

The Highland Council

Minutes of Meeting of the **Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee** held remotely, via Microsoft Teams, on Monday 16 December 2024 at 9.00 am.

Present:

Mrs M Cockburn
Ms L Dundas
Mr J Finlayson
Mr R Gale

Ms M Hutchison
Ms M MacCallum
Mr D Millar

In attendance:

Ms K Lackie, Assistant Chief Executive – People
Mr D Martin, Principal Education Officer
Ms M Murray, Principal Committee Officer
Ms R Ross, Committee Officer

Business

1. Appointment of Chair

Mr D Millar, having been duly nominated and seconded, was unanimously appointed as Chair.

2. Appointment of Vice Chair

Mr R Gale, having been duly nominated and seconded, was unanimously appointed as Vice Chair.

3. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were intimated on behalf of Mr J McGillivray and Mr R Stewart.

4. Declarations of Interest/Transparency Statements

There were no Declarations of Interest or Transparency Statements.

5. Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee – Remit

There had been circulated Report No ETF/1/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In response to a question, it was confirmed that it would be reported to the Sub-Committee if more Trusts were discovered in the future. The John Kirk Mortification would require to be revisited once further information had been received from the Court of Session.

In relation to the proposed powers to be delegated to officers, information was sought, and provided, as to why the value of single applications on which officers would have the authority to make award decisions had been limited to up to £500, and support was

expressed for increasing the value to up to £1000. It was confirmed that where there were multiple applications to the same category they would be brought to the Sub-Committee for determination, and awards made under delegated powers would be reported to the Sub-Committee for information.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the remit of the Educational Trust Fund Sub-Committee as set out in section 5.1 of the report; and
- ii. **AGREED** the proposed duties and powers delegated to officers as set out in section 6.1 of the report, subject to the value of single applications which officers had delegated authority to make award decisions on being increased to up to £1000.

6. Small Trusts and Bequests

There had been circulated Report No ETF/2/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on the reasons for the proposed transfer of the funds in respect of Forbes Meteorological Trust to Inverness Royal Academy, and why section 14.1 of the report referred to the Charity Commission for England and Wales rather than the Scottish Charity Regulator.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the limited historical knowledge of the creation of the following small funds and bequests and **AGREED** to close them and transfer as follows:-
 - a. Forbes Meteorological Trust to Inverness Royal Academy
 - b. AM Mackay Bequest to the capital fund of Inverness-shire Educational Trust
 - c. Belgian Youth Exchange to Inverness-shire Educational Trust
 - d. Lochaber Education Fund to Inverness-shire Educational Trust
 - e. Davidina Ross Bequest to Inverness-shire Educational Trust
 - f. John Mackay Prize to Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust
 - g. Jane Macpherson Prize to Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust
 - h. Duncraig College Fund to Duncraig Educational Trust
 - i. Williamina Stewart Bequest to Wick High School
 - j. Moray & Nairn to Inverness-shire Educational Trust; and
- ii. **AGREED** to McKay and J Mackenzie MM Rogart Will being offered as two bursaries for a year and the fund then being closed.

7. Caithness Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/3/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, information was sought, and provided, on the Manson Bequest (Keiss), during which it was confirmed that the recipients of the proposed bursaries would be nominated by the Head Teacher of Wick High School.

Concern was expressed that some of the terminology in the Trust Schemes and Approved Plans, such as “best pupil” and “top class”, was outdated and did not reflect modern society. In that regard, it was explained that legal advice had been taken and it was necessary to strike a balance between the original intentions of the bequestor and the law as it stood today. Some of the language had already been modified, for example, “best pupil” had originally been “best boy”, and it was confirmed that “top class” meant “senior class” and could be amended accordingly.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the key changes to the Trust Scheme;
- ii. **APPROVED** the new Caithness Educational Trust Scheme 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- iii. **APPROVED** the Plan and procedures (Appendix 2 of the report); and
- iv. **AGREED** that any references, in Trust Schemes and Approved Plans, to “top class” be amended to “senior class”.

8. County of Sutherland Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/4/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, it was suggested that the proposals for the expenditure of free income were too prescriptive, and that greater flexibility be built in to allow more people to potentially benefit. It was confirmed there was no impediment to allocating the free income across all the categories listed.

In response to a question, it was explained that the County of Sutherland Trust had been in abeyance for some years. Going forward, there would be a new website covering all the Trust Schemes, and a new application process, and it was intended to start advertising in January. Consultation with Head Teachers having been suggested, it was clarified that the Trusts were not specifically for schools, and it was for the Sub-Committee, as Trustees, to make decisions on the disbursement of funds.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the key changes to the Trust Scheme;
- ii. **APPROVED** the new County of Sutherland Educational Trust Scheme 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report); and
- iii. **APPROVED** the Plan and procedures (Appendix 2 of the report) subject to the Third Schedule being amended to reflect that free income would be awarded across all the categories listed.

