



**Minutes of the Board meeting held on
6th September 2023**

1. Present/apologies for absence:

- **Present:** Iain Frazer (Treasurer), Fran Hall, Anne Hislop (Chair), David Howell, Isla Kinnear, Iain MacKay, Chris Robinson, Kayt Howell (Manager), Kirsty Murray (Admin Officer) Gordon Cowtan (Consultant)
- **Apologies:** Sharon McMurtrie, Jo Skabara

2. Any Conflict of Interest (COI) on the agenda items?

- There were no COIs.

3. Approve minutes of last Board meeting 26.07.23

- The minutes were approved.

4. Financial Report (IF)

- IF had circulated a spreadsheet prior to the meeting.
- Fintry Community Energy (FCE) has received invoices for a lot of repairs recently. Some seem to be in residents' houses which the FDT should not be liable for. IF will ask GC for clarification. One house is in arrears with their fuel payments which accounts a little bit for the discrepancy between the income from heat sales and the bills paid for fuel. This usually evens out over the winter. IM asked for more information about the repair which had been done inside a residence. IF said that the report refers to a leak, but it is not clear where the leak is. It has been made clear to residents that any issues within their homes are their responsibility. However, they may not know where the issue is until Aggregated Micro Power (AMP) has had a look. CR questioned whether AMP have been instructed to make clear to residents that the fault is on their property and so they will be invoiced for the repair. (See Agenda item 6).
- FCE has already paid one invoice to Steve Luker (the project manager) and another one has just been received for £6K. This should be covered by the Scottish Government (SG) but the grant has not been received yet. There is not enough money in the FCE account to cover this so IF requested the money from FDT to cover it until the SG grant is received. The Board agreed.
- A Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) payment is due soon.

5. Financial subgroup report AH (IF GC & KH)

- The financial subgroup met on 16th August to look at Graham's spreadsheet in a bit more detail.
- One question that arose was to decide what percentage of the income the Board would be happy to invest. The suggestion from the subgroup was a 50/50 split this would leave funds available for bigger projects. The Board agreed to this suggestion in principle provided that any investments did not result in money being tied up for years. This split could be changed at any time. DH noted that this had been the preferred option expressed at the community consultation event.
- KH has put together a job description for a financial consultant previously and has now updated it. The current accountants will be asked if they can suggest anyone for this role or know who else to ask. The plan is to have someone in place by the next Annual General Meeting (AGM). Advice will also be sought from Development Trust Association (DTAS), Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) and CIS. A financial adviser would be able to make suggestions about investments and manage them. KH and KM had spoken to a financial group Assets at the DTAS meeting recently and they had offered to look at the job description for a financial consultant and give some advice about who to approach.
- The subgroup also discussed Graham's recommendation to split the role of accountants and auditors. It was agreed that things would remain as they are for this financial year but would look at making a change next year.
- Graham also advised reviewing the FDT's existing finance policy.
- A follow-up meeting was scheduled (See Dates of next meetings)

6. Balgair update (GC)

- GC had circulated a report prior to the meeting.
- SL's work is going well, and he would like to talk through his findings and proposals with the Board at a meeting in October. (See Dates of next meetings).
- There has still been no grant offer letter from SG for SL's work. It could be because the FDT have said that they do not want to rule out retaining and improving the current system. SG claims that this is a change in stance and was not considered when they were justifying the cancellation of the loan and agreeing to the grant for SL. The Board felt that they had always kept this open as an option and more information about the possibility of upgrading the system (e.g., the feasibility of improving the electricity supply) has now become available. As long as a system is in place which provides the residents with heat and hot water, is sustainable and cost effective, it is a bonus if it is low carbon. The Board agreed that it was important for SL to continue his work and the SG should be pushed to award the grant agreed for this. KH and GC had also spoken to Scott (from the office of Evelyn Tweed (ET) MSP for Stirling). He felt it was very poor that the SG was taking so long to send the offer letter. Although the FDT do have the funds to pay for the system to be upgraded this would be spending even more of their money on a small section of the community.
- The expected income from Earlsburn had been noted in GC's report.
- In response to CR's question (see Agenda item 1), GC replied that AMP had been instructed not to carry out repairs on the householders' side of the system, but the location of the fault is not always known when AMP are called out and the FDT may still get charged for the call-out. This is one of the issues that SL has been looking at.

