



***Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on
5th March 2025***

Present:

- Iain Frazer (Treasurer), Anne Hislop (Chair), David Howell, Isla Kinnear, Sharon McMurtrie, Kayt Howell (Manager), Kirsty Murray (Project Support Officer), Gordon Cowtan (Consultant), Steve Luker (Consultant), Janine Rennie (Financial Consultant), Jane Wild (Admin Assistant)
- 17 FDT members

I. Apologies

- Fran Hall

II. Welcome and report by Chair

- AH welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted that it was good to see such a good turnout. She thanked everyone for turning out and for their continued support of the FDT and confirmed that there more than enough members present to make the meeting quorate.
- AH introduced the Board members including FH who was unable to attend the meeting and is stepping down after three years on the Board. AH thanked FH for her involvement and noted that it has been great to have her on the Board. AH also thanked the remaining Directors for their continued commitment.
- AH thanked the consultants for their hard work and introduced JR who joined the meeting online. JR was appointed last year to assist with financial governance and has been a tremendous help in keeping the FDT on the right track – her knowledge and experience have been invaluable. An investment sub-group has been set up and will meet soon to investigate potential suitable and ethical investments. Discussion with members in previous years has shown that the FDT has a clear mandate to invest their income ethically. The Board attended a session led by Foundation Scotland to learn more about investment and it became clear that investing ethically can be a minefield. There is not always a good return and closer inspection of some ethical investments revealed aspects which were not always compatible with the FDT's ethos. The financial sub-group will look carefully at potential investments and feedback to the Board. High returns are already being made on money that has been invested in high interest accounts. A reserves policy is being developed and should be finalised soon. All these steps will help to ensure that the income from the turbine can continue to work for the community by providing grants etc. long into the future.
- AH introduced the staff and thanked them for all their hard work and commitment. There are now three members of staff. JW joined the team this year to help with administration and has been a huge support. The FDT have been working with STEP (Central Scotland's business support organisation) to ensure that their HR is appropriate and up-to-date and that the staff receive adequate support.
- AH informed the members that the FDT had created a statement to remind people that bullying and harassment of staff will not be tolerated. AH was sad that this had

been required but, unfortunately, had been made necessary due to the staff being on the receiving end of unpleasant and unacceptable behaviour from members of the community.

- The District Heating System at Balgair continues to be a challenge. AH introduced SL who has been assisting with making improvements to the system and will talk about this later in the meeting.
- The minutes of the last A.G.M. were sent out to members twice prior to the meeting. Acceptance of the minutes was proposed and seconded by members attending the meeting.

III. Introduction of Financial Consultant

- This was covered during the Chair's report.

IV. Financial report by Treasurer

- IF had included a basic outline of the annual accounts in the handout available at the meeting and noted that a paper copy of the full audited accounts was available if any member wished to see them.
- The total income to FREE for the year ending June 2024 was £455,509.22. Funds were transferred to the FDT to avoid capital gains tax and to have the money in one account to make it easier to manage. Around £40K was reserved in the FREE account for business grants and other expenses. The 32 day notice account has been closed with the money being transferred to a 95 day account which accrue higher interest. The FCE account again has a deficit which has been met by grants from the FDT. Equipment has been replaced at Balgair this year to improve the system. IF asked if there were any questions but none were raised.
- JR has now been with the FDT for a year. She commented that she is impressed by the financial management of the Trust and noted that the savings accounts have created a lot of interest. She feels that the organisation takes financial management very seriously and their level of reserves indicates sound financial management. The audit went really smoothly and administration costs are very low. JR explained that she produces monthly management accounts for the monthly Board meetings alongside a consolidation of the year so far. She noted that the Board had produced a budget projection document which has been really useful. JR asked if there were any questions and told the members that she was happy to receive questions by email at any time. No questions were raised.
JR left the meeting.

V. Project report by Manager

- KH thanked everyone for attending.
- KH has been part of the FDT for approximately 20 years in one role or another. She thanked everyone who is currently handling the responsibility of the Trust's substantial income. It is a big responsibility
- KH was pleased to note that many of the goals which were outlined at the last A.G.M. have been achieved. She mentioned the new website and the fact that it provides lots of information about the Trust including grant forms for FDT members as well as useful 'green' information. The electric vehicle (EV) charger has been replaced and should be ready for use soon and will be managed by the Sports Centre. The Bike Doctor has attended three times this year always to coincide with school holidays to try and ensure the children's bikes are checked and safe to use. Several research projects are being developed with Strathclyde University and will provide data which will help FDT to focus on future plans. The Fuel Payment (FP) grants have continued for a third year and the regular drop-in sessions have proved successful for members who prefer face to face interactions.
- The FDT made a decision to change the way they operate in order to focus on enabling others to develop and run projects rather than trying to run everything themselves. Examples of this are the log-splitting group and the re-usable party pack.

