



**Strathpeffer and District Community Rowing Club**  
Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) number 48977

## **Minutes of Annual General Meeting (AGM)**

**Wednesday 22 October at 8pm**  
**Strathpeffer Community Centre**

### **Present:**

Tor Justad (acting Chair), Bruce Taylor (Treasurer), Sarah Thomson (acting Secretary), Val Hogg, Laura Girvan, Angus MacInnes, Anne Hitchen, John Hitchen, Mark Taylor, Maz Wyllie, Emil Horsia, Gordon Robb, Neil Moscrop, Mike Hogg, Silvija Wilde, Sally Kershaw, Pamela McLelland, Fi Chalmers, Robert Greenwood, Andy Wilcox, Iain Law, Michael Dickerson, Kate Heathcote, Anna Myeshkova, Nicola Williamson, Trish Richard, Rod Richard, Marcus Thomson, Averil Milligan, Wendy Kerr, Sarah Nicholas, Kylie Blandford, Renate Jephcott (via zoom).

### **1. Welcome and apologies received - Angus MacInnes**

#### **Apologies were received from:**

Alan Mackintosh, Andy Paterson, Anji Soutar, Hannah Moneagle, Andrew Rose, Jo Newton, Roni Smith, Sam Crisp, Lizbeth Collie, Moses Choinka.

Angus opened the meeting by welcoming those present and explaining that, following the resignation of the Chair of the SDCRC, the board had agreed that a neutral party should chair the AGM proceedings and that this should be Tor Justad. Tor is the founder of the club and without him and his guidance there would be no SDCRC. Tor has always put the best interests of the club at the heart of all his dealings as a past Chair and Trustee.

#### **Brian Fraser**

Before beginning the official business of the evening, Angus gave a tribute to Brian Fraser, who died in August.

Brian was an enthusiastic member of the club and an active boat builder who travelled from Boat of Garten to join the build team at the barn despite challenging weather conditions. He attended the world rowing championships at Stranraer where he and his wife Carol supported the club and enjoyed the conviviality and hospitality. Carol visited the barn recently to see the Wemyss skiff he was working on and expressed an interest in attending the launch of the boat when that takes place.

## **2. Minutes of AGM held on 29 October 2024.**

Proposed: Sarah Thomson; Seconded Robert Greenwood.  
Minutes were approved. No matters arising.

## **3. Appointment of Tor Justad as temporary Chair.**

Angus handed over to Tor, who promised to give a steady hand to the tiller and keep things on an even keel throughout the evening. He also promised not to make any more puns about sailing...  
(Please see attached statement from Tor).

## **4. Treasurer's report - Bruce Taylor (Treasurer)**

Bruce outlined the main financial highlights (previously distributed via email to all members) and explained that the club's finances are in good shape, with membership up by 22% and the bank balance up by a healthy £4,390. He particularly thanked the students at Invergordon Academy for representing our club in the Youth and Philanthropy Initiative (YPI) and donating the resultant £3,000 grant to us so that we can create a better boat shelter at the Storehouse. Tor added that these accounts are the best he's seen for any of the charitable organisations he has been involved with and he thanked Bruce for his hard work and clarity of explanation.

Proposed: Marcus Thomson; seconded: Sylvia Wilde.  
Finance report was approved.

## **5. Chair's report - Moses Choinka (ex Chair)**

(see attached Chair's report).

## **6. Amendment to clause 10.3 in the club's constitution (Marcus Thomson)**

Marcus explained the background to this amendment and took questions from members. It is an anomaly that was caused by adopting a constitution used before the club was incorporated. The club's incorporation means that there is now no need for Holding Trustees. Members of the Board are responsible for holding and managing the club's assets and finances. This is merely a tidying up exercise.

Proposed: Rod Richard; Seconded: Trish Richard  
The amendment was approved unanimously.

## **7. Resolution (Marcus Thomson)**

Marcus introduced the idea behind this resolution. The club has now grown to over 100 members and management of its various activities is becoming increasingly difficult. The suggestion is to create a system of subcommittees to take the pressure off the board. There is no need to change the constitution; the board already has the power to delegate power to sub-committees.

Marcus cited two advantages of this resolution:

- a) it takes pressure off the board and spreads the work load, and
- b) It is more democratic as it will enable more people to get involved at a sub-committee level and have a closer connection to the board and the running of the club

This is not a new idea - plenty of other clubs operate in this way. Marcus referred the idea to Anji Soutar (who has a wealth of club experience) and she confirmed this is the case. The final structure is of course up to the new board, but suggested committees might be:

Membership & safeguarding,  
Introduction of new members & social rowing  
Boat building & repairing,  
Fundraising,

## Regattas & competitive rowing

Nicola, a long time board member, raised a question about time commitment and felt that some members have more time than others to fulfil their roles. Iain agreed that being on the board is hard work and that this idea might help those who are not able to commit to a board role. He suggested that if members are time-pressed, a role on a sub-committee would take away some of the pressure and allow the member to help out in a supportive team.

Tor agreed that the introduction of subcommittees would spread the workload.

Emil asked who would be on the sub-committees. Marcus suggested that this would be up to people to offer their time in whichever committee they could best help.

Maz advised that she has experience of this way of working on several boards and that regular reporting from the sub-committees back to the board is a good way of bringing people in.

John said he has no problem with the resolution because it works with the constitution as it currently stands. He queried the requirement for people to express an interest within 21 days of the AGM and Marcus explained that it would be helpful to vote for the heads of the various sub-committees at tonight's meeting.

