FDT AGM Minutes

Financial Year to May 2022.

Held at Edinkillie Village Hall

on Wednesday 8th February 2023.

1. **Welcome and Apologies.**

Present: Directors- Brian Higgs (BH) (Chair), Karen Astill, Sue Boulton, Moira Dennis, Stewart McCracken, Alasdair Laing, Tony Pinner.

Development team: Jan MacPherson (Development Manager), Ian Chorlton (Development Officer).

Attendees. Ashleigh Young (The Long Partnership), Sarah Higgs, Anne McCracken, Tim Slack, Suzanne Quinney, Andy Munro, Howard Davenport, Davie Nicolson, Donald Nicolson, Dawn Nicolson, Roy Dennis, Mike Crutch, Jane Young, Andy Hall.

Apologies: Anne Garrow, Tom Hardie, Debbie Herron.

A check was made, and the meeting was quorate.

2. **Chair Report**

Introduction

BH stated that the AGM is later than usual because FDT scheduled an EGM in November 2022 to make some changes to the Trust's Articles of Association relating to the appointment of Directors. The formal review of the Trust within this AGM relates to the year ending May 2022. Given the time lapse BH stated that he will report on work undertaken until May 2022 , as well as an outline update to the present day, and a look at the planned work for 2023 into 2024.

Coronavirus support Work

BH stated that many of the Trusts planned activities during the operating year to the end of May 2022 were severely impacted by the Covid pandemic. FDT adapted to the situation and achieved recognition as a community anchor organisation to access further funding from the Scottish Government to develop a 'Connecting Finderne'

project which included the recruitment of Kerry McInnes as a temporary part time project officer.

The remit of the 'Connecting Finderne' project had to be further adapted as new restrictions prevented enabling communities' outings and with the approval of the funder, Kerry was able to lead on the implementation of a community facilities survey in March 2022.

New buildings and existing building renovation.

From the community facilities survey it became apparent that rather than a new Hub, the community would prefer to focus on developing existing community buildings. BH also noted that in the time period to May 2022 new facilities and renovated facilities had opened up at Loch of Blairs, and at the Clubroom on Altyre Estate,

FDT shared the findings of the community facilities survey with the Finderne community, and followed up specifically with both Edinkillie and Rafford Village Hall Committees, to ask them what the Trust could do to help. Both halls' committees have provided a list of potential developments and further meetings will be held shortly, to agree the next steps for each organisation.

Apprenticeships

This element of the FDT plan was hit by the pandemic. It greatly affected local businesses and reduced recruitment activity impacted on the opportunity to create apprenticeships. Business priority was focussed on consolidation and survival aided by the government furlough scheme.

Initially FDT were supporting two apprentices, one decided to leave the area and return to his family home, the other continues to develop their skills with a local company. The scheme has also been broadened to offer additional help for local businesses as the economy tries to recover.

Broadband R100 (Reaching 100% of the population).

This has continued to frustrate both the community and FDT. When the Scottish Government released the details of R100 for the Finderne area, FDT wrote to every household advising them the status of their residence in the programme. Where they were included in the R100 plan the residents were also advised when the Scottish Government were stating that they would get connected.. Everyone was asked if they were interested in joining a collaborative project to be led by FDT to provide an interim solution ahead of R100. FDT received a very low response to this survey which seemed to be contrary to the fact that many members felt Broadband was a priority area.

This may have been due to the fact that the R100 scheme had indicated that large parts of Finderne, particularly Rafford, would get full fibre by the latter part of 2022.

In late 2022 however, the R100 program plans changed dramatically, increasing the deadline by two years, so not until the earliest, 2024.

FDT immediately contacted MSP Richard Lochhead to raise concerns about this unannounced delay. Finally, at the end of January this year Duncan Nisbet, the Stakeholder Director of the R100 programme, at the request of Richard Lochhead, made contact with FDT to offer to attend a community meeting in person to discuss the current situation and the possible way forward.

FDT has passed this communication to the FCC as the formally constituted representative group for the community to lead on this, with the ongoing support of the FDT. Overall, both FDT and FCC will continue to push for recognition of the problems with rural broadband and getting support to find even a temporary solution.

Improving Energy Efficiency.

FDT Scot Grad employee, Finlay McCulloch, finished his yearlong project to provide advice and guidance on home improvement grants to improve energy efficiency of homes in March of 2022. This work proved to be even more essential than expected as 2022 unfolded into 2023 with the large cost of live and energy price increases due to global events.

FDT are keeping a watching brief to see if any future grant opportunities become available which could possibly rekindle a role such as the one Finlay performed.

Winter Support Grant (WSG).

The WSG initiative evolved after the year ending May 2022. As the cost-of-living crisis grew FDT recognised the hardship and stress this was putting on some residents of the community. The board therefore took the decision in November 2022 to create the 'Winter Support Grant.' Whilst only government intervention can solve the long-term issues of this crisis, at least from the feedback FDT have received the WSG has been a great help in the short term. To date nearly 90 households have benefitted from a grant.

