

Minutes of Westray Development Trust Board Meeting
Thursday 12th March 2026 in the Community Classroom 7 pm

Present: Geordie Thomson (GT) (Chair), Louis Pottinger (LP), Anne Burgher (AB), Coilla Drake (CD), Gill McEwen (GM), David Seatter (DRS)

Attending: Gina Rendall (GR), Sarah Cowe (SC) minutes.

1. **Apologies:** Douglas Leslie (DL), Margaret Rendall (MR)

2. **Minutes of previous board meetings:**

Minutes of Board Meeting – presentation of accounts on 9th December 2025 Proposed by GM,
Seconded by AB

Minutes of Board Meeting on 17th February 2026 Proposed by AB, Seconded GM

3. **Matters Arising** – No matters arising

4. **OPS Manager Report – Including Finance Reports**

i. **Finance Report**

A query was raised by members of the community about whether the entertainment grant remains sufficient. **The Board agreed** that no increase will be made at this time, as it is not considered financially viable to increase it at present; the current level already exceeds that of other islands, and noted that the Community Grant is available for larger grants.

Recommendations to the Board from the Finance Sub Group meeting 11th March 2026

Overview of Classes The board reviewed the financial position of classes as of the end of February and projections for the year-end. The Garden and Here to Help are expected to exceed budget due to planned works and service costs. No investment transfer is required for the Jerusalem project, as grants have fully covered expenditure so far.

Grant income for the Hall totals £15,000, comprising CDF for prior year spend and SLF for current work by Billy Groundwater. An additional £45,000 for demolition will be drawn down from investments, utilising part of the £90,000 ringfenced for the Unit 1 office extension which is no longer happening. Gift Aid income of £424,000, exceeding the budgeted £347,000, may result in a £200,000 surplus, available for zero-income periods or turbine repairs.

Salaries Decision is to be made at Board Only

WDT Charges: The board reviewed charges for services under the WDT.

For Here to Help, with an increase in the real living wage it was noted that the true cost of employment is £17 per hour. The same service on the mainland would cost the service user £22 per hour. The finance sub-group proposed increase the hourly charge from £6.50 to £7. **The board agreed** to the increase and felt that this was an invaluable service to the community.

For Hofn, current rates are £6.50 per hour and £28.50 for five or more hours, representing a 14% discount. The finance sub-group proposed maintaining the hourly rate and increasing the day rate

to £29.25, adjusting the discount to approximately 10%. **The board agreed** and these changes were approved.

For the Garden, the sub-group noted that prices will require appropriate increases, with specific figures to be determined during the garden season.

Bayview rent review funding clauses currently prevents any increase in rent during the tenancy, but there may be an opportunity to adjust it when tenants move out, as some leases allow a rent review on re-letting. GM has asked whether she can attend online meetings with SSL, which would allow her to engage directly on matters like the lease or other operational updates. **The Board agreed**

The EPC rating requirement has been shelved for the time being, so no immediate action is needed, though it should be monitored in case obligations are reintroduced.

ACTION: GR to look into rent review options.

ii. **Housing**

Bayview There continues to be issues with internet installation at Bayview. GR discovered that BT were installing fibre through the Cloudnet communications cupboard but that it was a cloudnet order rather than our tenants. BT can only offer fibre and with recent changes the conduit is now not in a place and would involve digging up the drive way or wrapping cable around the building as they are not being allowed to use the Cloudnet cabinet.

Tenants can access fibre or radio internet but only through Cloudnet which as Landlords we are very disappointed about and was not the understanding of the board. Cloudnet had been asked not to authorise any changes to our building without consultation and that all communications be in writing so that there is a papertrail.

Maintenance work, Daniel Marcus Construction has inspected the front door and ordered materials to try and fix the gap. Facings have arrived and will be installed shortly, after which the contract should be complete within this financial year.

The intercom issue remains unresolved.

ACTION: GR to chase intercom repair

Sailing Club Shed: There has been no update regarding access to the Sailing Club shed.

Jerusalem

Funding: A total of £71,848 must be claimed before the 12th of March, with valuation work currently underway.

Renovation works are progressing well, with insulation completed, first fix electrics finished, and plumbing scheduled to begin shortly. Window installation is going on this week, as well as plasterboard. There now needs to be decisions made on internal door and the kitchen, GR to organise a Housing Sub-Group meeting is scheduled for next week.

