Report to February 2015 AGM by NUDC Chair – Robert Fraser

**Directors of NUDC**

There are currently 9 Directors of NUDC. The current Directors (date of appointment) are: Ada Campbell (2011), Mustapha Hocine (2011), George Jackson (2010/2013), Robert Fraser (Chair)(2010/2013), Raghnall MacIain (2014), Catherine MacLeod (2014), John MacDonald (2014), Jean Archer (2014), Philp Harding (mid-2014).

Archie Campbell, Emma MacKay and Andrew Ross stood down as Directors during the past year. A third of the Directors are required to stand down at the AGM. Ada Campbell and Mustapha and Philp Harding will stand down at the 2015 AGM.

Directors who have stood down are eligible for re-election at the AGM.

The current 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 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.

Finance – The Directors thank Ada Campbell for her work as Treasurer and Secretary of the Company. As well as dealing with day to day financial matters, Ada provides financial updates at every Directors meeting, carries out all the Companies House adjustments and liaises with our accountant. We all appreciate that this is a lot of work and are very grateful that Ada carries out this work for the company.

CnES Councillors Uisdean Robertson and Neil Beaton – Both Councillors attend the Directors meeting to offer advice and support. I thank them for their continuing support.

Archie Campbell – Special thanks to Archie who has recently stood down as Councillor. Archie was one of the founding members of NUDC and has over the last year provided support and advice as CnES Councillor.

Development Workers, Donna Matheson, Alastair MacLeod and Andrew Ross – All three people have made a very significant contribution to the work of the company over the past year. Donna moved to Ness in November. The Directors presented Donna with a small gift to thank her for the great contribution to the work of the Company. We welcome Andrew to the post left vacant by Donna.

CnES - Thanks to CnES for making available the services of Alison Cropper, Regeneration Officer. Special thanks to Alison, who has provided considerable support on the Wind Turbine and the Udal Project. Thanks also to CnES and our local councillors for recent ward funding allocation to assist NUDC in our move from Bayhead to Claddach Kirkibost Centre.

Community Energy Scotland – Without the help from Community Energy Scotland we would have not been able to progress the Wind Turbine Project. Special thanks to Kirsten MacDonald and Kathleen MacDonald.

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.

CARES – Funding Support from the Scottish Government’s 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. Murdo Murray of Local Energy Scotland who administer this fund has provided support and advice throughout the year.

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

**Website and Facebook**

The web pages are regularly updated by Andrew. For more information on the work of the Development Company please follow these links;

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

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

Big thanks to Andrew for keeping the site updated.

**North Uist Development Company (Trading) Ltd.**

All business transactions are processed through the trading company. The trading company was set up on the basis that NUDC would be developing the turbine project. Consideration may have to be given to winding up this Company. The Directors of NUDC (Trading) are Ada Campbell, Robert Fraser, George Jackson and Andrew Ross. Copies of the Company’s Accounts are available at NUDC’s office.

**Membership**

Our membership drive has been a huge success. We now have 693 members and 56 supporters (the membership category for those who are not resident in the HS6 area). Very special thanks to Director George Jackson who continues to seek new members.

**Projects**

**Development Plan –** The development 2012 - 2016 development plan remains current. The Directors have recently met and agreed on revisions to the development plan. These draft revisions will be posted on the website for comment by members. Members are asked to suggest revisions or additions to the Development Plan.

**Community Turbine Project**

The Directors were bitterly disappointed to have our planning application, which had been approved by CnES, refused by the Scottish Government. The decision, made by Derek MacKay the then Minister for Local Government and Planning and now Minister for Transport and Islands has cost the community of North Uist over £6m over the next 20 years.

Following the Planning Reporters Hearing which was held in Benbecula on the 3rd of June 2015, the Directors were shocked by this decision, which was not issued until the 9th October 2015. At the hearing Shane Savage of Wind Farm Aviation Consultants robustly defended our planning application and it seemed inconceivable that the Reporter could do anything other than approve the application. I was very concerned to learn that the only record of the hearing was the Reporter’s own private notes.

Unfortunately NUDC were not in a position to contest the refusal. There is no appeal process other than taking Court action. NUDC does not have the required funds to raise a court action. I believe that the lack of an appeals procedure demonstrates a significant failure of the Scottish Government’s Planning System. At the end of the day the success or failure of our Planning Application lay in the hands of one individual who has no expertise in radar issues.

NUDC are determined to find a way of exploiting the natural energy resources which exist in and around North Uist for the good of those who live and work on the Island. We still hope that we will be able to make use of the 1.8Mw of firm grid capacity which NUDC holds. In November the Directors met with Alasdair MacLeod, Chair of the Sustainable Development Committee and Calum Iain MacIver, Director of Development at CnES. It was agreed that a steering group would be set up to look at renewable energy opportunities in Uist and a study would be commissioned to identify these opportunities. CnES have made funds available for the study and tenders have been invited. These tenders are currently been evaluated and we hope that a suitably qualified consultant will soon be appointed. We expect that the study will be complete in early summer.

