

Aultbea Community Hall Special General Meeting Minutes Wednesday 6th October 2021

Draft to be ratified at the AGM in March 2022 as per the Deed of Trust

Venue: Aultbea Church of Scotland (Opposite Isle View Nursing Home) and on-line via Zoom (hosted by Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations). The venue and online facility opened at 7.00pm with the meeting starting at 7.30pm

Record of meeting: The meeting was recorded on Zoom and transcribed by Anne Sikorski, an independent consultant, on behalf of Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Meeting Facilitator: The meeting was facilitated by Jo Ford, Chief Officer of Skye and Lochalsh Council for Voluntary Organisations.

Aultbea Community Hall management committee members in attendance Stan Millar, Malcolm Purvis and Roger Kendall

Number of community members attending in person: 60

Number of community members attending online: 23

Jo Ford opened the meeting at 7.30pm, she explained the meeting had been called as the Aultbea Community Hall management committee wanted to retire. She noted the original notice about the meeting was issued as a dissolution notice as there was a possibility the organisation could be dissolved. However, between the notice being issued and the meeting taking place several people had come forward from the community who were willing to stand as new management committee members for the Aultbea Community Hall.

Jo Ford noted that during the afternoon open session hosted by Skye and Lochalsh CVO at the Aultbea Church of Scotland several people had asked about the three choices that community had. She explained that there were not three options and if people were willing to stand as management committee members, they would have an opportunity to address meeting followed by questions from participants. The current management committee would then appoint the new management committee members and retire, negating the need for a dissolution vote.

She asked meeting participants if this was clear and if there were any questions about the process. Andrew Townsend (a member of the community wishing to stand as a new management committee member) asked if the management committee would stay on as members for a month to facilitate the handover rather than retire at the meeting. Jo Ford advised the management committee members had committed to having a meeting with the new committee members within 4 weeks to hand over paperwork and arrange bank signatories. He asked if they would consider staying on until the paperwork handover had been completed. Jo Ford said that she would ask the members of the management committee if they were willing to do that. The question was repeated by Jo Ford to participants online who had difficulty hearing the conversation.

Jo Ford explained that because the legal structure of the group is unincorporated there was an element of personal risk to the management committee and that they had decided to retire. She advised participants that three members of the community had put themselves forward as potential

new management committee members and she asked if there was anyone else in the meeting who would like to put themselves forward as new management committee members for Aultbea Community Hall. There were no others wanting to stand.

Jo Ford asked if there were any questions about the legal structure of the organisation or if anyone wanted anything clarifying about that. There were no questions.

Jo Ford then asked the people waiting to stand to address the meeting.

- **Fiona MacKenzie** introduced herself to the meeting stating she was not there on behalf of Community Council of which she is Chair but in personal capacity. She explained that the new management committee could not make guarantees about reopening hall however, committed to exploring costs with the help of experts then to bring back findings to the community so assets remain in community ownership. She stated the three people standing were not seeking to be in competition with the new hall plans and that they were standing as an interim solution to give the community time to properly explore what costs might be and what can be done rather than having to make a rush decision on sale or whatever. She told the meeting she felt passionate to stand up and represent families in the area. Jo Ford thanked Fiona.
- **Andrew Townsend** explained that since his arrival in Aultbea in the 70s the hall has been an integral part of young people's lives and school in the area and that he is passionate that the community should not lose a communal area in centre of the village particularly for young people. Jo Ford thanked Andrew.
- **Pauline Butler** informed the meeting that she had been living in the area since 2002 and that her background in education has made her very aware of the challenges of living in a remote and rural area including transport to activities and employment. She said she felt that her experience in the education sector has helped her understand what like for families especially youngsters. She noted that a huge amount of her time over the last few years has been involved with Gairloch Museum which has come to the end of a substantial project and that she knows a lot about grant fundraising and governance.

She told the meeting she is open minded to the viability of saving the current hall however doesn't know what is possible but committed to do her best as part of an organisation fit for purpose that can properly explore what the options are. She said she very much hoped that when the meeting was formally over if herself, Fiona and Andrew became management committee members that the community would offer their support and expertise. She asked people to complete a volunteer form to pass on contact details if they wanted to help. She stated people came to the meeting as they obviously care and asked people to help support the three people standing.

