

**URRAS OIGHREACHD GHABHSAINN AGM  
HELD ON 29 OCTOBER 2020 AT 7.30 PM VIA ZOOM**

**Directors Present:** Agnes Rennie (Chair), Carola Bell, Donald S Macleod, James Macleod, Donald Macsween, Alasdair Smith, Johanna Furey, Agnes Macdonald, Murdo Macritchie

Calum Macdonald, CIB Services

Agnes Rennie welcomed all to the meeting and provided an overview of the evening's format. The sidebar will be used for questions and raise your hand using the Chat function which will be monitored by Fiona Rennie.

**Directors' Nomination Forms: 6**

**Forms of Proxy: 1**

**Participants: 30**

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Murdanie Macleod (Director), Colin Maclean (Director), Donald Macdonald (Borve), Lisa Maclean (Chief Executive UOG)

**2. Minutes of AGM 7 November 2019 and Matters Arising**

The minutes of the 2019 AGM were approved by David Green and seconded by Donald S Macleod.

**3. Chairperson's Report**

Good evening to you all. Whilst hosting this event digitally presented a new challenge, online platforms such as Zoom have benefitted many different aspects of our lives over the course of this unusual year. Every cloud has a silver lining as they say, and tonight's is that we have been able to gather for this meeting without leaving the comfort of our own homes or wherever folk happen to be at the moment, unfortunately, it also means that we will not be able to share with you all the stalls usually set up by staff with information about projects. However, I'm pleased to say that it has not prevented us from having a guest speaker and I look forward to introducing our speaker, Philip Revell, in the second part of the evening. I'd also like to take this opportunity to let you know that this year, we are missing the presence of Lisa Maclean, our Chief Executive. Lisa is currently on sick leave as she recovers from back surgery and I'm sure you will all join me in wishing her a very speedy recovery.

I reported this time last year that the terrible fire which destroyed the Business Centre had tested the Urras in many ways and had demonstrated the resilience of the organisation and our people. Little did I know what was ahead of us in 2020, but once again I am proud to be part of this organisation that's been able to play such a key role in working with the community to ensure the continuation of key services and provide other support, that only became necessary as a result of the lockdown. It's worth noting that many of the Trusts in the community land sector were recognised as anchor organisations playing a key role in supporting their communities since last March and Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn has been recognised more than once for the part it has played.

There is no doubt that one reason the Urras has been able to continue working so effectively has been the confidence created by having access to an independent revenue source. This income, as you all know, is mostly generated by the wind energy project in Ballantrushal and we have been pleased that not only have we earned an income from the turbines, we have also contributed to the continuing challenge to find ways to counter carbon emissions and fight climate change. However, we are not able to generate at the moment due to the failure of the cable across the Minch that connects to the national grid. SSE has stated that this is likely to take up to 12 months to be operational again. This is a huge blow to UOG and all the other community energy companies in Lewis and Harris. In the short term I must be honest and say that we are not clear yet what impact this might have on the Community Investment Fund which has benefitted so much from wind generated revenues. I am pleased that throughout all this time the core work of providing crofting administration and managing estate business has carried on, almost unhindered, due to the commitment of Urras staff even though they have all been working from home.”

I would like to thank James Macleod and Donald Macleod for their years of assistance to Urras Oighreachd Ghabsainn. I want to give a very heart-felt thanks to two trustees who retire tonight – James as a founder member of the steering committee, and Donald as a member of the Community Council at the time. Both have also been Trustees since the establishment of the Trust in 2005. They have shown their support in too many ways to list here. We could not have done this without you both and we thank you.

We look forward to being able to return to our own office space in due course, and look forward very much to welcoming all our members, as well as the wider community, to visit us. I also hope very much that we may be able to hold next year’s AGM in the new building. For now I’d like to express my sincere thanks to all staff who although working from home and through great uncertainty, have ensured that the Urras core activities have continued unhindered. I’d also like to thank Board colleagues who have worked to support staff and have participated enthusiastically in Zoom meetings.

Thank you of course to all of you for attending tonight’s meeting.

#### **4. Report on the Director’s Report and Audited Financial Statements for the period ended 30 September 2019.**

4.1 Calum Macdonald, CIB Services spoke to the report and the continuing development of the Trust. This set of accounts is a very positive historical document, with a year-end income of £372,000 compared to last year’s total £279,219. Consequently, total funds carried forward are £2.8 million. The income continues to grow with the increased income from project management and rental income.

4.2 Expenditure – an increase of up to £361k reflects the increased investment in staff by the organisation, with employee numbers rising from 10 to 13, delivering activities in the community and investing back into the community and services. The issue with the turbines will bring its own challenges, nonetheless, going forward, we are looking at a historical statement of September 2019 and it is very positive.

4.3 Balance Sheet – total funds of the Trust are £2.8 million. The assets can be divided into 3 main areas. **Tangible Assets** – over £618k, that again, primarily reflects the original purchase of the land by the Trust, which was just over £600k back at the point of the buyout. **Investments** reflect 2 separate strands of investment – around £700,000 investment in subsidiaries of the Trust and £600,000 reflects investments in more liquid

assets in terms of cash held by fund managers. **Current Assets Cash at Bank** is £671,000. The net assets are strong and the balance is there between the land and investment in more liquid resources, and the most liquid of all is cash. Good balance of assets held in that balance sheet and a very positive statement of the trust's activities for that year.

4.4 As part of our role as auditors, we are tasked to give a report as to the compliance of various and ever-increasing legislation which the Trust faces. To summarise, we gave a clean audit report to the organisation's finances and to the systems that they use.

4.5 Calum was thanked for his report and for assistance and support to the Urras through the year.

#### **5. Level of Membership Fee for 2020/21**

It was proposed that the fee remains at £1 and this was agreed by all present.

#### **6. Appointment of Auditors**

It was proposed that CIB Services be reappointed as auditors of the Company and this was agreed by all present.

#### **7. Election of Directors**

We have two retirements - James Macleod and Donald S Macleod, to whom we are very grateful for their support over the years. Two directors are required to resign as part of the usual rotation (Colin Maclean and Murdanie Macleod) - both submitted nomination papers and were renominated. Nomination forms were also received from Johanna Furey, Agnes Macdonald, Donald Macsween and Murdo Macritchie and all were fully elected to the Board, without the need for an election.

This concluded the formal business of the AGM.

Opening the second part of the meeting, Neil Mackinnon began by outlining the new developments associated with the replacement Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn building. Tenders were returned in September, he explained, and construction on the new building is forecast to begin in late November of this year, with the building envisaged to be completed by July 2021 (assuming no lockdowns are required in the future). Neil later discussed the impact of the loss associated with the SSE cable failure.

Subsequently, Operations Manager Christine Amos gave a round-up of the projects carried out by Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn staff throughout the year including: **JMT Transition Programme, LED Project, Covid Statistics, House Numbering Scheme, Tourism, Plough, Community Investment Fund.**

**Agnes Rennie, Chairperson, then introduced Philip Revell as guest speaker.** Philip is Board Convener of Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SCCAN) and newly appointed Chair of Community Energy Scotland. He gave a talk on the subjects of climate change and community resilience in the face of Covid-19.