Fencing: Work is delayed until approximately June or July, although we will confirm quantities and order materials in advance.

iii. **Community Spaces**

Community Hall

Funding: £10,000 for feasibility has been claimed; however, a VAT shortfall has arisen due to deregistration, so the claim will be less than £10,000. Progress reporting to the Scottish Land Fund is underway, with a five-year review required post-completion.

Demolition: work began on the 25th of February. The floor has been removed, and asbestos removal from the roof is expected today.

Funding for renovation: There has been no decision yet from RCGF regarding renovation funding. The OIC Crown Estate Community Led Development Fund application is expected shortly, and the Orkney Fund application is still to be done.

New Build: There is no update on the bill of quantities for the new build, although SUDS drawings have been approved by the council.

Gallow Hill: Nothing new.

ACTION GR to follow up

iv. **Golf Course / Men's Shed**

The AGM was not attended, and no updates have been received on the new build. The fencing offer has not yet been accepted, and a reminder will be issued that funding must be used before June.

ACTION: GR to Remind SR and RH

v. **Westray Conference / Community Plan**

The Community Plan is now available on the website. The final Place Plan meeting is provisionally scheduled for the 26th of March.

vi. **Hofn**

The turbine is now operational and generating electricity. Work is ongoing with OVO to update account details and enable submission of readings, although there is a lack of historical records, with the last confirmed submissions dating back to 2018.

vii. **Kalisgarth Turbine**

Alistair Morton (OIC) has expressed interest in taking over the turbine. There has been no response regarding the request for legal fees to be covered. A cost estimate will be obtained from Eoin Thomson.

viii. **Bargain Box**

No further update.

ix. **CDO Meetings**

The dolphin rescue group approached WDT to request support for accommodation and course fees for training medics. An offer was made to fund 50% of course fees only, with the option to revise this if necessary.

The Scottish Land Fund provided an update on key dates for the coming year, noting that future funding rounds are likely to depend on the outcome of the election.

x. **Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP)**

CARES Solar Panel and Battery Storage: Recent changes to planning mean that ground-mounted solar panels are now considered a simpler and more cost-effective option, with potential for greater capacity. There would be space at Hofn and behind the offices for 15 panels. We would receive an 80% grant. **The Board agreed** to go ahead with ground panels rather than roof-mounted.

ICNZ The Memorandum of Understanding has been signed, and equipment will be ordered shortly, which consists of a desktop computer and OWL for meetings

xi. **Small Transport Grant**

No updates

xii. **Slipway / Harbours Master Plan**

There have been no updates from Orkney Harbours regarding the slipway. Anne will be contacted to arrange attendance at a future board meeting regarding the Harbour Master Plan.

xiii. **Shapinsay visit**

The visit was very positive and provided a number of useful insights and takeaways.

5. **WRE**

i. **Turbine**

There is still no repair scheduled with Enercon. We are currently waiting for a quote from Simpsons in Caithness to see if we can get the crange and logistics for a lower price than those given by Global Cranes. The increased costs are due to the weight restrictions on the linkspan, which have meant that the cranes for the repair need to be broken down into smaller loads. Once we have this through, a decision will be made on how to proceed.

ii. **Insurance Claim**

The loss adjuster has indicated that the turbine breakdown is considered wear and tear, and therefore not eligible for a claim for loss of earnings under the current policy. The WRE board are appealing this decision. An initial meeting with Enercon was scheduled for 5th March to discuss the matter. Stuart Baird joined the meeting with WRE and Enercon, and stated that the turbine components are all within specification and do not constitute wear and tear.

6. **Forward Planning Subgroup**

The Forward Planning Subgroup is resuming activity after a period of dormancy. Stuart Baird presented to the group on 26th February and is collaborating with Gina to submit an expression of interest to a new UK government funding scheme. He is exploring hybrid wind and solar opportunities, including the potential for a community energy company. The turbine could provide affordable electricity to local residents, allowing community members to subscribe to lower-cost power.

