**THE BRIDGE**



**Minutes of the Annual General Meeting**

**Thursday 28 October 2021 at 6pm**

**(Virtual meeting online)**

**Present:**

Alastair Hirst The Bridge Board – Co-Convener and Yetholm Community Shop

Margaret Hindmarsh The Bridge Board – Co-Convener

Andrew Findlay The Bridge Board – Treasurer and Interest Link

Alastair Minnis The Bridge Board member and St Boswells Village Hall

John Scott Roxburgh Federation of Village & Community Halls

Penny Scott Hermitage Village Hall

Colin McGrath Kelso Community Council and SBCCN

Hazel Woodsell Kelso Heritage Society and Kelso & District Amenity Society

Joe Fernand Newlands Community Development Trust

Alex Wilson Peebles Community Trust

Trevor Cowie Peebles Archaeological Society

Ian King Selkirk Community Council and SBCCN

Alisdaire Lockhart Selkirk Community Council and SBCCN

Bill Renwick Waverley Route Heritage Association

Isobel Burton Wilton Dean Village Hall

George Runciman Blainslie Village Hall

Cilla Davidson Lamanca Hub

and representatives from TSI partners and Community Planning Partners:

Juliana Amaral BAVS (TSI Partner)

Margaret Simpson Scottish Borders Social Enterprise Chamber CIC (TSI Partner)

Chris Lau Volunteer Centre Borders (TSI Partner)

Cllr Euan Jardine Scottish Borders Council

Cllr George Turnbull Scottish Borders Council

**Apologies:**

Apologies were received from members of The Bridge: David Brackenridge (The Bridge Board member), Appletreehall District Public Hall, Bedrule Hall, Caddonfoot Hall, Fountainhall Village Hall, Fresh Start Borders, Future Hawick, Guid Blethers West Linton, Hawick Rotary Club, Heiton Village Hall, Jedburgh & District News Group, Newcastleton & District Community Trust, Peebles Civic Society, Roxburghshire SWI, Tweedsmuir Community Company, Walkerburn Community Development Trust.

**In attendance:**

Morag Walker The Bridge – Executive Officer

Heather Batsch The Bridge - Area Manager Roxburgh

Lorna McCullough The Bridge - Area Manager Tweeddale

Mim Wright The Bridge – Development Worker, Central Borders

Jane Morrison-Ross South of Scotland Enterprise – Chef Executive (speaker)

Morag Walker, Executive Officer, introduced Margaret Hindmarsh, co-Convener of The Bridge who welcomed everyone to The Bridge AGM and introduced the rest of the Board and the Keynote Speaker.

1. **Minutes of The Bridge AGM 19 November 2020**

Acceptance of the Minutes was proposed by Alastair Minnis, seconded by Andrew Findlay, and approved.

1. **Report from The Bridge Board for the year 2020-21**

Alastair Hirst, co-Convener of The Bridge, gave the report on behalf of the Board. He noted the highlights of the year, which included the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and measures taken by The Bridge to cushion our constituency of local voluntary and community organisations. We had:

* Administered a fund of £25,000 from the National Lottery which had provided support for 35 organisations.
* Worked with SCVO to lobby for the Third Sector to be included in Scottish Government Business Support Grants.
* On behalf of Fallago Environment Fund, administered their £100,000 Covid Relief Fund, providing project grants for 35 organisations.
* Through our regular community development work, supported 485 organisations including 15 new start (full details in the Annual Report).
* Disseminated information via email and website including guidance re Covid restrictions.
* Supported local organisations to lever in £3,337,000 in grant funding.
* Continued, as a partner in the Borders Third Sector Interface (TSI) to meet regularly and work collaboratively at Lead Officer and Development Officer levels.
* Provided representation for the interests of the Third Sector at a variety of Community Planning Partnership groups.
* Participated actively in the national TSI Network.
* Continued to deliver accessible community transport (though suspended at times due to covid lockdowns).
* Provided support to three Federations of Village Halls, and for individual Halls.
* And our Thrift Shops were busy catching up after covid closures.

The Bridge Trustees were extremely grateful for the support of our many volunteers and members of staff during this difficult period.

Margaret Hindmarsh thanked Alastair for providing an excellent summary of the Board report, which covered several pages in the Annual Report and Accounts for the year.

1. **Finance Report for the year to 31/3/2021 and Acceptance of the Accounts**

Andrew Findlay, The Bridge Treasurer, shared extracts from the Accounts on screen. All the figures were lower than previous years, but the community development support had continued. The Income was £364,482 and Expenditure was £333,979 resulting in a surplus of £30,503 at the year end. The funds brought forward from the previous year were £219,861 of which £172,300 were Restricted funds. The unrestricted funding of £91,956 carried forward is in line with The Bridge’s policy of maintaining a reserve of c.3 months’ expenditure. The assets were mainly the community transport vehicles and there was a breakdown for each of the three Wheels services.

The Bridge had also hosted a Citizens’ Panel support worker post on behalf of Scottish Borders Council.