7. Outsourcing IT (KM)

- KH & KM met with Amanda from Illuminate IT for an introductory chat and to hear her plans. There is a need for improved cyber security. The team from Illuminate performed a remote audit of the FDT laptops. The findings and recommendations, including costings, have been circulated. The remote audit highlighted the vulnerability of the system. A big risk to data breach is people working on their own devices using home Wi-Fi. In particular, financial transactions should not be on personal devices. New hardware for those Directors involved in financial transactions would be beneficial. KM proposed a separate meeting to discuss the findings. (See Dates of next meetings)

8. Grants update

a. EE Grants (KM)

- 37 grants have been paid out to a total of £34.5K. 17 have been completed and photos and receipts have been submitted. There is still interest and the scheme is going well. KM asked if there was to be an end date to this round of grants to enable people who have already received a grant to be able to apply again. It was agreed to run this round until the end of March and thereafter keep it in line with the log grants and Fuel Payment grants and run it until the end of March 24.

b. Prep for this winter's Fuel Payment grants with EAS. KH GC

- KH & GC met with Fraser and Christine from Energy Action Scotland (EAS) to run through the process with them. The grants will start again in October until March. KH has amended the agreement slightly and this has been forwarded for review. The cost to the FDT last year was around £22K. KH proposed a similar budget for this year. The Board agreed. EAS will contact the people who benefitted from the grant last year and check that their circumstances have not changed and then will be able to award them the grant without the need for a new application. The grant will receive increased advertising through tabletop notices at the sports club as well as in the newsletter and by leaflets being delivered to households. Information will also be available at the Food Festival. KH asked the Board if the criteria for the grant should be increased (i.e., the level of household income) by 10% to take account of the rise in inflation etc. The Board agreed. KH will contact Fintry Community Council (FCC) to see if they are aware of any families who need help with air fryers, blankets etc.

c. Log grants – 2nd round. Oct – March?

- IM declared a possible COI as his son sells logs. This scheme will run from October to March. The amount which can be claimed per bag will now be £30 (a maximum of two bags per household). KH will put together a list of local suppliers.

9. Next two policies. Approved – sign off.

- The last two policies were approved. The next two will be circulated.

10. Website – update on illustrations KH & KM

- KH & KM had met with the illustrator and felt that he now had a better understanding of what was required. The illustrations are good and although KH and KM had to give a lot of input, progress has been made. KH will circulate the graphics when she gets them, and the next step is to work on the main body of the site.

11. Fintry Sustainable Food Festival (KH & KM)

- The weather looks promising. Forth Environment Link will be there with their smoothie bike, there will be information from Zero Waste Scotland, information from the FDT, recipe cards, Spread the Love competition, a food sustainability quiz, a surplus wheelbarrow. KH asked that all Directors who can help arrive at 12 noon. Tables need to be collected from the Sports Centre, gazebos need collecting and erecting, donations need to be collected.

12. Community Woodland (Fintry Primary School (FPS) outdoor classroom) (ALL)

- KH had circulated a draft email to the Board to be sent to the Headteacher of FPS and asked for input and thoughts so that she can move the issue forward. An email has been sent to FCC but there has not been a reply. The main issue is to clarify who owns the land and to consider if the FDT want to take on ownership of the land or offer assistance with the management of the woodland. In the short term, there are a number of trees which need felling as they are unsafe. The land was offered to FPS but they do not have the funds to maintain the woodland. Stirling Council (SC) had offered a contribution to the cost of the tree surgery. There are still some questions about whether all of the land belonged to the person who gifted it to FPS. The Board agreed that this is a very complicated issue that needs a lot of consideration. Although it is a fantastic resource there are a lot of questions that need answering before any decisions can be made. There is also the complication of whether the FDT are allowed to own a piece of land, but one solution could be to provide funds to a community group who would take on the responsibility for the woodland. This would protect the FDT from any liability. KH completed a survey recently for the Community Woodlands Association and mentioned the woodland issue so they may be able to offer advice.

13. EV charging – Charge Place Scotland (CPS) progress (KH)

- CPS are still looking into the cost for extending the EV charging points and will get back to KH next week.

14. Letter to Minister (KH)

- The letter has been sent. No reply received yet.

15. A.O.B

- Thermal imaging – KH has received a quote from Thermal UK. They can offer three options of varying details and cost. A link has been circulated to the Board. It was agreed that the FDT would offer the basic survey for free and provide information to residents who were interested in a more detailed survey.
- Fruit trees – FH had spoken to Michelle Bennet (FCC) about the possibility of planting more fruit trees along the sides of the Sports Field. FCC felt that would be good and the Board agreed to provide funding.
- IK mentioned the condition and disrepair of the hedge in general and the possibility of improving the whole hedgerow, adding further fruit bushes etc.
- Conservation Volunteers – FH had met with one of the conservation volunteers about the possibility of planting more trees around the village. FH will circulate information about this

Next meetings

- IT meeting - 4th October 7-8 p.m. via Zoom
- Finance sub-group meeting – 4th October 8-9 pm. via Zoom
- Meeting with SL 11th October. Time to be confirmed.
- Board meeting – 25th October, 7.30 p.m. at the Hub