**Kitesurfing**

NUDC has the view that there is potential to develop kitesurfing in North Uist, and that there would be an economic benefit from doing so. Kitesurfers who have visited, including an organised group which NUDC coordinated a few years ago, have been very impressed with the wind resource and the beach locations we have to offer. NUDC is to work with Outer Hebrides Tourism to develop a kitesurfing section on visitouterhebrides.co.uk. Hopefully this will be a first step in driving further interest.

**Bayhead Office**

NUDC Directors remain bitterly disappointed that CnES chose to ignore our request to retain the former Head Teachers House as part of the redevelopment of the school campus at Bayhead. If serious consideration had been given to retaining the building at an early stage in the design process we are convinced that this could have been achieved at no additional cost to the school project.

The loss of this building is a significant loss to the community on the west side. The strength of feeling was demonstrated by the large number of people who turned up to the meeting between NUDC and CnES’s Director of Finance and their Asset Manager.

**Udal and Hebrides Archaeological and Environmental Research Centre (HAERC)**

This is a fascinating project and NUDC are pleased to be involved. 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 Directors have recently contributed to the community research being carried out by EKOS. CnES recently appointed EKOS, an economic and social research consultancy, to carry out a feasibility study looking at the potential of developing a HAERC. NUDC encouraged EKOS to carry out public consultation. We are pleased that these open meeting were carried out allowing all members of the community to express their views. We look forward to the publication of the EKOS study.

NUDC continue to ask questions of CnES regarding the appointment of the Assistant Archaeological for the Udal project. CnES have advised that this post will be based in Uist. We look forward to the appointment of the Uist based Archaeologist.

**Lochmaddy Hospital Development**

This project has the potential to provide considerable economic benefit to the Lochmaddy area and North Uist as a whole, as well as providing enhanced community facilities and spin-off benefits for local people. The Lochmaddy Hospital Redevelopment Steering Group estimates that this project could by itself increase the population of North Uist by 5 per cent. The Group has recently issued a tender for a “Feasibility Study for Future Use of Lochmaddy Hospital Site”. The Steering Group, chaired by Philip Harding and supported by our development officers have made great progress with this project and should be congratulated on securing funding to allow the Feasibility to be carried out. We look forward to the outcome of the study.

**Ben Lee Walk**

This project is opening up a fascinating and beautiful part of North Uist for walkers. NUDC is working with Western Isles Support for the Environment (WISE), who have enlisted the support of a group from Liniclate School to build 40 metres of boardwalk. It is intended that this part of the project will be complete for Easter. Funding for the boardwalk has come from North Uist Community Council, Ward Funding and WISE. The next stage of the project is to look at funding for signage, a car park and a brochure.

**Mountain Bike Track**

A new idea for the Development Company is the potential creation of a mountain bike course in North Uist. Aiming to provide a facility for a new generation of off-road cyclists in Uist, inspired by the success of South Uist cyclist Kerry MacPhee, the Development Company is looking for people to come forward from the community and help take this project forward.

**Healing Wells Project**

This project will aim to identify and provide interpretation on some of the many healing wells in North Uist. A number of these are identified in *The Healing Wells of the Western Isles* by Finlay MacLeod, and have also been documented by Erskine Beveridge and Alexander Carmichael, but their special qualities and often even their locations are unknown to many people nowadays.

**Geòla Bheàrnaraigh**

NUDC is supporting a community group in Berneray which is purchasing a specially-designed skiff kit and working together to build and then row the boat. The benefits of the project include reviving traditional skills, combatting winter isolation, improving health and fitness, promoting team sports and attracting more visitors to the area. The kit for the build is expected to arrive from the mainland any day now, and NUDC has assisted the group in applying for ward funding to enable the build to get underway.

**Assistance to Other Community Groups**

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

* Grimsay Community Association

**Office**

The closure of the Bayhead Schoolhouse required us to find new office premises. We are very pleased that we have been able to rent space from Urachadh Uibhist at the Claddach Kirkibost Centre.

**Development Worker Assistance**

This post is funded through HIE’s CAM project. The single post is staffed on a job share basis with Andrew Ross working Monday to Wednesday and Alastair MacLeod working Thursday and Friday.

Our current funding expires in June 2015 however HIE undertook to support the work of NUDC until January 2017. We are in discussion with HIE and hope to secure further funds to allow NUDC to provide Development Worker assistance beyond June. NUDC are very grateful for the support from HIE.

Robert Fraser 15 February 2015