Thrift Shop income was lower but considering they had only been open from August to November during this period, it was very impressive! Community transport was not able to open for much of the year.

Andrew noted that both the costs and the income were lower than last year. The Bridge had initiated lobbying with SCVO for the Third Sector to be included in covid support grants and this represented around £20 million in support coming to the sector nationally.

There were no questions; if anyone would like further information, please contact the Treasurer via Morag Walker.

Acceptance of the Accounts was proposed by Hazel Woodsell, seconded by Margaret Hindmarsh, and approved.

1. **Appointment of Independent Examiner**

The appointment of Douglas Home & Co Ltd, Chartered Accountants, as Independent Examiner was proposed by Alisdaire Lockhart, seconded by Cilla Davidson, and approved.

1. **Election of Board of Directors**

The Director appointed by the Board during the year (Alastair Minnis) stood down and presented himself for re-election, nominated by Alastair Hirst and David Brackenridge. All present were in favour and he was elected. The Board of Directors for 2021-22 was confirmed:

Alastair Hirst David Brackenridge

Margaret Hindmarsh Andrew Findlay

Alastair Minnis

1. **Keynote Speaker: Jane Morrison-Ross, CEO of South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE) on “The Spirit of Communities”**

Margaret Hindmarsh introduced the keynote speaker, Jane Morrison-Ross.

Jane was delighted to be attending the meeting, she said that the work of the Bridge was incredibly important.

Jane was keen to explain the role of SOSE – the Agency had never been formally launched as the Covid-19 lockdown hit just at that moment it came into being in April 2020. It was the only Agency launched by the devolved Scottish Government; its role was to support the well-being of the economy, the environment, and communities in the South of Scotland.

Jane had been in post for 8 months and was focused on crisis management. They had issued £12 million in support for 300 businesses – and Jane highlighted the parallel role of The Bridge in promoting £20 million in Business Support grants for third sector organisations. They had also provided a Wedding Fund to support businesses in that area.

At the beginning, SOSE only had 12 staff in post, and Board members helped to man the phones!

They have recently re-structured: the Communities team is headed up by Kate Musgrave; Jane can see why it is important to have organisations such as The Bridge and Borders TSI as a whole to connect up communities. SOSE really want to work more closely with the TSI – the gateway to success will be to work together collaboratively.

The Regional Economic Partnership has now launched its Strategy and a delivery plan is in progress. The tag line was: “to create a fair and flourishing South of Scotland.” The aim was to develop thriving and distinct communities – she will circulate the delivery plan and asked that we all look at it.

They are currently working with 170 organisations across the South of Scotland, much of this is long-term. They are involved in reviewing business plans and signposting to specific and specialist funds. Jane referred to work in Jedburgh where both SOSE and The Bridge engage in providing support.

SOSE is re-doing their website so it is clearer how they can help. They have also been reviewing the client journey, so it is quicker and clearer.

They work with organisations of all sizes/scale – and their funding support also varies in scale. For example, the large-scale funds provided to e.g., Langholm and The Haining and smaller amounts e.g., £5000 to A Greener Melrose and £15,000 to Jedburgh Community Trust. SOSE were really happy to look at any level of funding.

Their areas of expertise are available to The Bridge, and they want to be more visible, more successful. They have a dedicated Communities Team and would like to work in partnership.

They have a systems approach to Transformation:

* every aspect is important
* collaboration is key
* there is an opportunity to work together for the benefit of the South of Scotland.

Questions were invited.

Colin McGrath, chair of Scottish Borders Community Councils’ Network (SBCCN) said that they represented 69 Community Councils and around 700 community councillors. He thanked The Bridge for providing the SBCCN Secretariat – The Bridge had been helpful to them. As a member of Kelso Community Council, he spoke about a Kelso business that he had referred to SOSE. He would ask them to make contact now with Jane Morrison-Ross.

There were no other questions. Jane Morrison-Ross thanked The Bridge for inviting her to speak.

1. **Closing Remarks**

Morag Walker introduced a short video presentation on the work of The Bridge during the year.

TSI Partner Margaret Simpson (SBSEC) congratulated The Bridge and the whole team, these were impressive results.

Morag Walker thanked all the members of The Bridge development staff team for their work in support of community and voluntary organisations.

Margaret Hindmarsh, co-Convener, thanked the keynote speaker Jane Morrison-Ross, Treasurer Andrew Findlay for his financial expertise, and all the staff, including the admin staff who were not present at the meeting. She also thanked the TSI Partners for attending tonight and for working together with The Bridge to deliver the TSI Framework. She then thanked Morag Walker and Alastair Hirst for their support to her in her co-Convener role. She noted that all the Board were volunteers and thanked them and all of the volunteers of The Bridge.

Morag Walker ended the meeting by thanking Margaret Hindmarsh for leading the AGM.

**providing community and voluntary sector support**

# Scottish Borders Community Development Company (operating as The Bridge)

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