



***Minutes of the Board meeting held on  
25<sup>th</sup> March 2020***

**Present/apologies for absence:**

- **Present:** Luke Emerton (Chair), Iain Frazer (Treasurer), Hugh Edmond, Anne Hislop, David Howell, Iain MacKay, Chris Robinson, Kayt Howell (Manager), Gordon Cowtan (Consultant),
- **Apologies:** None

**I. Welcome to Iain MacKay**

- Luke welcomed Iain to the Board and Iain gave a brief outline of his background as an engineer and commitment to being involved in the community.

**II. Approval of Minutes of last meeting:**

- Approved.

**III. Review action points of previous minutes**

- It was agreed that the action's from the previous Board meeting were all either completed or ongoing with actions being taken forward.

**IV. Financial Report**

- Iain had circulated a spreadsheet prior to the meeting.
- The FDT and Fintry Community Energy (FCE) accounts are as expected at the moment. Costs related to Balgair are still a problem with a couple of outstanding invoices still to be paid however, Energy Saving Trust (EST) has agreed to a holiday period on the loan repayments which will help. A V.A.T. rebate of approximately £4K should be received soon and a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) payment is also due. There will also be some income generated by heat sales. Despite this, Iain asked for £2K to be transferred to the FCE account from the FDT account so that the outstanding invoices can be paid. The Board agreed to this request. Iain hoped that costs would settle down over the summer allowing the account to build up although Gordon pointed out that heat sales would be less over the summer period.

**V. Balgair briefing**

- Gordon had circulated a report prior to the meeting which is attached below.
- One issue which was not included in the report was a build-up of woodchip outside the door to the woodchip store. This is not affecting the operation of the boiler and is not woodchip that has been paid for. The door to the hopper needs repairing and the woodchip needs to be cleared away.

# Balgair Report

## Operational Update

With everything that's been going on, I've been trying to do what we can to make sure that the householders are continuing to get heat and hot water, and any problems with the system are being noted and addressed. I've been in touch with Billy Glass at HWE on a weekly basis, discussing their response to the situation with him. They're trying to carry on with business as usual as far as is possible: office staff are now working from home while the engineers are carrying on as usual though keeping their distance from householders. You'll have seen the communication I sent out a couple of weeks ago to householders.

I've also been in weekly contact with Douglas Young and Paula Barrowman who live at Balgair. Both Douglas and Paula have reported that there have been few issues with the system and that the quality of heat has been good since the boiler was serviced (and since the FCE board meeting last month). Douglas has been taking daily readings of the water temperature in the district heating loop every morning and this has typically been between 75 and 80C.

### Specific Operational Issues

I've only been aware of two specific operational issues that have come up recently –

1. **The temperature in No. 7 not being as high as the householder would like.**
2. **Issues with the hot water in No. 14.**

### Cost Savings

Following the last board meeting, I put together a list of "call-out" charges that I didn't think were valid.

You'll have seen the email from Ken Brady about the payment holiday on the loan at Balgair.

Following the FCE board meeting last month and in the light of coronavirus I've taken the decision to postpone the price rise to householders. It was clear the level of heat had been poor for some weeks in the new year, until the boiler was serviced plus increasing heating costs to vulnerable customers during a global pandemic isn't a good look.

### Longer Term

I haven't heard anything concrete from HWEnergy since we rejected their initial offer. Neither have I heard anything from Angus Biomass since they visited the site some weeks ago although I've contacted them a couple of times.

I'm waiting for the WSP technical report to be completed.

As you know, CARES have declined to meet to discuss options on Balgair. Last week I phoned Ken Brady to set a time for a conference call.

- Ken suggests waiting until the WSP report is complete before we do anything else and decide what we want to do from there.

### (RESERVED BUSINESS)

- The Board discussed Gordon's proposal to delay the price rise to the Balgair residents. It was agreed that this will now not take place until 1<sup>st</sup> June. **ACTION: Gordon to draft a letter outlining the fact that, due to the current situation regarding Coronavirus, the FDT will not be increasing prices until 1<sup>st</sup> June and circulate to Board members for approval.**
- Gordon spoke in more detail about his conversation with Ken Brady (EST).and made two suggestions:
- Although Ken was not keen on meeting with the whole Board, Gordon felt he would be agreeable to meeting one or two of the Directors after the WSP report had been published.
- Gordon felt it would be useful to commission a report into everything that had happened on the Balgair project including the history of the project, the design of the system, the operational issues, the financial situation, potential routes forward and a survey of the Balgair residents. This report could then be used in conversation with Members of Parliament, the Scottish Government and other interested parties. Gordon

had spoken to a member of staff at the Community and Renewables Energy Scheme (CARES) and they may be willing to fund such a report. Chris confirmed that within the industry there is a lack of information regarding certain renewable technologies and that such a report would be beneficial. The Board agreed that this would be a valuable document which may prevent other organisations making similar mistakes. Iain M pointed out that he had very little knowledge of the system and its issues and would like some background information. Luke felt that it would be useful to have some kind of induction process for new Directors as it is not easy to understand all the discussions at first. **ACTIONS: Kayt and Gordon to phone Iain M to provide him with background information about Balgair. Gordon to pursue the possibility of funding from CARES and proceed with the commissioning of the report if funding is secured.**

- Luke asked for more detail about the issues with lack of hot water at one of the homes at Balgair. Gordon explained that the house had been empty for some time prior to the current residents moving in and that damage had been done to parts of the Heat Interface Unit (HIU) by rodents. Although the hot water is working at the moment, the problem is intermittent and the HIU will need to be replaced at some point.
- Iain F wondered about obtaining a meter reading to submit to the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (OFGEM) for the RHI payments under the current situation. Gordon said that an invoice from HWE for woodchip was due soon and they usually include a meter reading. This reading will be used for submission to OFGEM.

