



A meeting of NCDC was held on: Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> June 2022, at 7:30pm, virtually, via Zoom

Present – Bob McGeady (RM - Chair), Alistair Williamson, Bill Manson, Harry Haslam

In Attendance – Charlotte Slater, Iain Davidson,

1. Apologies – Esmée Buchet-Deak

2. Approval of Minute – Minutes of meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2022 were approved by AW and seconded by BM

3. Financial update – BM reported that the finances were still in a good position with nothing out of the ordinary. He wished however, to focus on investment of current funds to gain best returns balanced with accessibility. (His research so far consistently suggested that the best bank account was Al Rayan but, due to the fact that it operated under Shariah Law, he wished to ascertain if any directors objected to this. By operating in this way, the bank cannot pay interest but, instead, pays a profit share which generally works out around 2.5%).

BM recommended investing NCDC money in tranches of approximately £85,000 each into various types of investment to create such a balance. There was some discussion around tying up substantial funds with major projects being proposed (such as Old Urafirth School) but those present agreed that, as funding would be sought for these, it was unlikely to have a major impact. It was suggested that 2 tranches of between 1 and 2 year fixed-term investments be made alongside 2 instant access accounts. There was also concern expressed about the high probability of an upcoming recession being the wrong time to move from known banks to lesser known. BM assured that Al Rayan was working under the same protections as other UK banks. Some directors suggested that this was a good time to buy into Investment Trusts as the price was low while others felt it was risky as they were still going down. It was agreed that BM and RM take the proposals forward and to review on a quarterly basis.

**Action: BM, RM, CS & ID to take forward investment proposals**

4. Hillswick shop update - ID reported that the shop was, as mentioned at last update, struggling with staff shortages and that he had been helping to cover shifts so could say from personal experience that the shop was busy with both locals and tourists. A meeting had been set for later that week to discuss staff recruitment and the possibility of reducing opening hours

5. Nortenergy update - HH reported that enquiries were starting to drop as people were feeling the pinch of the cost-of-living crisis but progress was still being made with creation of additional hub and they were beginning to look into the potential of international markets.

Some directors suggested that trade could actually pick up as people saw a need to grow their own food to combat ever-increasing prices

6. Growing Local Project – There were no Growing Local staff available to report due to illness

7. Consultation “Drop-In” Days – CS reported that the first 3 had been held with limited turnout but still some good ideas being put forward, particularly from Urafirth School pupils who felt that the playpark(s) in the area needed improving/upgrading. There had also been renewed calls for a cycle/walking path from Urafirth houses through to Hillswick Shop, taking in the school. This had been proposed a few years ago with land ownership being cited as the biggest obstacle. However, with Active Travel now high on council and government agendas, it was suggested that this may be worth revisiting. It was suggested that, if there were people who wished to pursue the project, then NCDC could offer help to facilitate rather than take on the project themselves. There had also been suggestions of a revival of events for the over-60s and, while it was agreed that this was a good idea, it was commented that, like everything else, volunteers were the key. Other ideas included the provision of a Community Fridge and this was built on with the idea of a freezer being installed at Bruckland in conjunction with cool boxes in local bus stops.

RM addressed the issue of “Consultation Fatigue” and put forward the idea that, when the draft Development Plan was ready, that directors could produce a video (possibly a series on different topics) which could be made available online, linked to an online survey.

8. Old Urafirth School Project – It was reported that a meeting had been held between RM, CS, ID and Tracey-Ann Anderson and Mike Taylor of SIC to discuss the next steps. CS had also met with Ana Arnett who will be our liaison with SIC. The outcome of these meetings was that the next step should be to write a Business Plan for the project as soon as possible. However, RM would prefer to meet with planners first to gauge their thoughts on proposals. RM also keen to engage Suzanne Malcolmson asap to draft ideas while BM suggested that quotes should be sought from other architects too. It was agreed that SCBF should be approached for funding for these initial costs. It was proposed that Phase 1 of the project be NCDC Office; Meeting Room and Single-Person housing units, while Phase 2 would concentrate on the outside grounds. A meeting to discuss the project was to be held with Paul Harrington (SLF) and Fiona Stirling (HIE) on July 6<sup>th</sup>, to which all directors were invited.

**Action: ID to approach SCBF; CS to arrange meeting with SIC Planners**

9. Matters Arising – Nothing further

11. AOCB – ID reported that he had been approached by Ruth Fisher to request that NCDC manage an Airbnb self-catering property for her in the same way as they did, the Weaving Shed. It was suggested that it would depend if staff were willing to take on the additional work. BM suggested a year’s trial.

CS reported that she had been approached by Ollaberry and Sullom Hall committees with a view to NCDC helping to administer, for the former, a major funding application and, for the latter, Secretarial Duties. It was suggested that a rate of £25 per hour be applied. There was some discussion around whether this service could be applied to other halls/organisations as well.

**Action: ID and CS to respond to respective individuals/groups**

12. Date of Next Meeting – 1<sup>st</sup> August 2022

Meeting ended: 20:26