Nicola asked if it could be left to the board to decide who heads up the various sub-committees and Sylvija wondered if the matter should be referred to the 70+ members NOT present, so that they could be involved. Marcus said that was a possibility but everyone had received the AGM papers prior to the meeting and he felt that it would be preferable to get all board members voted in tonight.

Averil suggested that the 9 board member roles should be assigned this evening but that the sub-committee members could be managed via the usual channels.

She suggested that the new membership process could involve encouraging people to join a sub-committee they can help with. Nicola endorsed the idea that each board member should represent the head of a sub-committee.

Maz suggested that the board could wait until after the AGM to find the committee members.

Proposed: Averil Milligan; Seconded: Val Hogg  
The resolution was voted in by a majority.

## **8. Election of Trustees and office bearers for 2025/2026 season**

Those present were asked to support the election of the following board members who stood unopposed as follows:

### **Office holders:**

<b>Chair</b>	<b>Tor Justad</b>
<b>Vice-Chair</b>	<b>Rod Richard</b>
<b>Secretary</b>	<b>Marcus Thomson</b>
<b>Treasurer/Membership*</b>	<b>Bruce Taylor</b>

\* Bruce offered to include membership as part of his treasurer role as it was felt that membership secretary would have been too onerous to be included with safeguarding.

Five trustee positions were available as heads of the following proposed sub-committees:

Safeguarding  
Boat building and repair  
Fundraising  
Training/competitive rowing  
Events and expeditions

Sarah Nicholas suggested that there could be 10 people on the board to spread the workload and Nicola confirmed that there have been 10 in the past. Marcus explained that increasing the number

of board members would require a resolution to change the constitution. The constitution currently says there can't be more than 9 board members.

The following 9 people were standing for the remaining 5 trustee positions:

Moses Choinka, Laura Girvan, Robert Greenwood, Iain Law, Angus MacInnes, Alan Mackintosh, Anna Myeshkova, Andy Paterson, Nicola Williamson.

After some discussion, it was agreed to allow 5 votes to each member present in the room and everyone wrote down their 5 chosen names. Counting was conducted out of the room by Kylie Blandford, Anne Hitchen, Mark Taylor and Maz Wyllie.

The 5 new board members were then announced by Tor as follows:

Moses Choinka,

Laura Girvan,

Robert Greenwood,

Iain Law,

Angus MacInnes,

Tor gave thanks on behalf of all the members to past members for their work on the board.

## **9. AOB**

### **A. Anne and John Hitchen and Anna Myeshkova Management of the mixed U17 crew for the World Championships 2025.**

Tor explained that detailed discussion on this topic has to be held away from the AGM and that any comments this evening should contain absolutely no reference to named individuals.

Tor emphasised that the club should take safeguarding very seriously and that lessons have and will be learned from this hugely

impactful procedural error. Meetings will be held with the concerned parties as soon as possible, taking advice from people qualified to deal with these issues. He invited John and Anne Hitchen and Anna Myeshkova to add their comments.

John would like the committee to address significant issues with regard to rule compliance at regattas and trust in the integrity of role holders. In particular, he would like to bring to the attention of the members the failures in safeguarding and welfare of vulnerable groups within the club. John explained that his prime concern is the way that the board has handled the matter since questions began to arise about the age of the individual in the Under 17 boat. Tonight is the first time he has heard a recognition from the board that they are accountable and take responsibility for the matter. He feels it has taken too long for a board member to state: “we have failed as a club”. Anne Hitchen added her concerns about the lack of communication and the silence from board members on the issue. She said it has been traumatic waiting for replies. Laura said that (as previous committee member) she has dealt with communications from St Ayles Skiff International (SASI) and Scottish Coastal Rowing Association (SCRA) by passing these on to relevant board members. Laura has recorded a timeline which will be helpful for investigations. There was discussion around the room about accountability and the challenges of social media. Tor agreed that a club code or policy for the use of social media would also be helpful going forward.

Anna echoed the Hitchen’s comments about not being able to have this conversation until tonight and emphasised that she is still waiting for a response from the board concerning the matter.

Tor agreed that it has been an unacceptable wait for an official statement from the board and that, as soon as the new board start work, this important matter will take priority.

**B. 1. (Andy Paterson) A committee/builder agreed process for boat modification** - to avoid unnecessary work and time out of the water.

## **B. 2. (Andy Paterson) Racing squad/crew selection clarification**

- to ensure no one who qualifies for a crew on age and physical ability is excluded from training and potential selection.

Tor said that the new sub-committee system would address all these concerns and he hoped that Andy would want to join one or more of the new sub-committee groups.

## **C (Anji Soutar) - general skiff availability at weekends**

Anji asked if one skiff could be made available for general use, especially at weekends, and if more notice could be given before rowing events so that new members could join in.

Tor repeated his view that he felt this matter would be resolved by the formation of the new sub-committees.

## **D. Statement from new member (Maz Wyllie)**

Maz joined the club 8 months ago and wished to outline her experiences as a new member of SDCRC, which had not been positive. **The statement that Maz read out is attached to these minutes.**

## **10. Summing up and conclusion of meeting (Tor Justad)**

Tor thanked Maz for her statement and concluded the meeting by emphasising that the toxic elements highlighted by her (namely: envy, ego and insecurity) do indeed need to be carefully managed and that the new board would strive to make the very necessary and urgent changes to take the club forward in a positive way. Tor thanked members for attending and giving up their time to attend.

The meeting concluded at 10.15pm.

