

Leadhills Community Company Limited

Annual General Meeting 2021

Thursday 25th March

Attendees:

Company Directors - John Ralph *Chair* [JR] Luc Smith *Treasurer* [LS] Lewis Whitfield [LW]
Robert Campbell [RC] Steve Johnstone [SJ] Alison White [AW]
John Weatherby [JW]

Company Members - Angela Ralph Gerard Godfrey Amanda Davis [AD]
John Currall Nikki Currall

Guests - Andrew Lord Hopetoun [AH]
Donald Noble [DN]

Apologies:

Rachel Campbell (proxy vote to Rab Campbell)

Carsten Kressel (joins for last few minutes)

Meeting started 19:37

Contents:

JR opens meeting with brief explanation of agenda.

- Previous AGM minutes
- Chairs Report from John Ralph
- Finance Report from Luc Smith
- Voting of 3x new directors [Stephen Johnstone, Robert Campbell, and John Ralph]
- Open discussion on company's current and planned projects with time for any questions

JR explained that we do not yet have access to the minutes of last years AGM from the previous board. Apologies were given for this and an update will be released as and when we receive the minutes.

Chairs Report from John Ralph

As of today the LCCL has 53 members of whom 5 are associates as they are not resident in Leadhills. At the AGM in January last year we had 56 members so we are holding steady. At the 2020 AGM a new Board of directors were elected with Lewis Whitfield as Chair. Three of us are nominated for election or re-election later in this meeting. Carsten Kressel had previously been co-opted and he was again co-opted when the Board met, as was I. Rab Campbell was also co-opted later in the year in order to retain continuity and context with the projects inherited from the previous board.

I would like to thank the members who have made donations when they paid their subscriptions. I would especially like to thank all of the directors who put in time and effort to support the evolution of the Company and its aims over this challenging year. Applause in a Zoom Meeting is not the same as the real thing but please show your appreciation by waving with enthusiasm...

As the spring of 2020 approached, Lewis was unfortunately taken seriously ill, although he has since bounced back, and at that time he felt no longer able to hold the chairing role. The Board generously voted me into the role of interim Chair, taking account of my previous experience as a director of a charitable social fund and various flavours of chairmanship over more than 25 years. It has been my aim and vocation for much of my working life to support people to achieve their aims and fulfil their potential. As I am a newcomer to the village this was a tremendous act of trust.

Because of the COVID restrictions it became impossible for the Board to meet face-to-face. This was especially frustrating as we had resolved that all of our meetings would be open for anyone to attend. From then on we organised Board Meetings using the Zoom video platform. This has gone quite well, with only a few hiccoughs, and we have been able to make useful progress with our projects.

We were in agreement that the Feasibility Study, which was only completed in the months after the previous AGM, had left us without a realistic plan of financing or developing the stable block as had been hoped. So we looked at other alternatives, which we shall discuss later in this meeting, and we agreed to get behind the planning of a replacement toilet block, with additional facilities as will also be discussed later on this evening.

It has also become clear that the various groups in the village, among whom are the LVA (Leadhills Village Association) which is temporarily in abeyance, could usefully work together in mutual support towards a Village Plan for the future. I hope that in the coming year a meeting in common will be possible.

The earlier prospect of a buyout of the whole Leadhills Estate would become a responsibility and liability for which we lack the resources and expertise to manage or develop at the moment, even if the owners were willing to sell. So we decided to approach the Estate owners, currently Leadhills 2019 LLP, with a view to develop partnership projects for mutual benefit. We met with Donald Noble and Andrew Lord Hopetoun in September, under COVID rules in force at the time. We took stock of the current situation and explored possible ways forward that included taking ownership of the Stable Block and an area of land with a building in Horner's Place, up behind the Hopetoun Arms.

Concerns about the future of the Glen Franka Dam were raised and the situation clarified. The reservoir and surrounding area is one of the prime opportunities to develop amenities for ourselves and for tourists without overcrowding the village. The meeting was positive and forward looking and the estate arranged an architect and a structural surveyor to evaluate the condition and potential of the stable block.

We have now submitted a grant application to the Sustainable Development Fund. We are very grateful for Amanda's advice and support with this application. That grant would enable us to engage the necessary professional support to take our projects forward. We should hear back in May whether our bid has been successful.

These are topics that the directors have discussed, and it is vital that conversations among the whole village can happen after lockdown. The Community Company is here to make the most of the ideas that have strong support of the village, to evaluate viability and cost effectiveness as far as possible. And we must not forget those who live elsewhere and own properties in Leadhills and who appreciate what we have here already. There may be expertise and creativity that can support the village into the future among that group.

Despite the uncertainties of the pandemic and restrictions imposed upon us in the year gone by, the Community Company directors have made significant progress towards practical and beneficial projects. It is my impression that the current Board of directors are well able to take the Community Company forward creatively and effectively. But we do not yet have all the necessary skills, and we cannot work in isolation. We need the active support of the village as a whole, and we would be delighted to hear from anyone who has expertise to offer us.

Time for any questions

LW proposed chairs report as adequate. AW seconded.