Brockloch Community Led Affordable Housing.

This project aimed to bring much needed affordable housing to the Finderne area. Up until May 2022 FDT were in negotiations with Dallas Estates to purchase the land to develop affordable housing with input from the community. The land had been zoned for housing by Moray Council in 2015 and again in 2020. Dallas Estates already had a buyer, a housing developer who if successful would have built housing without any meaningful community consultation and it is unlikely, they would have been 'affordable.'

Since May 2022 the land has been purchased on behalf of the Finderne Community as the site for a community led affordable housing project, via funding from the Scottish Land Fund for circa £330k in July 2022.

FDT are also pleased to have an addition to the team, Ian Chorlton, who has joined as Development Officer in July 2022. Ian brings considerable experience in the construction industry and he will devote around 50% of his time on the affordable housing project. He has so far led on the tendering process for the selection of the Architects and community communications and is working with our partner the Communities Housing Trust on the required funding plan for the work.

FDT have progressed with consultation events and bringing onboard a design team which the Finderne Community can meet next week at Rafford Village hall. A drop-in event will be held from 3.30pm to 19.00 on Thursday 16th February where the community can discuss the proposed housing project with the newly appointed architect, Oberlander. Communities Housing Trust will also be present to answer any relevant questions.

Community Transport.

This was identified as a need from the community facilities survey carried out in March 2022. FDT had intended to start a workstream to look into this but coincidentally the Edinkillie CA informed FDT that they were keen to run an 8 week pilot scheme for a community minibus. Given the enthusiasm of the ECA to progress this it made sense for FDT to assist financially and then build in their findings into a Finderne wide initiative.

The ECA organised trial was completed just before Christmas, and they are due to share their findings with the FDT Board at the next Board meeting in February 2023.

Road Safety in Rafford.

Finderne Community Council (FCC) have been working to resolve a long term vehicle speeding issue in Rafford. Moray Council have finally agreed to allow the installation of vehicle activated speed signs on the roads entering the village and the FDT have stepped in to provide the capital funds to purchase the equipment. Hopefully this equipment will be installed in the very near future and it will have a beneficial impact on the road safety for the community.

Questions on chairpersons report.

Q. Suzanne Quinney asked what the outcome of ECA's application to the recent Just Transition Participatory Budgeting Fund in November had been.

A- Moira Dennis confirmed that the ECA had not been successful on this occasion, but that they had received positive feedback from the fund organisers, and that there would be the opportunity to re-apply, as the fund is in place for 3 more years.

Q. Andy Hall asked if alternatives to open reach were being considered as an alternative for short term broadband solutions.

A. BH confirmed that the FDT are looking to alternative providers for any possible short-term solution.

3. Annual Accounts to 31st May 2022.

BH and AY summarised the accounts and opened it to questions.

Q. **Sue Boulton** asked what is the difference between restricted and unrestricted funds?

A. Restricted funds are funds that can only be used for the work/project that was stipulated by the grant provider at the application stage.
A. Unrestricted funds can be used as the FDT sees fit within the objectives of the Articles of Association and the best interests of the Finderne community.

Q. **Tim Slack** asked if the money from funding covers project management or if this comes from FDT's own funds?

A. BH advised that specific project funding generally doesn't include project management fees, and these will be covered by the FDT's core funds.

Q. **Roy Dennis** made the statement that the FDT Board could change the Articles of Association (AoA).

A. BH advised that only FDT members can change the AoA for the Trust, but that the Board could recommend changes to the AoA to the membership if wished.

Q**. Howard Davenport** asked what the FDT intends to spend the £300k on that's currently shown in the bank account? Is the Trust spending enough money?
A. As this was a general question, rather than relating to the specifics of the AGM, BH asked if this could be discussed after the formal part of the AGM. (see later)

Q. **Mr Nicolson** asked what is the annual income from the windfarm to FDT?
A. BH, it varies but last year it was approximately £154k. At the date of commissioning in August 2018 it was £138k. The payments are index linked to the CPI.

Davie Nicolson commended FDT on providing the Winter Support Grant over the winter of 22/23; he felt it was a very fair approach to have taken.

4. **Director Elections and Re-elections.**

BH stated that during the year 2022/23 three board members, Emma Sedgwick, Stephen Nasrat and Ruth Macfarlane had stood down. He gave thanks for their hard work during their time with the FDT.

BH welcomed the appointment of two new directors, Sue Boulton and Tony Pinner which brings the number of member directors to six, so therefore no voting required. There is one Board vacancy remaining, and it was offered to anyone in the audience to consider applying.

The four continuing directors are Brian Higgs(chair), Moira Dennis, Stewart McCracken, and Karen Astill.

One co-opted direction has stood down, Jo Laing, and has been replaced by Alasdair Laing. Jo Laing was a very active and committed director and BH thanked her for her contribution. BH noted that the Board will benefit greatly from the experience of Alasdair Laing, and he welcomed him to the board.

AGM concluded at 7.40pm.