

## Ecovillage Findhorn (EVF) BOARD MEETING *minutes*

**Wednesday 31 Jan 2024 at 15.30-17.00, at Mari's House**

Present – Ross J, Rupert D, Ian C, Tessa B, Mari H, minutes; Apologies, Anni B.

Began with a short attunement & check in.

### **Minutes**

Previous minutes – approved. All approved minutes are now uploaded to [www.futurefindhorn.org](http://www.futurefindhorn.org) website which is our placeholder. We will also make these available to NFA for its new website. We need administration support to make this easier and the subscriptions promised by members will support this.

**Options with FF update (RD)** – a joint announcement from the Chair and CEO of FF was published in RB last week. There is clear, in principle, agreement between Rupert & Terry on the term, map and price of the options; but the Chair and full FF board needs to agree for it to be formalised. FF Board are meeting this week (1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> February) so the timing is hopeful. After a surprise introduction of a higher valuation in the joint meeting (based on speculative future planning permission) Rupert wrote to FF Chair and other Trustees clearly spelling out the reasons for the fair price he proposed, based on the current state, repair needs, under-investment, and ongoing “carrying cost” losses associated to site-management, and explained how the offered price achieves both community and FF financial sustainability aims in a timely way, while fitting SLF funding limits, i.e. a win-win-win.

**Local Place Plan Group (RD and MH, covering for IC).** Co-Chairs of LPPG had a good meeting with RD to address his concerns (of differentiating between a prior FF plan focused on asset valuation maximisation and a proper, community-sourced, for community-needs, non-price inflating plan); Mari had several informal meetings; followed by Mari and Rupert attending the working group. Rupert will continue to attend. The key view RD tried to get across is that LPPG must become the future community planner, doing genuine community-led planning *based on what the community wants in actuality*. In so far as it is work helping the community towards the widest possibilities for community's needs and aims then great; but it has to be clear it is the community developed agenda, not the prior FF as client-CAL-Devcom one, there is a difference (although not as much as people imagine). Any LPP must be clearly for the community's benefit and “blessed” democratically. At the same time *LPP has a deadline (September draft 2024 submission)* so these two things must be harmonised - so that we don't miss opportunities to create the widest possible planning optionality for community's future. This is what LPPWG is concerned about and has been working towards for a long time, held up waiting for materials from FF. **The meeting was very collaborative** and positive. FF is no longer looking to submit its plan to Moray and will be giving all strategic framework materials to the community, to use as the community sees fit, which is a generous act of good will by FF (per Ann McLellan, Titleholders). MH/ RD's shared view is Strategic Framework has lots of helpful elements for the community's future planning. It will be shared with community, after the feedback group, later in February. LPP look to sit with EF in right timing, as the community planning arm, per Marilyn.

**Community Housing Fund (CHF)** RD gave an extended site tour to Nicola Doctor from CHF who will be bringing us a quote to manage suitable professional contractors for valuation, housing needs analysis, technical survey on infrastructure liabilities, business planning, and other Stage 1 SLF needs. Ian knows CHT well. SLF like working with CHT as a professional provider as they did for for Ian's FDTrust SLF funded project. Tour included

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meditating in the Nature Sanctuary (!), so values seem aligned. RD stressed EF bringing in our own technical / historically well-informed expertise to supplement formal providers (e.g. Paddy, Infrastructure; Peter U. Hall)

**OSCR application** -fresh application in draft form from Mari awaiting Board edit/approval; RD has created a 30-page detailed evidenced back up document, based on the OSCR Charity Test guidance (100 page “bible”) - linking purposes to evidenced actions and outcomes, but we need a 2-page summary to submit via the web portal; Mari has drafted the rest of the application but this last 2 page precis needed, asap.

**Communications** - need digital support especially for a platform that can enable subscription income; we are looking at “Buy me a coffee” or similar. Digital skilled admin support will be very helpful more generally for website, minutes posting etc.

We will give updates to community via the new NFA website as well as our temporary one, and to any platform where it can usefully get out to members, interested parties, supporters.

We have a 10-minutes slot for an update in 5 Feb NFA meeting – RD (if he can get back in time from London) and MCH to attend.

**Websites.** RD has met both Dell Horler (outward facing world-wide website) and Viv Wylde (NFA's more local website). EF will need to do both worldwide and local members comms so will need to work with both platforms, which are for different purposes. We are back-burnering EF's own while website harmonisation happens given the current complexity!

**Governance Working Group** – Mari has had several informal meetings with leads in the GWG to request a focus on creating shared policy and procedures for all village/ community groups to adopt in collective decision making. NFA, EF and GWG seem aligned on a community way forward to removing redundancy and getting democracy in one place. Decisions will be needed going forward with local place planning (LPP), the community plan over the site (“Common Vision”) and similar, hence MH's emphasis on agreed participatory decision making processes. This need is clearly identified in CAL's strategic framework as well .

**Sharing Work Burden:** Discussion of reducing Board meetings and raising funds to hire staff or switching some Board members to paid staff or otherwise solving the issues of unavailability of half the Board members due to full-time work, travel, family or student responsibilities - to be addressed soon, in a future meeting (supervision?)

**Review of meeting (MH)** – encouraging updates, good focus; appreciation by team for the stalwart work gifted into the projects, particularly by Rupert. No in-person meeting next week; next meeting day 14 February; any business arising will be managed via emails. Switching to evening meetings reduced to every other week is possible. Postponed – Office space.