

Wigtown & Bladnoch Community Initiative

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ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2022

Held at Machars Action, Wigtown

At 5.00 pm on Wednesday 21 September 2022

PRESENT: Andrew Wilson*, Kevin Witt*, Nick Walker*, Matt Kitson*, Sarah Nyland*, Anne Dunford, Les Dunford, Ian Wood, Laura Mustian, Robin Richmond, Ada Montgomery
Associate Member: Jak Kane*

*Directors

APOLOGIES: Roselle Stead, Jim Tennant, Maggie Kelly, Tim Cowan, Richard Draper, Gill Hay, Sue Swift, Jonathan Wood.

Minutes of AGM 2021 (21.02.2022) accepted.

Convenor's Report:

Nick welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted it was quorate. He expressed regret over the long delays which have beset the Bunkhouse project; principally due to COVID and Scottish Water connection delays. However on Friday 23.9.2022, the Booktown Bunkhouse welcomes its first guests. As reported at the official opening, despite setbacks the project remained within budget. Nick thanked all members, directors, and funders who have supported W&BCI over this time.

The large family flat has been occupied for some months now, and it is proving an excellent family home. Nick showed a short video (available here: youtu.be/TxerN-JitsU) organised by South of Scotland Community Housing (a charity which assisted with housing needs assessment, practical details related to becoming a social landlord, and housing related fund-raising) in which the tenant played a role, expressing their family's gratitude for the spacious, high quality accommodation they now enjoy. The film was partly for SoSCH to enter W&BCI for the SURF awards 2022 (which recognise community regeneration projects across Scotland). Cleaning staff have been recruited for the bunkhouse and day to day management of its running (including payroll) has been contracted to Machars Action. This fulfils part of W&BCI's role to provide not only accommodation but also to support local employment.

The letting of the small accessible flat is on going. The first prospective tenant changed their mind, and then it was agreed to delay advertising until people could actually view the flat. Since then, three more prospective tenants have been offered other accommodation while waiting. The Board will decide the best way to proceed in the coming weeks.

Possible future projects were discussed, and this conversation continued informally after the business of the meeting was completed. In addition, to continuing with community right to buy processes for the old showfield, there are several possibilities including: The Plough, the Friends' (Quakers') Meeting House, and the Church Hall. There is also interest in the bowling green and clubhouse, which are part of Wigtown Common Good and therefore are owned by D&G Council. Matt Kitson has been assisting the Bowling Club with consultations, etc. about the community taking a long lease or ownership of the bowling green, and W&BCI could have a significant role in the project if it proceeds; this could include reprovision of the clubhouse which is in a dire state, but which could become a multi-use facility.

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Nick ended his report by announcing his retirement as Convenor and from the Board now that the bunkhouse project is complete and coinciding with his leaving the area. He thanked fellow Directors, Matt Kitson, Kevin Witt, Sarah Nyland and Jak Kane, and Andrew Wilson who also now retires, as well as Roselle Stead and Robin Richmond who retired during the year.

Financial Accounts for year ended 28.2.2022:

Final accounts are still with the Accountants, Montpellier. Jak Kane, Treasurer, presented draft accounts for the year which shows a closing balance of £60,644. In the reporting year, £334,323 were spent. Jak noted that we were fortunate not to have been penalised by rising building material costs, mainly due to tight contracting by McGowan Miller, our quantity surveyor; this allowed the former Bank of Scotland building project to come in within budget, despite a lengthy delay with Scottish Water. Future trading income will be impacted by significant architectural issues which mean that a four berth bunk room has space for only two bunk beds; increased energy prices will affect profitability also, but the business plan still appears workable.

Questions:

Should we attempt to win back costs from Scottish Water and Hazel Smith (Architect)?

The Board can consider options, and it is likely worthwhile to chase Scottish Water, though with limited prospect of success. Legal costs of pursuing both are expected to be significant, and to outweigh the benefits of action. However raising a concern with the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland could be a reasonable course of action, to reflect the issues and the Architect's lack of acknowledgment of responsibility, even without much prospect of compensation. The issue was raised with the Architect on several occasions and additional fees linked to the drawn out nature of the project were reduced as a result.

Election of Directors:

Current elected Directors are Nick Walker (convenor), Andrew Wilson, Matt Kitson, Kevin Witt and Sarah Nyland (Co. Sec.). *Robin Richmond retired during summer 2022 and Roselle Stead retired shortly before the AGM.* Nick Walker and Andrew Wilson retire at this AGM.

Jake Kane (treasurer) is an appointed Director, put forward by Wigtown Community Council.

Nominations for members to become directors were sought. Ada Montgomery was nominated, and elected. There were no other nominations. The new Board of Directors is therefore: Kevin Witt, Sarah Nyland, Matt Kitson and Ada Montgomery as elected directors, and CC appointed director, Jak Kane.

Other business:

Bunkhouse garden: interest has been expressed by various people in having allotments; in addition, the Heritage Apple Project and an edible gardening project are keen. Tenants are keen on some garden area too. A working bee will be held over the weekend of 22-23.10.2022 to clear up the garden, after which division and occupation can take place, being aware of the need for privacy and security of tenancies and neighbours.

Next AGM:

August/September 2023, at date to be confirmed.