

Unst Partnership AGM – 23rd April 2013 - Chairman's Report

Unst Partnership have taken on 12 new members in the last year, increasing membership to 78, roughly a seventh of the adult population. That is reasonably good but we would like to increase it over the next year to 100.

We have sent out two Newsletters since Verona took over from our outgoing LDO (Local Devt Officer) Hannah Eynon in September. Thanks to both for their work over the past year. We have 7 Directors on the board, three new faces - Dave Howitt, Murray Brown and Steve Swan, now vice chair. Dave resigned midway through the year but put in a lot of hours to assist us in that time.

We have altered our Articles of Association to allow the Partnership to have a more modern constitution, allowing for Right to Buy status if it were ever needed and for Unst Community Council representation on our Board.

The Tourist Map proved very popular and has been reprinted for this year in greater quantity (from 2.5 K to 5K copies). Thanks to Ted Harrison for the design and Hannah, Verona and Steve for their work in bringing in grant funding and advertising.

Continuing the Tourism theme, we have been involved in helping Chas Hollis set up the "Walkers are Welcome" site for visitors, as well as assisting consultations over the SNH information site at Burrafirth and at Halligarth House and woods.

We also had some talks with Marvin Smith of the SIC over improving Broadband coverage in the Uyeasound district. We are awaiting news of the Fetlar project before continuing with this.

We finally received Feed in Tariff (FIT) income for our wind turbine but decided to scrap the other one as it was going to cost too much to insure and repair. This has been a long saga but we will now receive an estimated £1000 a year from the remaining working turbine.

The polytunnels continue to be used, with 5 out 6, possibly now all 6 being occupied. We are trying to keep the costs to users as low as possible (currently £30 plus VAT a year) although insurance and replacing covers was costly after last winter's gales. With netting and more protection, the tunnels have survived this winter quite successfully. Thanks to Jane Macaulay and URGE members for their help and advice with these.

With a local donation, we brokered a 6 month lease of the vacant Northern Lights Bistro. The Bistro's fortunes were mixed but it did stay open as a tourist facility last summer. We are unable to secure further funding and the property is currently empty this summer, although is still on the market.

We are not much further forward with a community wind turbine but are still keen to find a site and explore feasibility, given enough community support. This formed part of the Community consultation tonight at the earlier session. Wind turbines are not universally popular but they are a good potential income source for community groups if the community itself is willing to support them.

I would like to thank Verona, Bridgette our Admin Assistant and the Directors for their support over the year. We have secured funding for one more year but our three year contract expires in 2014 and we will have to show that we have a good case for further funding, as well as trying to increase income, to secure our future beyond that point.

Gordon M. Thomson
Chairman