



Schoolhouse
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Report to February 2014 AGM by NUDC Chair – Robert Fraser

Directors of NUDC

The current Directors of NUDC are; Ada Campbell, Archie Campbell, George Jackson, Robert Fraser (Chair), Mustapha Hocine, Iain MacPhail, and Andrew Ross.

Uisdean Robertson and Neil Beaton have stood down as Directors. Iain MacPhail is standing down as a Director. Directors who have stood down are eligible for re-election at the AGM.

NUDC constitution allows for a maximum of 10 Directors.

Acknowledgements

Fellow Directors – The past year has again been very challenging but despite this NUDC has made great progress on a number of projects. Thanks to all Directors who have made a substantial contribution to the work of Company in the past year. All the Directors give their own time on a volunteer basis in the hope of making North Uist a more vibrant and prosperous place to live.

Councillors Uisdean Robertson and Neil Beaton – As Directors of NUDC both Councillors were excluded from voting on important North Uist issues in the Council Chamber in Stornoway due to potential conflict of interests. Both Councillors have stood down as Directors of NUDC as they believe that this gives them the best opportunity to represent the interests of the people of North Uist. Both Councillors attend the Directors meeting to offer advice and support.

Development Workers, Donna Matheson and Alastair MacLeod - Donna and Alastair have made a very significant contribution to the work of the company over the past year. Without their efforts we would not have made such good progress. Thanks to both of them.

CnES - Thanks to CnES for making the services of the North Uist Community Co-ordinator available. Special thanks to Alison Cropper who has provided considerable support on the Wind Turbine and the Udal Project.

Community Energy Scotland – Without the help and financial assistance from Community Energy Scotland we would have not been able to progress the Wind Turbine Project. Special thanks to Kirsten MacDonald, Mark Hull, Kathleen MacDonald and Dr Colin Anderson.

Highland and Islands Enterprise – HIE have provided financial support which allowed NUDC to employ our Development Workers over the past year. Special thanks to Joanna Peteranna in the HIE office in Benbecula.



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CARES – Funding Support from the Scottish Governments Community and Renewable Energy Scheme has been essential in progressing our Community Wind Turbine Project. Without this funding and the support of the CARES officers we could not have progressed with this project.

North Uist Community Council – Thanks for their continuing support. NUCC were the applicant for our Planning application. This resulted in a saving of 50% of the application fee.

North Uist Estate and Claddach and Claddach Illery Township – Thanks for their co-operation and support and their willingness to make the land available for the Wind Turbine Project.

Community and Members – Thanks for all the support from members and the community.

Web Site and Face Book

North Uist Development Company now has its own web site and face book page. The pages are regularly updated. For more information on the work of the Development Company please follow these links;

<http://www.isleofnorthuist.com/>

<https://www.facebook.com/isleofnorthuist>

Andrew Ross and Ada Campbell (NUDC Directors) have created the sites and keeps them updated. Big thanks to both Ada and Andrew.

North Uist Development Company (Trading) Ltd.

NUDC has formed North Uist Development Company (Trading) Ltd. All business transactions will be processed through the trading company. The formation of the trading company will allow NUDC to reclaim VAT on the turbine project. The Directors of NUDC (Trading) are Archie Campbell, Ada Campbell, Robert Fraser, George Jackson, Uisdean Robertson and Andrew Ross. The company is in effect dormant at this time.

Membership

Our membership drive has been a huge success. We now have 665 members and 43 supporters who are not resident. This level of support, approximately 50% of those eligible to join) is fantastic and is a great help when we go looking for funding and support from agency bodies. There are very few community groups in Scotland who can demonstrate this level of support. Very special thanks to Director George Jackson who has visited many homes to explain the work of NUDC and to seek support.



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Projects

Development Plan – The development 2012 - 2016 development plan remains current. The plan should be updated towards the end of 2014. Members are asked to suggest revisions or additions to the Development Plan.

Community Turbine Project

The key purpose of this project is to generate income to create a fund which will be used for the benefit of those living in North Uist. We will harness one of the best wind resources in Western Europe and will sell "green" electricity onto the National Grid.

Directors, Donna and Alastair and the team at Community Energy Scotland have worked very hard over the last year to make this important project a reality. The biggest obstruction to the development has been the MoD who continue to claim that the turbines will cause interference on both Air Defence and Range Control Radar. The MoD advised NUDC in 2010 that they would not object to a wind turbine development on the proposed site. The Comhairle Councillors approved our turbine planning application by a vote of 9 votes to 4. Unfortunately the Scottish Ministers called in the application and they will now determine the planning application. The outcome of the "call in" will not be known until April at the earliest. As a result of the "call in" we were unable to secure the current Feed in Tariff level. The Scottish Ministers decision has resulted in a loss of £1.33m to the community of North Uist over the 20 year life of the development. Latest financial figures provided by Community Energy Scotland show that the project is still profitable with an annual income of £203,000 in years 1 to 15 and £476,000 in years 15 to 20.