Financial Report from Luc Smith

Brief overview of last accounting years report was given. The company ended the 2019-2020 financial year with £34.00 in the bank and owing £420.00 to the accountants for this report (still owed).

Several grant opportunities to cover this fee are being looked at – we hope to receive a £500.00 grant from the Community Council which will cover this nicely.

A more up-to-date report was given with the company currently having just over £140.00 in the bank. Explained that this income comes purely from membership fees and donations for which we are extremely grateful.

Time for any questions

Election of Directors

JR handed chairmanship of meeting to LW.

The 3 names of those being voted in as full Directors were put on screen...

- John Ralph
- Robert Campbell
- Stephen Johnstone

It was ensured that all those present understood how to use the 'Raised Hand' feature of Zoom and were asked to raise hand to vote in all 3 Directors at once.

It was clarified that only those living in Leadhills as full members were able to vote.

6 hands were raised, with no abstentions, voting all 3 directors in.

JR took back Chair of meeting.

Project Discussion: Toilet Block

Rab Campbell opened discussion giving brief history of toilet block in Leadhills.

Explained it had been 7 years since the village had a working public toilet, despite 3 previous attempts by multiple people that were put forward. None of these ever happened.

Explained that himself and Martin Hollingsworth [Leadhills Resident and Community Council Chair] had looked for a new site in the village, away from the school where residents no longer wanted them.

A site at the back of the hotel was mentioned, being in the centre of the village with space for parking.

Research was carried out with conversations between residents, as well as Donald Noble on behalf of the estate.

The company invited an architect to investigate the use of the old kennel block behind the hotel to be incorporated into the design, and drawings were completed. Unfortunately, any further progress was halted by the pandemic however we are still in contact with the architect.

The facilities would include:

- 1x Ladies
- 1x Gents toilet
- 1x Disabled Access toilet
- 2x areas for token use shower and laundry room (tokens could be bought at the shop and hotel for single use)
- Full rainwater collection system and solar panelled roof for sustainable running of building
- Parking immediately next to block with 6 to 8 spaces including 2 disabled spots.

Explained while the removal of the old toilet block at the side of the school may be welcomed, access to water for the community polytunnel should still be fine. Believes it is important that this is maintained.

Time for any questions

DN reminded those present that the LVA currently occupies the kennel block and that communication must be had with the gardening/environment group that currently use it. Was happy that arrangements could be made by the estate for relocation of this group.

JR agreed.

Project Discussion: Stable Block

Lewis Whitfield opened discussion with recent history of project.

Explained that the company had not progressed as quickly as we had hoped due to covid situation and lack of in-person meetings. Also explained that being unable to apply to Scottish Land Fund for funding had held us back.

A structural survey was completed however there are still issues to be looked at – a further survey of the rear wall and its foundations is needed.

Company hopes to create an upper floor with accommodation which would fund the running of the toilet block.

Proposed that further ideas for the remainder of the building can be discussed in future once a full structural survey has been completed and we know how usable the space is.

Time for any questions

Amanda Davis asked if everybody knew about the funding application that has been sent in?

JR stated that the details of the application were not yet public but the fact that we had applied for funds has been shared.

AD gave brief run-down of application, explaining that it would cover all costs inherited through the initial surveys, plans, legal fees, studies etc. before any practical work began on renovating the building. Stated that we may get answer before May.

AD asked if a further consultation would be carried out with local community regarding use of building?

JR stated it was important that people were able to contribute and that we must find ways for the community to approach the board.

AD confirmed that the community polytunnel's water supply does come from the old toilet block and thanked Rab for mentioning it.

RC believed the water supply could be run directly into the polytunnel grounds. Agreed to work on this in the future.

Open forum for discussion/questions

DN gave thanks for the invitation to AGM and wanted to show full support for the projects. Looks forward to working with the company.

Asked about any other projects that been raised in the village? Believed that getting 1 project going would be good to start some positive momentum.

AD mentioned a nature reserve that had been brought up by Victoria Chanin, as well as an enclosed area for people to walk their dogs without disturbing grouse and sheep.

DN agreed that he liked the idea and that it could be something to look at.

JR suggested that we could investigate a possible location for this.

Andrew Hopetoun raised concern of keeping the area clear of dog foul when people do not pick it up and that this would require regular volunteers.

DN gave example of dog park that had been created in another Hopetoun Estate as a commercial business and that it is in fact extremely popular.

JR suggested to come back to Donald on that and a possible fact finding visit.

LW raised question of what was happening with the Glen Franka dam? Asked for any updates.

DN gave explanation of current issue – the reservoir falls under the Reservoirs Act and gets a 10-year regular independent report. The last report had raised concerns that do need to be addressed by law. Due to downstream developments including the Elvanfoot substation and the removal of one of the viaducts, the reservoir was classed as a danger to infrastructure. The estate was given the options to either raise the dam, creating more free-board, or lower the level of the reservoir. Stated that investigations would begin shortly.

AH summarised status as not much has happened in the last year.

Carsten Kressel joins 20:28

JR thanked everyone for coming and looks forward to what this year has in store.

Meeting ended 20:30