

Minutes of Westray Development Trust Board Meeting
Thursday 16th April 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 (DS)

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 on 12th March 2026

Proposed by GM, Seconded DS

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

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

i. **Finance Report**

Quarterly Report: Final figures are still being processed, with the expected bottom line for the last quarterly report at **£2,971.79**. The budget has been slightly adjusted, which has affected the Gift Aid figures following an administrative error that has now been corrected.

Income: Income includes the final RHF grant for Jerusalem (£70,000), CDF funding for the Hall feasibility study (£5,500), and the remaining SLF funding for both Jerusalem and the Hall (£12,000).

Expenditure remains largely focused on grants, primarily fuel grants. Core expenditure has increased due to a £2,500 repair to the Hofn turbine and a rise in consultancy costs from £8,000 last quarter to £28,000 this quarter. This includes £6,000 to Eyland Skyn for the Place Plan, £5,500 for the Hall, and £13,000 for the Golf Club/Men's Shed. In addition, £1,820 was paid for the WDT development plan.

Upcoming Income: A total of £9,338 is expected in the next quarter's income, representing grant claims submitted but not yet paid. This includes £7,338 from TOF for the Golf Club/Men's Shed and £1,500 from WCC for the Place Plan.

CDF Feasibility Study (Hall): The feasibility study was claimed and recorded as income this year, although the expenditure occurred last year. Due to no longer being VAT registered and coming in under budget, the expected £10,000 was slightly reduced.

ii. **Housing**

Bayview

Internet resilience has been improved following recent outages. We've asked Cloudnet to leave radio equipment and additional links to minimise future disruption.

Maintenance issues

Andrew Seatter is to inspect the intercom system. Roof tiles on Flat 4 are currently rattling, and

Daniel Harcus Construction has been asked to investigate. The toilet issue in Flat 2 has been resolved by Christopher Rendall Handyman Services.

Sailing Club Shed: Nothing new to report

Jerusalem

Funding: Funding of £71,848 has been received, with a further £50,000 from OIC still to be claimed.

Renovation: Works are progressing, with plaster boarding nearly complete, plumbers have arrived, and windows for the extension still to be fitted.

Board decisions made for kitchen and internal doors

- Integrated fridge/freezer
- Neutral colour units – pebble
- Darker wood effect worktop
- Internal doors: panel, white finish
- Chrome handles on kitchen cupboards (T-bar style)

Fencing: Materials ordered

Next Project: A proposal to explore further housing development has been suggested by Davie Campbell **The Board agreed** to leave meantime due to current financial and staffing capacity constraints. While funding opportunities such as SLF are available, rising material costs make additional projects unviable at this time.

iii. **Community Spaces**

Community Hall

Demolition: Asbestos has been removed from the roof and is waiting for collection. Hydro disconnection has progressed following earlier difficulties, allowing the rest of the demolition to proceed once complete.

Funding and Delivery: £1.2 million has been approved from RCGF, with additional funding applications submitted or in progress. A phased delivery approach is being discussed, prioritising completion of the Hall before progressing to the Golf Club/Men's Shed.

New Build: Tenders have been issued, with costs expected to be confirmed in early May.

Solar Panels: Solar panels may be an option at The Hall, with possible space near the soakaway area. Stuart Baird is looking into feasibility, available space, and any planning issues. There is interest from Highlands and Islands Enterprise with potential funding through a Green Grant.

Gallow Hill: There are no new updates.

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

The project was paused but with the RCGF announcement discussions are being held regarding a potential funding package dependent on keeping costs below £600,000. No commitment has been

made by WDT. Planning-related costs have been claimed, and further concept design work is underway. A formal proposal will be presented.

GR to talk to Cindy McKenzie

Westray Conference / Community Plan

A recent meeting was positive, although it largely revisited ongoing issues. This is reassuring that WDT and the community aims are aligned. WCC has contributed £1,500 towards costs which we are very grateful for.

Concerns have been raised regarding some of the inclusion in the development plan and expectations around the use of Unit 1. It is proposed that some content be removed from the WDT plan and redirected to the Place Plan as that's why the information was gathered, with alternative options to be considered if suitable space becomes available. **The Board agreed.**

v. Hofn

Progress has been made with turbine administration, including resolving account issues and preparing to submit readings.

CARES funding: Funding is now open. Jason Taylor is available to help with Planning and we were able to secure funding from Community Energy Scotland to pay for this piece of work.