Pauline then read out several emails that had been sent to them in support of the three people standing to becoming management committee members. Fiona seconded a plea for

help from the community to support the three people standing and asked anyone who cares to step up for way forward.

Jo Ford thanked the three people for addressing the meeting and opened the floor to questions.

Jo Ford first asked questions that had been raised directly with her.

- It was noted that the assets of the Aultbea Community hall included the hall and playing field and that there was a local understanding that this may be part of the Common Grazing and the new management committee to talk with the Common Grazing Committee about this.
- A question was asked about ARC and how the people standing for the management committee would work with ARC and other community facility providers to move forward with what the community want. Andrew Townsend noted that the new management committee would sit down and have a candid conversation with ARC about how the hall and their plans could fit together, possibly as phase 2 and 3 of the ARC plans. He reiterated that there was a need to engage all of groups in area and that there was no point in acting against other organisations.

Jo Ford then asked for questions from the hall

- A member of the community (Donald MacLean, Crofter) asked for clarification as to which playing field was the asset of the group. Jo Ford confirmed it was the old field and that this is in the Trust Deed which she read out *'which comprises of a hall and football or sports field for the use of the inhabitants of Aultbea and surrounding district'*. The community member stated they have a copy of the land report from 1967 when there were three parcels of land were decrefted and the old football pitch was identified as being for use of common grazing when not used as a football pitch. Jo Ford stated this is why the new committee would need to connect to the people using the land and Common Grazing Committee.
- A member of the community (Heather Wiseman MacPhee) asked about the amount of money in the kitty and if this was for the old hall or new hall. Jo Ford explained that there were two different organisations and that ARC had about £60,000 in cash as per their last accounts and that the Aultbea Hall Committee had about £2,500 as of the 30th September 2021 financial statement. Clarification as to who are ARC was sought, Jo Ford advised ARC are registered with Companies House and that a list of Directors, contact details and accounts are available on the Companies House website to which there is a link from the SLCVO website page for Aultbea Community Hall.

It was then asked why the money to build a new hall cannot go to the old hall. Jo Ford suggested these are the conversations that need to take place as part of the community consultation. She noted that Skye and Lochalsh CVO are funded to help communities and groups with consultations and that if the Aultbea community want support, SLCVO can lead the consultation, giving the community an opportunity to tell all the groups what they want and giving all groups equal access to the information from the consultation. This would be a couple of months work for free for the community which would equate to between £5,000 and £6,000 Development Officer consultation time. It was asked if there would be a community vote on this, Jo Ford

stated that there is no requirement for a vote to take place. If the community and groups want support, they just need to contact SLCVO. She reiterated that this would be a consultation for the community to have an equal opportunity to say what they feel and what they want and for not one particular group.

Jo Ford asked if there were any more questions from the hall. There were none.

Jo Ford asked for questions from online participants

- Peter Jarosz asked if the new volunteers (people standing as management committee members) realised there needs to be a community consultation before anything further is done, as the community had previously voted for a new hall and that before talking about refurbishing the old hall, they need to get community backing.

Pauline Butler answered they were hoping to be in that position in 6 months' time as the first thing they need to do is sort out the constitution with support from Jo Ford and her colleagues, so they have some legal status. They want to find out more about the legalities and assets particularly the crofters rights. She stated the three people standing came together as they did not want the assets to be sold but they have no intentions of doing anything until they have looked at the options, appraised them and put them to the community to get their response to the various options. They need to look at the options for the group before they start to look at the options for the hall and that they are very open minded as to what the options will be. Jo Ford repeated for online participants that the new committee would like to look at the legal structure of the group first to ensure it is correct and protect the assets then look at the options and take them to the community.

Jo Ford stated she understood what Peter was saying; he thought the community should say what they want first and then the options looked at. Peter confirmed this was correct and said the community need to approve any work that may be done on the old hall before work starts. Jo Ford suggested the consultation could be done in tandem whilst the group are looking at potential new legal structures because the group say it could take 6 months to look at the legal structure and that during that time Skye and Lochalsh CVO could carry out a community led consultation about what the community would like in their facilities. It does not have to be completed one after another and can be done in tandem. Peter stated his concern is that if all the work is done by the management committee may be wasted if the community vote no to the hall being repaired.