#### **VI. Futures**

- Nothing much has changed since the Annual General Meeting (AGM) but Gordon is in the process of putting together a report. It was agreed that there is no urgency with this at the moment and other issues should take priority.

#### **VII. Governance**

- There has been no forward motion with this since the AGM but is one of the areas that Kayt will be working on now with input from Anne. The initial plan is to construct a list of policies which need to be created and begin working on them. It is important that everything is in place before the larger income kicks in.
- Luke reminded the Board that a discussion of additional office bearers had taken place previously and they had agreed a need for a Deputy Chair and a Company Secretary. Anne confirmed that she was happy to stand as Deputy Chair, a vote was taken and the position appointed. Chris asked what the exact role/duties of a Company Secretary are. **ACTION: Kayt to circulate the role and duties of a Company Secretary to the Board.**

#### **VIII. IT plans**

- Kayt and Gordon have been working with a consultant to streamline FDT's IT system. They have made good progress and the consultant has almost completed the work. All files will be stored in the cloud and all Directors will be given a Microsoft mailbox. Kayt and Gordon plan to try and do some work on this each week and will begin by setting up an initial project to add archive documents to. They have also been looking at using the Microsoft Teams Tool. Some in-house training will take place once everything is finalised.

#### **IX. FDT Resilience plans – Covid 19**

- Luke said that the Board had been reviewing the staff sickness policy and Anne has drafted an email to send to Kayt for feedback. Kayt wanted the Board to know that she appreciated the consideration that was being given to her role by Human Resources (HR).
- There was discussion regarding anything that the FDT could do with regard to the Coronavirus pandemic but it was agreed that the Fintry Community Council (FCC) were managing the situation really well and that the FDT should just offer their support to them.

- It was agreed that it would be useful to have a list of tasks that Kayt and Gordon carry out on a regular basis that may need to be done by someone else if they fell ill. **ACTION: Kayt and Gordon to compile a list of essential tasks and useful contacts to circulate to the Board.**

#### **X. Falck - payments**

- Gordon said that information regarding income from the wind turbine is received bi-annually and would usually be received around the end of May. The head office for FALCK is in Milan where there has been a high incidence of case of Corvid 19. It is possible that the information may be delayed. Kayt remarked that FDT has asked on several occasions to be updated monthly instead of bi-annually but this has never happened. **ACTIONS: Gordon to speak to Richard from FALCK to discuss the situation. Chris to look into the possibility of an alternative contact.**

#### **XI. A.O.B.**

- None

#### **Date of next meetings**

- Wednesday April 29<sup>th</sup> 2020 7 p.m.

Thanks were given to Luke for chairing the meeting.

#### **Manager's report prior to Google hangout meeting of 25/03/2020**

##### 1. General –

*Working from home.*

Thank you for agreeing to this - as an old asthmatic, probably a good idea that I do! I will continue to keep the core days of Tuesday Wednesday & Thursday and maintain the 21hrs, though there may be times where I require some flexibility under the current circumstances, to deal with family issues etc.

*Enquiries*

The volume of enquiries has eerily come to a halt, not surprisingly, so that frees up some time. I hope to put this to use for some at home training and research for our IT changeover.

*Admin*

I'm keeping all copies of invoices, and paperwork, hopefully in an ordered fashion at home and **NOT** doing any admin work at HQ.

There will be a backlog of paper post at HQ but nothing important that we won't have digital access to.

2. Bookkeeping – Rather than continually add information to the physical files at HQ, I'm suggesting that we prepare files of bank statements (copied from online banking), any relevant invoices and information into folders to send to Andrew Haslam (Bookkeeper) each month for his input to SAGE.

I will also ask Andrew to forward any outstanding invoices for his work to us by email for payment, rather than leaving them in the 'books'.

3. HR – as discussed with Anne & Iain recently it would be useful support to set up an online meeting with them and myself once a month in the first instance, to check on progress and cover any issues.

Just a note that my current contract ends in six days.

4. IT - Gordon and I have been working through a plan for the requirements and structure which suits FDTs needs. Lots to be done but we are 'meeting' tomorrow to advance the

plans. One of the time-consuming aspects will be clearing out all the 12 years' worth of files and sensibly saving what is needed. Paper files will need to wait.

5. Futures project – Gordon will be able to shed some light on where we are re report etc. While Gordon is focused on Balgair, I may be able to pick up on some of this.

6. Governance – This is where I intend to go back over our decisions and look into next steps. I will be looking at what policies are applicable to the Trust and then working with the Board to develop.

That's it for now, I think. Stay home, stay safe. Kayt