GR and GT asked the board to consider Stuart Baird as a project manager to support the Forward Planning Subgroup. They highlighted that his involvement could provide valuable expertise to advance the group's work during a period of uncertainty with the turbines. **The board agreed** that GT should take this proposal forward to WRE

ACTION GT to take the proposal forward to the next WRE meeting

7. Wellbeing

- i. **Here2Help** - The board noted that the latest request for assistance with cleaning has been accommodated. It was reported that the scheme is now at capacity with the hours Helpers are able to offer. A request for gardening assistance was also received. The board didn't see an issue with providing this if one of our Here to Help workers would be willing to take on.
- ii. **Podiatry Clinic** - The podiatrist is now organising her own clinics in Westray. Clinics are being advertised as advised.
- iii. **Optician** - The optician visited the island from 2nd to 4th March, extending his stay by one day. Three residents were unable to be accommodated during this visit, and he will return on 6th April to deliver glasses and ensure proper fitting.
- iv. **Community Fridge** - The Community Fridge in Westray, launched in 2024 to reduce local food waste, initially relied on donations from the three local shops. Fareshare, a national surplus food scheme, began supplying standardised pallets, including fresh produce. This led to reduced sales for the shops, forcing them to discard unsold items, and all three have now stopped donating. The Development Trust bears transport costs from Orkney mainland, and fresh produce continues to arrive despite requests to exclude it, creating both financial and environmental concerns. Shop owners have indicated they would resume donations if Fareshare deliveries stopped. While Fareshare reduces food waste nationally, in a small community, it has unintentionally increased local waste and impacted shop profits. Proposed mitigation includes resuming local shop donations, household contributions, engaging other food businesses, promoting the Food Bank, and recording Community Fridge usage for ongoing monitoring.

The Board agreed to pause Fareshare deliveries to Westray for three months to assess the level of donations that can be sourced directly from the local shops. During this period, the focus will be on encouraging shop contributions, household donations, and support from other food businesses, while continuing to monitor Community Fridge usage and supply.

ACTION GR to write to the 3 local shops letting them know of the Board's decision

- v. **Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund – Events** The Adult Activities weekend scheduled for 21st–22nd March was postponed due to low uptake and the Outdoor Education Instructor being on sick leave. Their funding has now run out and they will not be running outdoor education programme for adults again.

The Colour Boost Event, scheduled for 24th–26th April, has seen good uptake. An introductory social event will take place on Friday evening at Saintear, followed by individual or small group sessions at the Hofn over the weekend.

Orkney Dance and Fitness offers an island membership for online classes. Interest in streamed classes will be gauged via a Facebook poll before committing to membership. The Community Council could be approached to help with costs incurred.

- vi. **I.T. Support** - Drop-in sessions and presentations on online safety and digital connectivity took place at the Hofn on 27th February with support from Ewan Kennedy (OIC) and Chrissie Matthews (Learning Link). Additional support will be provided over the coming months regarding the landline digital switchover.
- vii. **Linking with G.P. Surgery** - Meetings were held with practice staff to share relevant community activities. A “Welcome to Westray” pack is being developed, including practice information sheets, for distribution to new registrants by the surgery.
- viii. **One-to-One Support** - Support has been provided regarding the digital switchover, assisting a new resident and helping residents load ferry vouchers onto cards.
- ix. **Training** - Health Behaviour Change training has been completed. Short training sessions on various aspects of mental health will commence the week of 9th March.
- x. **Wellbeing Coordinators Group** - The February Teams meeting allowed for the exchange of ideas and connections with relevant agencies.
- xi. **Screening Equity Group – NHS Orkney** - The group has met and agreed Terms of Reference. Initial focus is on ensuring that screening appointment letters stress that people can reschedule if ferry times do not align. Most letters are centrally generated and cannot be altered. The group will meet again in two months.
- xii. **Men’s Shed** - Contact has been made with the Men’s Shed Chair to attend meetings and discuss men’s health issues, including screening uptake and barriers. Collaboration is also being explored for national health awareness campaigns, such as Bowel Cancer and Prostate Cancer Awareness months.

8. Sub Group Reports –

AB asked if the change of use for the Bargain Box would still be in place after 3 years. GT to finish taking down the old Bargain Box once the weather allows.

ACTION – GR to check with Community association on use of snooker room

9. Correspondence

2 new applications to become WDT members were received and approved by the Board

10. AOCB - None

11. Date of next meeting: 16th April 2026 at 7 pm

Meeting closed at 8.35 pm