ACTION: GR to look into this once Jason Taylor is back from holiday

Digital Hub: Starlink has been installed at the Digital Hub as a temporary connectivity solution.

vi. Kalisgarth Turbine

There has been limited progress on the transfer, although recharge funds have been received and will be passed on to Friends of Kalisgarth this week. Follow-up is required.

vii. Bargain Box

Temporary planning status has been confirmed, and a new application will be required, which is expected to be straightforward. Initial discussions have been positive with a Westray resident about a building identified as a possible new Bargain Box.

ACTION: GR to apply for temporary planning

viii. CDO Meetings

Westray has been included in a study on resilience in the Isles, focusing on practical measures and identifying what support is required from OIC and other agencies. Suzanne Baird, Wellbeing Coordinator, is keen to progress this work, and it is considered a priority for the island following recent events. **The Board agreed** and is happy for Suzanne to attend.

ix. Community Climate Action Plan (CCAP)

CCAP: Engagement with Cooke Aquaculture has been challenging and probably means that this data will be missing. Agriculture data is still to be gathered.

ICNZ: Equipment is ordered for our resource centre.

- x. **Small Transport Grant:** No updates
- xi. **Slipway / Harbours Master Plan:** A meeting is to be scheduled in May, with no further updates at present.
- xii. **Chapel of Rest**

A need has been identified for additional refrigeration capacity due to limitations in current facilities. Equipment costing approximately £10,300 would allow capacity for up to three individuals. It is proposed that this be considered a community-funded initiative, potentially led by WCC with support from WDT and external funding applications. **The Board agreed** that WCC could apply for a Community Grant to help with costs if they were willing to take the lead on this.

ACTION: GR to talk to WCC and Corse Funeral Directors about potential grants and funding

5. **WRE**

Stuart Baird, Blue Energy has started his work with WDT and WRE to manage the repair and also look at future projects.

Work began on 1 April 2026. Early progress has focused on understanding the technical and logistical requirements across all workstreams. Progress has been slowed slightly due to the Easter holidays and ongoing local internet issues. Efforts are underway to arrange a meeting with Enercon, as their input is critical to progressing turbine repair planning. A proposal has also been received from RFM for an independent inspection of the turbine.

Turbine Repair & Life Extension

The priority is to return the turbine to full operation, secure approval for extending its operational life, and reduce risk for trustees.

Progress: Initial review work is underway, including inspection reports, maintenance history, and the overall condition of the turbine. A proposal for an independent third-party inspection has been received from RFM, approved by the WRE Board, and is now moving forward with planning and scheduling.

Attempts have been made to contact Enercon to begin detailed planning, although responses are still pending. Contact has also been attempted with Orkney Harbours regarding the linkspan, and previous discussions with Simpsons Cranes have been reviewed.

Existing technical documentation is being reviewed via SharePoint, with further information to be requested once engagement with Enercon is established. A full assessment of repair requirements, costs, risks, and timelines is dependent on this engagement and is therefore still outstanding.

Work has begun on a risk register to support trustee reporting. Procurement and scheduling activities are ongoing, although responses from the WRE Board have been slower than expected, likely due to internet disruption.

Future Renewable Energy Development

The aim is to develop a long-term energy strategy for Westray beyond 2030, identifying viable renewable opportunities and supporting future funding and decision-making.

Progress: Initial work has started on assessing potential options, including wind, solar, storage, and hybrid systems, although this remains a secondary priority to turbine repair. An early-stage proposal is being developed to support a feasibility study.

Engagement with partners and funders is ongoing, with funding applications already submitted to GBE and CARES in February. Work is also underway to develop technical, financial, and regulatory scenarios, alongside a longer-term roadmap aligned with community priorities.

Additional funding opportunities have been identified, including a route through GBE to support feasibility study work, and an application is currently in progress.

ACTION- GR to put update on turbine in next Auk Talk

6. Forward Planning Subgroup

Westray Energy Hybrid Hub: Trustee Engagement Report

The Hybrid Hub is a proposed community energy project that would combine solar generation, battery storage, and Westray's existing wind infrastructure into a single integrated system. Its main purpose is to strengthen local energy security, reduce reliance on imported electricity, and provide a stable long-term income stream for the Trust, particularly in anticipation of the end of Feed-in Tariff payments in 2030. It would also help reduce wasted renewable energy by storing surplus generation for later use and improve overall system efficiency through a central control platform.

A key feature of the proposal is "sleeving", which would allow locally generated electricity to be allocated directly to island households and businesses through a licensed supplier. This would reduce energy bills locally while providing predictable revenue to the Trust. Alongside financial benefits, the project is intended to support wider community resilience, including better protection for essential services during outages and enabling future developments such as EV charging and heat pump use.