The success of this important project is very much in the balance. We would ask everyone who has an interest in North Uist and its people to write to Derek MacKay, Scottish Minister for Local Government and Planning urging him to approve this application. We also look for support from Alasdair Allan MSP and Angus Brendan MP. It is essential that this project succeeds. Derek MacKay's Contact details are; Mr Derek MacKay, Minister for Local Government and Planning, St Andrews House, Regent Road, Edinburgh. EH1 3DG

The Directors are also considering the option of down-rating the project to 1.5MW. This, if allowed by OFGEM, would result in an improved return as the project would qualify for a higher "Feed in Tariff" rate. The above income figures are based on the first turbine running at full capacity and the second down-rated to 600kW.



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Lease of Land. NUDC now have a signed "Options Agreement" and a "Draft Lease" with North Uist Estate.

Turbine Funding. We have had initial discussions with a number of banks and funders. A number of banks have shown some enthusiasm for supporting our project. We cannot progress this until we have secured planning approval.

Delivery Programme. The delays in the planning process now mean that it is unlikely that the turbines will be erected before March 2015.

Distribution of Funds. We have commenced work on options for setting fair and robust criteria for the distribution of funds from the Wind Turbine Project. This work has been put on hold until the outcome of the planning application has been determined.

Kite Surfing

We had been hoping to work with ExPix , an extreme and action sports media company, to develop a major Kite Surfing event in North Uist. We were unable to agree to the terms and conditions as proposed by Ex-Pix. We have had discussions with the BKSA and initially they were very enthusiastic about developing an event in Uist. Unfortunately the BKSA no longer wish to be involved with a North Uist event. Our Development Workers are in touch with a couple of islanders who are keen to return home and develop a Kite Surfing School. We hope that progress will be made on this in the coming year.

Bayhead Office

Our Bayhead Office provides a home for our development workers.

We rent a room to a hair dressing business. We are seeking a tenant for the other room which has become available.

The public areas are regularly used by a number of groups.

The local doctor provides a local surgery every two weeks. This provides an important local service which was lost when the Tigh Ceilidh was closed. Neither the Health Board nor Lochmaddy Surgery make any contribution to the building running costs. This is disappointing as NUDC must fund the lease and running costs for the building. Until the turbine project is operational NUDC have no income other than grant funding for specific projects. Concern has been raised about access to the Doctors Surgery. While NUDC would very much like to improve the access we have no funds to carry out these expensive works.



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Currently the building is leased from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. It is in poor condition and NUDC are unable to raise grant money to pay for repairs and upgrading due to the lease period. We have been in contact with CnES and expressed an interest in purchasing the building. CnES will not consider this until after they have agreed the design of the new North Uist School.

Udal

This is a fascinating project and one which NUDC is very pleased to be involved with. The collection is in itself very important and we are keen to see this brought back to North Uist. Udal charts 5000 years of climate change and can demonstrate how man has adapted to these changes. NUDC are part of a group who are looking at developing an Environmental and Climate Change Centre around the Udal Collection. Already there are a number of Universities and Government Agencies who have shown an interest in this potential development. Councillor Uisdean Robertson with the assistant of the Comhairle's Archaeologist Deborah Anderson, Caitriona MacCuish and Alison Cropper have put a lot of work in bringing this potential project to this exciting stage. HIE have provided the financial support to run project development workshops in Edinburgh and Uist. The target is to have this project constructed by 2019. I strongly believe that for this project to become a reality it must be driven by the community of North Uist. NUDC are very keen to work with other groups in North Uist to ensure that this project becomes a reality.

Lochmaddy Hospital Development

This is another great opportunity for North Uist. From the initial idea of redeveloping a derelict building there is now the possibility of expanding the art courses at Taigh Chearsabhaigh to provide spaces for 60 to 75 students. In addition Gaelic courses would be offered during the student holiday period. This would be fantastic for North Uist and would provide many full time job opportunities. NUDC are pleased to be supporting the Ceum Air Adhart. Alastair and Donna have put a lot of work into supporting this group.

Assistance to Other Community Groups

In the past year NUDC have provided assistance to the following community groups.

- Old Lochmaddy Hospital Development Group.
- Grimsay Community Association



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Development Worker Assistance

We appointed Donna Matheson and Alastair MacLeod to the role of Development Worker in March last year. Donna works Tuesday to Thursday and Alastair works Thursday and Friday. The post is funded through HIE's CAM project .

HIE have recently confirmed their commitment to support the work of NUDC through CAM for a further 3 years. Initially there is funding to extend our Development Workers Contracts for 15 months. NUDC are very grateful for the support from HIE.

Robert Fraser 19 February 2014