9. Ross and Cromarty Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/5/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, the following points were raised:-

- information was sought, and provided, on the percentage of available funds allocated to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and the background to the arrangement, which it was confirmed would require to continue to meet the terms of the Trust;
- attention having been drawn to the reference to Rosehall School Fund on page 98 of the papers, it was queried why this sat within the Ross and Cromarty Educational Trust Scheme as Rosehall School was in Sutherland. In response, it was explained that there would have been a Rosehall School in Ross and Cromarty in the past and that, where schools had closed, current catchment areas were looked at. It was confirmed that further research could be carried out to clarify the location of the former Rosehall School; and
- information was sought, and provided, as to how the Trust Fund had been publicised to date, and it was confirmed that information on recent awards could be provided following the meeting.

The Sub-Committee:-

- NOTED** the key changes to the Trust Scheme;
- APPROVED** the new Ross & Cromarty Educational Trust Scheme 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- APPROVED** the Plan (Appendix 2 of the report); and
- AGREED** that information on the location of the former Rosehall School in Ross and Cromarty and recent awards from the Ross and Cromarty Educational Trust Fund be provided to Members of the Sub-Committee by email.

10. Inverness-shire Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/6/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In relation to the Meta MacBean Bursary Prize for an essay on an original aspect of Badenoch history or genealogy, it was commented that education had evolved, and it was queried whether there was scope to broaden the boundary and work collaboratively with organisations such as High Life Highland, who had employed someone for Badenoch The Storylands, and Heritage Horizons to create a lasting legacy of the work produced. The Principal Education Officer confirmed that guidance could be sought from High Life Highland and others in terms of setting parameters for the essay. However, the will was very specific and it was not possible to use the money for anything other than an essay, which needed to be of high quality to gain the prize. On the point being raised, it was confirmed that Members could decide to accept an essay in any medium, including digital. It was suggested that the Principal Education Officer report back to the Sub-Committee in March with proposals in terms of essay format and parameters, and that the prize be awarded at the September meeting, with the essay submissions being circulated to Members in advance for consideration.

On the point being raised, it was confirmed that Approved Plans could be reviewed to ensure there were no references to public schools or junior secondary schools. However, it was not possible to amend the Trust Schemes as they had to reflect what was stated in the original endowments. Where schools no longer existed, the funding went to the appropriate current catchment school.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the key changes to the Trust Scheme;
- ii. **APPROVED** the new Inverness-shire Educational Trust Scheme 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- iii. **APPROVED** the Plan and procedures (Appendix 2 of the report);
- iv. **AGREED**, in relation to the Meta MacBean Bursary Prize, that proposals in terms of essay format and parameters be presented to the March meeting of the Sub-Committee for consideration, and that the prize be awarded at the September meeting of the Sub-Committee; and
- v. **AGREED** that Approved Plans be reviewed to ensure there were no references to public schools or junior secondary schools.

11. Duncraig Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/7/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

During discussion, it was commented that it was necessary to clearly articulate the wide-reaching nature of the Duncraig Educational Trust, which was not only pan-Highland but open to those of Highland descent who lived outwith Highland, and it was suggested that consideration be given to an all-Member communication or a follow-up report to the Education Committee on the various Educational Trusts.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the key changes to the Trust Scheme;
- ii. **APPROVED** the new Duncraig Educational Trust Scheme 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- iii. **APPROVED** the Plan and procedures (Appendix 2 of the report); and
- iv. **AGREED** to delegate authority to officers to approve awards in January 2025, as an interim measure.

12. Inverness Royal Academy Endowment Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/8/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

In response to a question, it was clarified that, whilst there was no specific reference to Gaelic within the Trust Scheme, applications related to Gaelic were not excluded.

It having been queried whether the facility to award capital grants to school hostels for additional amenities applied to other Trusts, particular reference having been made to Plockton Hostel, it was confirmed that it was possible to draw down from capital funds. However, the impact on the capital fund and the resultant loss of free income would be significant. It was suggested the matter merited further discussion at a future meeting.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the key changes to the Trust Scheme;
- ii. **APPROVED** the new Inverness Royal Academy Educational Trust Scheme 2024 (Appendix 1 of the report);
- iii. **APPROVED** the Plan (Appendix 2 of the report); and
- iv. **AGREED** to adopt the scheme into the Highland Council Charitable Trusts.

13. Gairloch and Plockton High Schools Educational Trust

There had been circulated Report No ETF/9/24 by the Assistant Chief Executive – People.

The Sub-Committee:-

- i. **NOTED** the historical knowledge of the creation of these funds;
- ii. **AGREED** the movement of HCT Gairloch High School Fund from “Highland Charities Trust” to “Highland Council Charitable Trusts”;
- iii. **AGREED** the movement of Howard Doris Fund into Highland Council Charitable Trusts;
- iv. **AGREED** the formation of Gairloch and Plockton High Schools Educational Trust and **APPROVED** the associated Trust Scheme (Appendix 1 of the report); and
- v. **APPROVED** the Plan (Appendix 2 of the report).

During further general discussion, information was sought, and provided, as to whether work was still taking place to look for Trusts that were in abeyance, the ongoing work on the history of the Trusts, bequests etc already identified, and what happened if there were Parent Council funds in abeyance. Members expressed thanks to the Principal Education Officer for his extensive work on this matter.

The meeting concluded at 10.20 am.