The system would include a 750 kWp solar array and a 1 MW / 6 MWh long-life battery, integrated with existing wind generation. Together, these assets would smooth supply, store excess energy, and optimise local use. The project aligns with several major funding opportunities and would be delivered in phases from design and approvals through to construction and long-term operation.

Overall, the Hybrid Hub is presented as a strategic investment to secure future income for the Trust, reduce energy costs for the community, and strengthen Westray's long-term energy resilience and self-sufficiency.

7. Wellbeing

- i. **Internet and Phone Outage:** Following the recent outage, vulnerable residents without mobile, landline, or internet access were identified using existing service lists and cross-checked with the GP surgery to ensure full coverage. Immediate support was provided through the loan of basic mobile phones and SIM cards, with additional assistance given to care providers affected by loss of communication services.

Temporary connectivity was supported through hot spotting, and staff assisted individuals in reporting outages, requesting 4G hubs, and managing urgent online requirements. Additional equipment was installed at the Trust office to restore reliable internet access, and donated equipment was also deployed for community use.

The Hofn Digital Hub is now open Monday to Friday, 10am–4pm, providing access and support for those affected. Usage is being monitored, and dedicated digital support continues to be provided through scheduled one-to-one sessions.

- ii. **Here2Help** - Interviews have been completed for relief support worker and gardening roles, with three appointments made, including one with gardening experience. This will improve overall capacity across services.
- iii. **Optician** - The visiting optician returned to the island on 6 April to fit and deliver glasses for patients seen in March 2026. A further visit is expected to be scheduled to complete the remaining assessments and prescriptions.
- iv. **Community Fridge** - Following the March 2026 Board decision, Fareshare deliveries have been suspended, although one delivery was already in transit at the time of the change. The remaining stock is still available for use. An advert for the Food Bank was put in the April Auk Talk renewed requests for local shop donations and wider community appeals via posters and social media.
- v. **Community Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund Events**
We received £300 from Westray Community Council

Colour Boost Event: The Colour Boost weekend (24–26 April) has had strong uptake, with the Friday evening social event fully booked. Workshops will take place across Saintear and the Hofn over the weekend.

Orkney Dance and Fitness: A membership has been secured, with access to online resources now in place. Due to connectivity issues, the start date is now the 6th of June, when cable repairs are complete. Planning is underway for delivery arrangements, including booking systems and venue use, with input being sought from other islands running similar programmes.

Book “Fridge”: Plans are in place to repurpose the Community Fridge freezer space to create a book exchange. Books will be donated and made available for borrowing, with optional donations directed to the Bargain Box

- vi. **Linking with G.P. Surgery** - The “Welcome to Westray” information pack has now been printed and delivered to the GP surgery for new patient registrations, following earlier delays caused by internet disruption.

- vii. **One-to-One Support** - Support has focused on digital access issues, home visits for housebound individuals, and assistance with financial queries, including funeral costs and Power of Attorney arrangements.
- viii. **Training** - Participation in scheduled mental health training sessions has been affected by ongoing internet issues.
- ix. **Wellbeing Coordinators Group** - The March meeting was disrupted due to connectivity problems and workload pressures across islands. The next meeting will be rearranged after the Easter period.
- x. **Screening Equity Group – NHS Orkney** - The next meeting is scheduled for April 2026.
- xi. **Men’s Shed** - A session is scheduled for 28 April to discuss men’s health and screening uptake, with a focus on identifying barriers to participation. This work will inform the national Screening Equity Group. Additional involvement has been requested for Men’s Health Week (15–21 June 2026).
- xii. **Westray Hub** - Attendance has continued in a volunteer capacity, providing informal support, including assistance with ferry vouchers and general one-to-one guidance. The Hub will continue monthly on Tuesday mornings, focusing on hot drinks and informal support.
- xiii. **Strength and Balance** - The Ageing Well team at Balfour Hospital is offering funded training in the OTAGO falls prevention programme. Zoe Williams has agreed to undertake training in summer 2026. Delivery will be developed in partnership with the GP surgery to support individuals identified as at higher risk of falls.

8. Sub Group Reports – None

9. Correspondence

Three applications for sponsorship of athletics events and training were presented to the Board. **The Board agreed** to support the applications.

10. AOCB

Sand O’ Gill: The fencing at Sand O’ Gill has been damaged. **The Board agreed** that it should be removed. LP suggested that there might be an option to utilise people carrying out community service.

ACTION – LP to report back with information when it comes.

Litter Station: A litter station has been gifted through Dounby Brownies fundraising, following a suggestion from Greener Orkney. The Board agreed that it should be installed at Sand O’ Gill.

ACTION – GR to arrange installation at Sand O’ Gill

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

Meeting closed at 9.10 pm



