Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge, and Achnacarry SCIO SC0 44101
Minutes – Trustees' Meeting 30th October 2025

Held at the Community Centre, Spean Bridge starting at 6pm

Present: Sharon Donald (Chair), Valerie Steele (Treasurer), Ian Langley (Secretary), Brian Smith, Melvyn Giles, Margaret Horner, Charlotte Hatto, Keith Hoole, Eilidh Maitland and Tony Perriam

1. **Apologies:** Joanna Kotula
   Sharon pointed out that as the meeting was taking place immediately before the SCIO's 2025 AGM, discussions would necessarily be brief and focussed.

2. **Approval of Minutes of Meeting on 3rd July 2025:**

   Proposed: Ian Langley
   Seconded: Brian Smith

3. **Matters Arising (not covered elsewhere on agenda):**

   Logo: our new logo was now live and in use. Sharon will alter the letterhead and Tony will update our website accordingly

4. **Community Development Officer Update:**

   Spean Bridge Community Garden and Woodland:

   The community-led **Garden Group** has now met four times and will report back to the trustees via Tony and Eilidh, the required Board member on the sub-committee**.**

   Acquisition: we took over ownership of the 3 acres of playpark, open ground, woodland and riverbed adjoining the Community Centre at Spean Bridge from Highland Council on 4 August.

   Funding: Our application to SSE's Hydro Community Fund for £18,125 of garden start-up costs was successful, and the grant will be treated as designated funds when transferred to our account. Meanwhile, Val has secured the wind-up balance of £4,015 from the now-defunct Glen Spean and Great Glen Tourism Group, on the understanding this would be spent on the garden.

   Polycrub: The Garden Group had approved the purchase of a 10 x 4m polycrub as a focal point, the cost of £10,415 covering materials, construction and internal raised beds. Given the sum involved, the trustees were asked for their approval. After a brief debate it was agreed that Tony would circulate further details and photos, and any objections aired before proceeding to place an order.

   Community Picnic: This took place on Sunday 21 September, to celebrate the acquisition of the garden and woodland. Prior promotion on social media and a prominent banner at the A82/A86 junction led to over 60 residents attending, with useful ideas gained for the garden from both adults and children. A DJ was hired, and there were stalls dedicated to ideas gathering, teas and the SCIO's activities.

<u>Roy Bridge Primary School Site</u>:

Acquisition: the transfer of the former primary school and its grounds at Roy Bridge into the SCIO's ownership on behalf of the community took place on the afternoon of the meeting, ideal timing for the imminent AGM. The agreed consideration was £75,000, a significant discount off the Open Market Value of £160,000.

The long-term lease of the former schoolhouse and garden to ***Taigh na Sgoile*** remains in place, with 29 years to run. Sharon will reach out to *Taigh na Sgoile*'s Chair and suggest a joint meeting to promote a collaborative approach going forward.

Highland Council: our Community Asset Transfer Request had earlier been approved at the 13 August meeting of the Property Committee of elected councillors.

Scottish Land Fund (SLF): our Stage Two (acquisition) grant application was successful and covered the whole of the discounted purchase price as well as our legal fees and expenses and the costs of a 0.25 FTE Roy Bridge School Project Officer from January to March 2026.

Communities Housing Trust (CHT): In light of the shortcomings of CHT's input to our SLF grant application, CHT had agreed to end our contract with them amicably and have refunded £4,320 of their £13,440 fee, previously paid in April. Tony will contact the Communities Regeneration Fund to see if their share of the refund should be returned or if it could be diverted to other spending on the project.

Pre-Application Enquiry: in anticipation of the transfer of ownership, this been submitted by Kearney Donald in June. A determination was now overdue. Grant funding had been secured for all but £227 of the £5,135 costs.

Insurance: as well as modest costs for the canteen and MUGA, a quote of £1,955 had been received from our brokers Keegan & Pennykid to add the risk of the empty Victorian classroom building at Roy Bridge School to our existing policy. A lively debate ensued, and it was agreed that Sharon, Tony and Ian from the Steering Group would review the proposed provisions and arrange cover to minimise risk as soon as possible. It was possible that the premium could be mitigated by improving the security and re-occupying the classroom.

<u>Membership</u>: now at 122: 116 Full, 6 Associate (120 in July) and Facebook followers were at 610 (565 in July)

<u>Gairlochy Noticeboard</u>: An order had been placed at a cost of £2,006, a slight increase on the £1,951 agreed at the July meeting but now including delivery to Lochaber rather than only as far as the Central Belt.

<u>Outdoor Heritage Events</u>: Tony introduced the idea of holding a small number of outdoor talks at important heritage sites within our area. The preservation of sites of historic significance was among our SCIO's stated aims. Tony will investigate further, approach possible speakers and report back at the next meeting.

5. **Trustee Retirals**:

   Sharon explained the constitutional requirement that one third of our trustees should be stepping down on rotation each year at the AGM. We began the year with 12 trustees and since then Rik Eppens had retired and Joanna Kotula had resigned on the morning of the meeting. At least one further trustee should therefore be retiring and, if willing, offering themselves for re-election. Both Brian Smith and Charlotte Hatto had earlier indicated to Sharon that they would be willing to do so at the AGM.

6. **Office Bearers:**

   Although a matter for the AGM, Sharon asked if any of the trustees present intended to stand as Chair. No-one indicated an intention to do so.

7. **Frequency of Meetings:**

   Sharon sought the meeting's view on holding six trustee meetings per year rather than four, given the SCIO's increased activity. There was widespread agreement, and a discussion on the best day of the week with Thursday evenings at 7pm emerging as the preference. At least 50% of trustee meetings would be in person, although the Roy Bridge School Steering Group and the Garden Group may find it more convenient to meet via Zoom or MS Teams more frequently. To allow full trustee meetings to focus on ongoing issues, Tony will circulate monthly updates on our charitable work.

8. **Treasurer's Report**:

   £58,064 was available in our account on the meeting date of 30 October.
   Val had liaised with Voluntary Action Lochaber over the independent examination of our 2024-25 accounts. These had been signed and would be available for members' scrutiny at the AGM.

9. **Any Other Business:**

   Spean Bridge Christmas Lights: we have been approached for financial assistance. Tony had directed this informal group to the Community Council administered Stronelairg microgrant scheme, but it was agreed to discuss ongoing support at a future meeting.
   Apple Press: Val has purchased a community apple press for £1,182 and its first outing at Roy Bridge Memorial Hall on 5 October had been well received by all ages. It was planned to repeat the event in 2026.
   Hector the Haggis has retired gracefully but may be refurbished as an Easter Egg for 2026.
   Shinty Club: the new children's strips sporting the SCIO's logo are being worn by ages 7-11 (P1 to P7) and used in both club and school tournaments. Meanwhile the SCIO's pitch side advertising board with QR code is prominent at all home matches.

Meeting closed at: 7.00pm

Date of next scheduled meeting: Sharon will circulate suggested 2026 dates in early November.

Ian Langley, Secretary