

Scottish Universities Community Bank – Board Report to the 2025 AGM

Introduction, continual change and evolution

This report is based on the views of the Board of Directors and covers the current business plan.

We have been using the trading name of Scottish Universities Community Bank for a full calendar year along with the new logo. The Scottish Universities Community Bank continues to operate in a hybrid manner from the same centrally located office on the Heriot-Watt University Edinburgh Campus. Heriot-Watt University provides office space, utilities and payroll facilities free of charge and the Board are grateful for their continued support.

The Operations Team can be contacted by email or telephone as detailed on our [website](#).

We are pleased to report that membership has increased from 1131 in 2023 to 1218 by September 2024, an increase of 7.1%. Members with loans increased from 363 in 2023 to 382 by September 2024, an increase of 5%. The interest from members loans, our main source of income for running the community bank, increased from £63,246 in financial year 2023 to £70,990 in 2024, an increase of 11.9%.

The Board and Staff are aware of the importance of growing both membership and the loan book to ensure financial stability and continued viability.

Board overview

There has been turnover in the Board over the last year with the resignations of Allan Gray and Maryam Sholevar. The Directors wish to thank them both for contribution to the community bank.

The Directors are:

- Doug Veitch, Chair, University of Edinburgh
- Phil Rowsby, Secretary, Heriot-Watt University
- Derek Penman, Money Laundering Reporting Officer/Convener of the Finance Committee, formerly Heriot-Watt University
- Khadidja Merakchi, Director, Heriot-Watt University
- Rose Tope Olorunfemi, Director/Member of the Finance Committee, University of Highlands and Islands

Two new members were recruited through our formal appointment process following the 2024 AGM:

- Morag Cherry, Edinburgh Napier University, subject to a vote at the 2025 AGM
- Stephen Isa, Edinburgh Napier University, subject to a vote at the 2025 AGM

We are proud to say we now have one of the most diverse Boards in the sector with representation from a greater number of HEIs than ever before.

Staffing overview

As discussed at the 2024 AGM we recruited to the new role of CEO in July 2024, Luke McGilvray took up the post in July 2024 and works part-time. Carol Bendall, Operations Manager, continues to work part-time hours whilst Rob Chatwin, Operations Assistant, left the business in early 2024.

Governance

The Board and CEO have continued to regularly review policies and procedures. Member facing policies are available on our website. All policies have been updated within the past 3 years as required by the regulatory authorities.

As noted at previous AGMs we continued to have little success in recruiting a Treasurer. Following discussions by the CEO with other ABCUL member credit unions, a new Finance Committee was established to review financial information and report to the Board, following examples of comparable arrangements in other credit unions.

The Board approved role descriptions for the Directors, Chair and Secretary, these can be accessed on our website.

We continue to benefit from support, advice, information, and networking opportunities from ABCUL (Association of British Credit Unions Limited). The Directors have undertaken a range of ABCUL training and attended far more training events (mostly online) as well as the Scottish Forum and UK events.

As always, we are looking for additional Directors, if you would like to know more or would like to volunteer, please contact the Office: office@universitycu.org.uk. Board Meetings alternate between online and in-person on a Tuesday evening, last around 60 minutes and normally take place monthly.

IT System

As reported over many years we continued to face operational challenges with the Incuto banking platform. The company continued to under-perform and were unable to confirm when they would be able to provide the extended services promised.

The CEO and Board undertook a thorough process to obtain a more suitable IT system in 2024. Custom, a well-regarded and well-established service provider for over 20 credit unions, was awarded the contract. The new system was launched in December 2024.

Finances

After investing surpluses to mature at periodic intervals the Board continues to monitor available returns on all cash reserves with the intention of being agile and nimble in the market as investments mature.

The Community Bank must continue to increase the income value of the loan book to match the increasing costs of operational activities.

As the fees charged by our Auditors remain highly competitive the Board has not chosen to undertake a tendering exercise to replace them. The Auditors have provided the finance report for this meeting but are not our Treasurer.

Plans for the future

We will continue to develop, expand and most importantly benefit from the efficiencies provided by the new IT system.

Thanks

We would like to thank the Staff and Volunteers for their work during 2024 and the start of 2025.

Directors

February 2025