- Lorna McDonald advised there were three people taking part in the online session with her and what they would like to know is that why when the hall was looking for people to help run it 4 years ago the people there (those standing as management committee members) were not putting themselves forward then and that if the same issue of time constraints would cause the same issues as before when one of the people standing tonight retired from the Aultbea Community Hall management committee due to lack of time . She noted that a lot of time and effort had been put into the hall and there was a lack of support. The hall was closed when a professional survey was taken of the hall, and it was condemned as not

safe. They did not want the building to close but there was nothing much they could do. Jo Ford asked the people standing if they wanted to respond to that and they said no as it was going over old ground.

Jo Ford advised the meeting that what the community need to do is go forward and a way to do this is via a consultation, the community being asked what the community want and each of the organisations working together to deliver what the community need. Lorna said they tried 3 to 4 years ago but it did not happen as there was no help. Jo Ford said as a community they need to look at a way forward and draw a line under the past. There was a concern that the group would need to raise more money to survey the hall and that the community were not wanting to raise money again for this, as work has already been done. Jo ford acknowledged the concerns raised and stated that there are people willing to look at this over the next 6 months.

Jo Ford asked if there were any more questions. There were none.

Jo Ford explained that the Deed of Trust required the current management committee members to appoint the new management committee members and that it was not a community vote. A member of the community (in the church) asked how many members there were needed on the management committee, Jo stated it was 3 but if anyone else was interested in standing they are very welcome to. The member of the community said they want to help support the group moving forward, Jo Ford asked the person to complete the form to become a volunteer at the end of the meeting.

Jo Ford asked if the management committee were happy to appoint those standing. They agree and Roger Kendall read out the following statement:

“When we were forced to close the Hall in 2018, we arranged a meeting with interested parties, namely, ARC, ACC, Funday, Primary school and the community church and church of Scotland chaired by the local councillor to try to find a way forward. That meeting agreed that ARC and ACH should meet and act as a single entity to look at how a community facility could be achieved.

This meeting arranged by the hall management committee asked for ACC to organise similar meetings within a few weeks to progress a way forward. This has never happened and over the last few years no group or any individual has every come forward to help the present Hall management Committee resolve the issues of the old hall.

Now at long last when it is proposed to dispose of the hall and its assets for the benefit of the community, we have volunteers to take upon the management role and the financial risk we have borne.

As required by our trust deed we invite the three nominated people, Pauline Butler, Fiona Mackenzie, and Andrew Townsend to join the Aultbea Community Hall management committee. The outgoing Management committee wholeheartedly wish them every success

and look forward to their first community consultation to expand on their plans in more detail for the community to make informed decisions.

It is our intention to resign from the Management Committee and within the next four weeks pass to them all relevant information and leave everything in their hands.

We thank all those past committee members and the community who have supported us and helped us over the last three years.”

Jo Ford verified that Pauline Butler, Fiona MacKenzie, and Andrew Townsend had been appointed as new management committee members of the Aultbea Community Hall. She confirmed she asked the old management committee members were willing to stay on for 4 weeks, as Andrew Townsend asked at the start of the meeting, but they did not want to remain as management committee members and were retiring as per Roger Kendall's statement. Jo Ford stated Skye and Lochalsh CVO could facilitate the handover meeting and take minutes.

Jo Ford confirmed the minutes of the meeting taking place will be available of the Skye and Lochalsh CVO website and that all who had emailed Skye and Lochalsh CVO will also receive a copy. The minutes will also be published in the Gairloch Times.

Jo Ford confirmed Skye and Lochalsh CVO are funded to support communities in development and if the Aultbea community want help with the community consultation to contact Jo Ford (jo.ford@slcvo.org.uk). She also confirmed that the offer of help would be sent to all facility groups and Aultbea Community Council.

Jo Ford brought the meeting to a close, noted she was available after the meeting to talk and again asked people wanting to help the new management committee to complete the volunteer form.