

Minutes of Village Hall meeting of 18th March 2021

Present: Dougie Oliver (chair), John Offord (treasurer), Alastair Minnis (secretary), Cliff Ellershaw, Shenagh Ellershaw, Sandra Thomas, Christine Little, Kate Warner, and Janette Jefford, with Mark Douglas, Audrey Rae, Becki Hodgson, Wilma Burns, Charles Strang, Roy and Christine Lawrie, and Charlie Duthie.

In the chair: Dougie Oliver.

1. Welcome and Apologies. Apologies received from Ros Anderson, John Lamont MP, & Amanda Richard.
2. Minutes of AGM (30th November 2020) for information, and minutes of open meeting held on same date for approval. Minutes of open meeting approved. The AGM minutes cannot be approved formally until the next AGM.
3. Matters arising. Were dealt with during the meeting.
4. Statement of current lockdown situation as it affects the village hall. At time of meeting, no advice had yet been received from The Bridge.
5. Update on our transition to the new SCO. Alastair provided an account of the historical process. Making this public is a required part of our progression from the old organisation, St Boswells Public Hall (SCO35577) to the new one, St Boswells Village Hall (SCO48481). A dossier of documents had been pre-circulated. The original 1896 Disposition is our founding document. In the beginning, a plot of building land was offered to the village by Miss Mary Theresa Baillie of Dryburgh House, a daughter of Charles Baillie, Lord Jerviswoode, who had spent his last years there (he died in 1879). Mary Theresa paid a hundred pounds for the ground where the Hall now stands to Benjamin Hunter, 'merchant of St Boswells'. Hunter's 1896 Disposition declares that she 'has agreed to purchase from me the said piece of ground for the purpose of making a free gift of the same ... to the Village of St Boswells as a site for the Public Hall which is about to be erected thereon'. This property was 'disposed' to a group of Trustees including the relevant member of the County Council of Roxburghshire, Robert Somervaille; Walter Ballantyne (son of the Walter who established the Ballantyne grocery business in the building now used by The Mainstreet Trading Company); and the butler of Dryburgh House. Moving forward to 1954, then it was it was 'considered desirable to enlarge and modernise the said Saint Boswells Public Hall, increase its amenities, and introduce a system of management more in keeping with modern requirements'. So in 1955 a new Deed of Trust was registered with the Registers of Scotland. Whilst the trustees maintained their responsibility for the upkeep of the hall's fabric, the general management was vested in a Committee of Management, with nominations invited from the many village organizations. The next significant legal date: on 1st January 1992 the Public Hall became a charity registered with the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (SCO35577). Moving forward to 2017: at a Management Committee meeting in May of that year it was decided to abolish the old trust (the means of management since 1896) and proceed to a new-style Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), under the general Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR), the independent Regulator and registrar for Scotland's charities. [A document recording the relevant committee discussions is appended to these minutes.] This involved a fresh Disposition (2019), and getting the village hall recorded on

the new land registry – a process which took a long time due to the general slow-down caused by Covid, etc. The remaining documents presented for public scrutiny were: the new SCIO's Constitution, the Code of Conduct for Trustees, and the list of current "trustees". [Note: not to be confused with the type of trusteeship in place from 1896-2020]. It should be noted that the new SCIO has actually been in existence since the 21st June 2018, but the process of transition has taken until now, so we have been obliged to run a "dual system", making annual returns for both charitable organisations to OSCR. Alastair shall be sending to them a completed "Notification of changes made to your charity document", as soon as bank account details become available, confirming the winding-up of the old organisation, SCO35577. The patient and careful assistance of our consultant solicitor Andy Drane throughout this long process was noted, with warm appreciation. It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to Andy, along with a little gift.

6. For the new SCIO: elections and resignations. At this point Alastair briefly took over as chair, since Dougie Oliver was standing for election as a trustee. He was duly elected. The resignation of Robin Wild as a trustee was noted. It was agreed that a letter of warm thanks for his long service should be sent to Robin. Dougie then resumed as chair.

