



MEETING OF THE FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE

Chair – Shona MacDougall

Tuesday, 10th March 2026 at 5pm via Microsoft Teams

Committee Members

Chris Alliston, Independent Board Member

Derek Lewis, Chair of the Board of Management

Jacqui Barclay, Professional Services Staff Board Member

Shona MacDougall, Committee Chair & Senior Independent Board Member

Also, Present

Debbie Miller, Vice Principal Strategic Developments

Derek Bond, Derek Bond, Vice Principal – Resources & Enterprise (CFO)

Doug Rattray, Head of Infrastructure and Estates

Ellen Campbell, Board Secretary

Hannah Ritchie-Muir, Vice Principal Academic

Joe MacPhee, Head of Strategic Projects

Stuart Gibb, Director of Research and Knowledge Exchange

1. QUORUM & APOLOGIES

There shall be not less than three members. A quorum shall be no less than half the voting members.

Apologies: Lydia Rohmer, Principal & CEO, Alex Macdonald, Independent Board Member

The meeting was quorate.

It was noted that this would be the last time that the current CFO would attend this meeting before taking up his new role with UHI EO. The Chair introduced and welcomed Jacqui Barclay as a new member of the Finance and General Purposes Committee.

2. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

The Chair informed the Committee members and reporting officers, that she intended to manage the meeting differently due to the large volume of papers. This meeting of the Finance and General Purposes committee had already been pushed back to accommodate financial reporting time constraints; however, the financial reports had still been exceptionally late. Committee members may not have had time to fully read the late reports, and the Chair had therefore requested the CFO to take the committee members through them in more detail. The Chair advised that she had considered a continuation of this meeting into the following day, however lack of member availability had proven the option to be unviable. Reports for noting would be taken as noted, focus would be applied to papers presented for approval or endorsement. The committee were content to proceed.

3. Minutes from previous meetings 10th March 2026

Some minor corrections to grammar were requested for the minute of 10th March 2026. A reference to an HR matter within the minute would be removed.

4. Action Tracker

Outstanding items would be addressed at agenda items later in this meeting. In particular, the deferred review of outstanding Financial Policies and overdue Review of Financial Regulations were requested to be reported to the next meeting of this Committee scheduled for September 2026.

Reviewed and approved.

5. *Health & Safety quarterly report Doug Rattray (DR) for Jim Hutton

Noted. No questions were received in advance; therefore, the report was noted.

6. *Research and knowledge exchange quarterly report – Stuart Gibb (SG)

The Committee recognised a very detailed, interesting and positive report, though pointed out that the income figures within the KPI dashboard still read as 27pence, instead of £2.7m. SG would correct the figures.

Action: SG to correct figures with the KPI dashboard of the R&KE report.

Noted

7. *Strategic projects – Stuart Gibb (SG / Debbie Miller (DM) / Joe MacPhee (JM)

7.1. Confidential – withheld

7.2. * Confidential item – withheld

7.3. Restricted – Hydrogen Projects Update June 2026 – JM

The committee thanked JM for his detailed report, though noted that capacity and limited staff resources were an issue here again.

Many of the members were not familiar with the hydrogen sector, agreeing that the Board should be informed at a strategic level to assist in giving an informed view. JM would introduce Nigel Holmes, CEO of Hydrogen Scotland, who would give a short presentation to the Board on 17th June 2026.

Noted

1654 SG left

7.4. *Thurso Lifelong Learning Campus – DM

The Committee commented that this was a detailed report with an in-depth update.

Noted

7.5. *Nigg Skills Academy update – DM

References to Nigg Skills Academy would be removed from future agendas, as the project was now known as NU Horizons Training Ltd.

Noted

8. *Confidential – withheld

9. * Confidential – withheld

10. *Estates and capital work plan – Doug Rattray (DR)

10.1. Update on 2025/26 planned works – DR

DR gave his periodic update to the F&GP Committee, with updates given on the scheduled replacement to the tower lift on Thurso campus and replacement of the biomass boiler on Fort William campus, both were reported to be progressing in line with original costings.

The CFO informed the committee that the funding allocations from SFC appeared to be less than what was expected via the Government. The 2026/27 planned works would bring options for other areas where emergency funding could be applied for. The FFR rules disseminated by the SFC on Monday had intimated that there would be a reduced flexibility in grant funding for capital works.

Endorsed

10.2 Outline plan for 2026/27 – DR

The oil boilers on Stornoway campus would cost an estimated £1.5m to replace. Assistance had been requested from both the HIE and local Council Authority to meet the total sum.

The college had previously been successful in application for emergency capital grant funding, with indications that NWH would be permitted to apply for further projects in 2026/27.

The committee questioned how DR had arrived at a preferred choice of replacement boilers. It was advised that a feasibility study had been conducted, which had resulted in learning that ground / air source types would have maintenance and parts issues. A hybrid fossil / renewable (50% decarbonised) would receive funding through the decarbonisation fund as well as input from the CNES and HIE. Technical expertise had been given by M4, CNES and HIE, which had concluded that this was the best option.

The committee asked if NWH had the analysis that supported the boiler choice, as it was recognised that there would be a £1m spend from the public purse. DR advised that he would circulate the analysis documentation to the committee via email along with the feasibility, presentation and financial modelling.

The Chair requested to see sound financial analysis when the project came back to the F&GP committee for approval.

Endorsed- subject to the projects coming back for scrutiny of due diligence. 1728 DR left

11. *Confidential item – withheld

12. * Confidential item - withheld

13. * Confidential item - withheld

1835 CA Left

14. * Confidential item - withheld

15. Grants / Donations for approval – Debbie Miller (DM)

none

16. Financial policies and regulations for review (TBC) – Derek Bond (CFO)

Still outstanding due to lack of resource within the Finance team

17. A.O.B.

The Chair and committee expressed their thanks to Derek Bond for this particular meeting, and for his contributions to the F&GP committee over the past years, wishing him well in his new role at EO.

Meeting closed 1851