McKenna, James Hamilton, Andrew MacVicar (Trustees), Amy Groom (Secretary)

Five members of the public in attendance.

## **2. Apologies**

Amy Aitken (Scottish Power Renewables)

## **3. Minutes from the last AGM**

Minutes not found in documentation returned by the previous Secretary / Treasurer who resigned on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024.

## **4. Chair's Report**

It has been an active year for the Trust with a considerable number of applications granted and a change in the online bank accounts to navigate. This is the last meeting for AM as Chair as he is retiring from his position after 21 years involvement with the Trust.

## **5. Accounts 2024/25**

Statement presented by MR acting as Treasurer.

The previous Secretary/Treasurer was the principal signatory of the Trust's bank accounts. His sudden departure on 18<sup>th</sup> Nov 2024 and the loss of some documents by the bank meant that the bank accounts were not available until the end of January 2025, until which time the Trust was not able to meet grant commitments,

It was then discovered that a 95 day notice account for the Trust had been established by the previous Secretary / Treasurer with conditions on withdrawal of funds that had never been agreed by the Trustees. Moreover the previous Secretary/Treasurer had transferred virtually all the Trust's funds into this restricted account a few weeks before

his resignation without informing the Trustees. Given the withdrawal conditions it had taken until early May 2025 to access the balance of the funds.

To manage the situation some underspent grants were reclaimed and partial grant payments were made. Of these only the CGDT still has an outstanding call on funds. Thanks were due to all organisations who had helped during that difficult time and especially to the ColGlen Community Council for advancing a £1,000 grant to a Dunoon Grammar School pupil towards their trip to Tanzania.

The 2024/25 accounts have been checked and signed by Jon King and deemed a true record. There is a £29,847.02 balance carried forward at the end of the year. The annual community benefit payment of circa £45,000 is expected within the next fortnight.

The accounts will now be submitted to Argyll & Bute Council as is required.

During the year it was decided to build up a reserve fund. This is in the light of the uncertainty of the future operator of the windfarm after the lease to ScottishPower Renewables ends in 2029. It is possible there may be a gap in funding between this lease ending and the successful bidder re-powering the windfarm. However on a more positive note it is likely that the community benefit payment will increase significantly when re-powering is complete.

## **6. Report by ScottishPower Renewables**

### **None Received**

The Treasurer reported that SPR had undertaken a compliance audit of the Trust during February, March and April following a complaint made by the previous Treasurer / Secretary. He had contacted SPR before resigning without telling the Trustees and had followed up afterwards with allegations regarding conflicts of interest. Considerable information had to be provided for the audit and the Chair thanked MR for undertaking this task.

The Compliance Audit concluded that :

- The challenges of small communities and difficulties in avoiding Conflicts of Interest is acknowledged.
- **There is no evidence to indicate any intention of wrongdoing, or that the payments were made other than in good faith for the benefit of the community.**

- The previous secretary / Treasurer does not appear to have had sight of all of the information now provided in relation to the Burns Lunch or the ARC / Summer school, and has commented on the difficulty in obtaining supporting information in respect of the Fuel support payments during the period where further instalment payments were due. It is unclear whether this was purely a timing issue, if it was not clear to the recipients what was required of them, or some other reason.
- One point is noted in respect of the Burns Lunch, where it was identified the forecast entertainment cost was not incurred due to a goodwill gesture by those involved donating their fee to hall funds. This is highlighted for Trustees to consider whether this is in line with the intent of the award or whether the £350 'underspend' should be returned to CMWT.
- **No other concerns are identified with the three awards reviewed and the approach taken by the Trustees in relation to their declared Conflicts in these awards.**
- Improvements to the Governance process around award approval and follow up, and transparency of activities were identified and implemented in 2024. It is important that these improvements are maintained, in particular the follow up of awards by the new secretary and information provided by beneficiaries to support activities. Further support should not be provided to organisations where these processes are not followed.

It was further noted by MR that the improvement in transparency in 2024 had come about because of dissatisfaction about the barriers to applicants which the Trustees felt existed and about which there had been complaints. Further improvements had been put in place after the resignation of the previous Secretary/Treasurer including a web site and the publication of minutes.

## **8. Questions from Community**

*How frequently is an audit required?*

At the conclusion of a grant-funded project we request a report and account of expenditure, and expect any unspent funds to be returned. Archaeology Scotland's project and the River Ruel Improvement Association were noted for their full reports. The annual audit for CMWFT is undertaken on the same level as for the ColGlen Community Council. The option is open to the Trust to undertake a complete audit if we so chose. Considerable information is provided to SPR for their annual report.

*Comment - glad to see the three new Trustees in position.*

*Do we look to change our approach to visibility / advertising the funding available to the community and encourage applications this year? Due to a feeling there has been uncertainty in previous years as to what is available and how to go about applying.*

Yes we recognise the Trust should increase its publicity and activity to encourage awareness of the grants available, whilst bearing in mind that at present we receive a community benefit which is at the lowest end of the scale of such payments. The Trust's budget is limited and somewhat stretched by the existing level of applications and we wish to manage expectations.

In the winter we created a new website, containing information and all relevant documents, and this is posted to social media when relevant although we could do more to promote this. Information could be included in the community newsletter and results of funded projects placed on community noticeboards to generate wider public knowledge. Applications have greatly increased in recent years which does show increased awareness of the Trust's activities and also an increased need for community funding.

If all the applications outstanding today are to be met then a significant part of this year's fund would be allocated. More attention to match funding could be a sensible way forward.

## **8. AOCB**

A sincere thank you to AM for acting as Chair, as well as previous roles within the Trust, all in being a substantial 21 years involvement which had benefited the community greatly.

The meeting was closed at 4.20pm.