7. Treasurer's report. John explained that he was presenting basically the same information for two sets of accounts, both of which are to be independently audited for delivery to OSCR, together with annual reports signed by Dougie as chair: one for St Boswells Public Hall (SCO35577), the other for St Boswells Village Hall (SCO48481). This shall be the last time we have to report on the former. We are in a very healthy financial situation, despite the hall being closed due to Covid 19 restrictions. On the 25th February 2021 the balance on the current account was £24,163.86. The majority of this balance can be accounted for by a small business grant from SBC of £25,000 paid on 24th July 2020 and two further grants from SBC of £2,000 each paid for January and February this year. This should continue through March at least, at the rate of £500 per week. On top of all that, currently we are a Co-Op award cause and the money raised so far is £915; hopefully that will be doubled by the time the scheme ends for us in October. The No. 2 account stood at £10,343.99 at the start of February and there have been no withdrawals from this account for over a year. As part of our transfer to the new SCO the Bank of Scotland has agreed to change the name of the current account to St Boswells Village Hall, and we can continue to run the account as before. Unfortunately the Royal Bank of Scotland was not prepared to make a similar name-change to our account with them. Rather than open a new account with them it makes sense to close this account and transfer the balance to the Bank of Scotland.

8. Account of village hall refurbishments and maintenance work in progress. John went on to address this. We are facing expenditure for re-slatting the roof of the hall extension (around £6,000), re-painting the external woodwork (£5535 ex. vat, with the hire of a cherry picker an additional cost), and the new website (around £1500, in light of the three estimates we have obtained). As treasurer he is comfortable with committing to all of this, given the current healthy state of our finances plus the fact that funding to help with the re-roofing cost has been sought from the Federation of Village Halls (the usual limit of awards is £2000), and an application has been made to one of the National Lottery's funds to pay for the website. Dougie noted that the company Dobbie and Michie (of Hawick) had repaired the hall floor, at no charge to us. It was agreed that a letter of thanks should be sent to them.

9. An appeal was made for photographs and images of events in and around St Boswells Village Hall (for our new webpages). Alastair said he is happy to scan any old-style photos which owners themselves may not have the means of scanning. Dougie undertook to set up on Facebook a competition for the best relevant photograph.

10. AOB.

(1.) Alastair noted that the SBC had been in contact regarding using the Village Hall as a polling station for the upcoming Holyrood election. The plan is to take over the hall for the entire week (3rd-7th May) to allow plenty of time for setting-up the main hall, in light of Covid restrictions. It is unclear what cleaning is required and who is supposed to do it. (There was discussion of polling station use at the last Federation of Village Halls meeting, at which many concerns were raised.) Obviously, what we charge the SBC will be affected by what responsibilities we are obliged to bear. Alastair shall keep in touch with Judith Turnbull, the Democratic Services Officer, who herself is not yet in possession of all the requisite information.

(2.) Appreciation for all the work carried out by the management committee was expressed. Charlie Duthie explained that he was attending on behalf of Turas, the Gaelic Singing Group, and looked forward to returning to the Hall. Becki Hodgson (as Bright Start Borders Project Manager) expressed a similar ambition. Alastair noted that two groups had inquired about the possibility of using the hall for wedding receptions, but he had to put them off for now. At the time of writing these minutes, we are still awaiting clarification of how the re-emergence from lockdown will affect village halls. The lack of specific information is very frustrating.

11. Date of next meeting. It was decided that this should be left open, until fuller details of our emergence from lockdown were provided.

**APPENDIX: Extracts from Minutes of Meetings held by
St Boswells Public Hall Management Committee, re becoming the new SCIO.**

(1.) 23rd May 2017, at 7-30pm

In attendance: Kate Warner (Chair), Keith Farnish (secretary), Shenagh Ellershaw, Cliff Ellershaw, Bill Muir, Ruth Drane, Lauren Purves, Robin Wild.

There was a discussion regarding the proposals to incorporate St Boswells Public Hall as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (a “SCIO”). It was noted that many village halls in Scotland have taken this step and that it has significant advantages not least to management and long term sustainability. After due consideration it was decided that St Boswells Public Hall would incorporate as a SCIO to be known as St Boswells Village Hall and that upon incorporation the business and assets of St Boswells Public Hall would be transferred to St Boswells Village Hall.

(2.) On the 19th September OSCR approved our request for re-organization.

This was discussed at a management committee meeting on the 10th October 2018, at 7p.m.

In attendance: Cliff Ellershaw (chair), Keith Farnish (secretary), Kate Warner (treasurer), Denise Brebner, Shenagh Ellershaw, Sandra Thomas, Alastair Minnis, Audrey Rae.

It was noted that “OSCR have confirmed the successful application for re-organisation”, and that “we are now able to carry out legal work for the transfer of assets”.

This process has taken a long period of time, in large measure due to the impact of Covid-19, which in particular delayed the Land Registry in approving our application re change of ownership, which involved placing the village hall on the new land registry.