- KH noted that the FDT have also taken a step back from running workshops and events as attendance and interest has been low. Despite that, a workshop/information event on air source heat pumps (ASHP's) is being planned in the near future.
 - The recent storm and the devastation to many trees locally has prompted the Board to consider helping residents to replace lost trees. This plan is still in development.
 - The FDT continues to interact with the primary school and will be supplying the children with wildflower seeds to plant in the Spring.
 - KH encouraged members to get in touch with any questions and/or ideas and she thanked them for their support.
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- Project support officer's report (KM) – KM noted that the end of the current grant cycle is coming to an end and that this is not in line with the FDT's financial year. There has been a lot of interest in all the grants. The FP grants were well subscribed, and the Energy Efficiency (EE) grants have been popular with the biggest purchase being new doors and windows. The Business Green (BG) grants and the Community Green (CG) grants started in October for a six-month trial period and KM will be gathering feedback and information to help to plan for the future. A breakdown of all the grants was provided in the leaflet available at the meeting but KM summarised as follows: £83K has been awarded in total for 157 grants including 77 bags of logs, 67 FP grants, 38 EE grants and 5 BG grants. An application for a CG grant has recently been submitted.

AH asked if there were any questions for KH or KM. There were not.

VI. Consultant's report

- GC explained his role which has been to keep an overview of the heating system at Balgair. He noted that there have been several challenges over the year and that a lot of time has been spent addressing the issues and putting things in place to improve the system and make it more viable. All the Heating Interface Units (HIUs) have been replaced as they had been causing problems and expense.
- Scott Walker has been taken on to act as a triage point for residents at Balgair – he has the expertise to either sort out problems or make the decision to call out engineers.

VII. Introduction of Balgair consultant

- GC introduced Steve Luker who has been working on improving the district heating system at Balgair to make it more efficient and viable.
- SL explained that he got involved about 18 months ago. He carried out a detailed process of looking at what was there and he concluded that it would be better to improve the existing system than to replace it completely. This means that the FDT can continue to benefit from receiving Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) payments.
- Time has been spent making changes to the system, in particular with regard to the controls. The system is now more efficient. The pumps are not working as hard and the LPG boiler is not firing up as often and this will continue to be monitored. A remote monitoring system has also been installed. All of this, along with the appointment of SW, will hopefully cut down on call-outs and problems.
- One major intervention has been replacing the HIUs. SL explained that HIUs are the equivalent of a boiler and they convert the heat from the heat network into heat for heating and hot water in the residences. This was a large expense but going forward there should be fewer outages and problems.
- Next steps will be to carry out some changes to the commercial arrangements around the system. There are currently 8 or 9 suppliers involved so SL is looking at simplifying this and reducing costs of the contracts. Aggregated Micro Power (AMP) currently have the contract for the service and maintenance of the boilers as well as

the supply of the woodchip. They will continue to have a major role but the plan is to separate the wood chip supply contract and the servicing/maintenance contract. This should result in lower running costs.

- SL asked if there were any questions. There were not.

SL left the meeting.

VIII. Election of Directors

- Every year, the two longest serving members of the Board are required to stand down. They can then stand for re-election if they wish to. This year, AH was required to stand down and expressed a wish to stand for re-election. FH had expressed her intention to stand down from the Board. AH provided a brief summary of why she would like to remain on the FDT Board.
- No one else had indicated any interest in joining the Board.
- SM asked the members present to vote by a show of hands their agreement for AH to remain on the Board. Members voted for this. There were no votes against.
- Post holders will be agreed at the next Board meeting.

IX. Any Other Competent Business

- An FDT member asked if the developers of the new windfarm had been in touch with the FDT. The reply was yes, but the development is still in its early stages. The FDT has expressed their interest. Another presentation from the developers is planned.
- An FDT member asked about the re-powering of the windfarm at Earlsburn. Nothing definite has been decided yet but it is usual for turbines to be upgraded when the 25 year planning approval has expired. The expectation is for the FDT to remain involved. GC suggested that it may be useful to try and get something in writing acknowledging FDT's continued interest. DH noted that the members have previously expressed their wish to reinvest in the windfarm and it had been agreed that 50% of the FDT's income should be invested and 50% should be spent on grants and projects.
- GC/KH informed the members that they had met with Nadara with regard to the fire in one of the turbines and seeking compensation for loss of income during the time that the turbine was out of action.

X. Thank you and close

- AH again thanked everyone for attending the meeting and brought the meeting to a close.

An FDT member raised a vote of thanks to the Chair.