

**ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL
CHAIRMAN'S REPORT-
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING APRIL 2010**

It is hard to believe that a whole year has passed since the last Annual Meeting. We began the year with a new Council, following the stand down at the 2009 AGM, of some former long serving members. Fortunately, we were able to welcome new members to the Council to enable us to begin the new term with a full committee. In addition, we were able to co-opt a number of members. Thus, we were in a fortunate position of starting with a good working committee. Regrettably, we lost our long serving Secretary, Iain Shand who resigned on health grounds, but we hope that he will be able to return to a place on the Committee as soon as he is well enough to do so.

The past year has seen a noticeable improvement towards informing and promoting the work of the Ardgay & District Community Council. Through the circulation of our Newsletter which is produced four times a year, and our Community Website, we have been able to keep everyone informed and up to date on all ongoing events within and throughout the Kyle of Sutherland, as well as within the Highland Council. The Community Notice board also continues to be well used for publicity purposes. I would like to express a personal thanks to David Hannah and Phil Olson for the considerable time and effort they have each put in on the Newsletter and Website.

There have been additions and losses during the year. We at last gained a Bus Shelter in the Village. It was a long and sometimes frustrating wait but worthwhile.

Unfortunately, the Post Office was required to move out of the premises they used in the Lady Ross Hotel, and Ardgay was left without a Post Office. However, the Post Office has made a good effort to return a service to Ardgay. Since February, a Post Office Service has been open in the Village Hall on two half days a week. Although this is a much-reduced opening, we hope residents can make good use of this service.

The year has seen a continuing increase in the number applications for Windfarm developments throughout Scotland, and a number of new developments in this area are now visible on the surrounding hills, as well as more in the planning stage. The financial benefit to communities affected by these sites is of some consequence, and the Community Council will continue to ensure that the interests of the community are sustained. Funds available from the Windfarms will continue to benefit local groups and organizations for a number of years to come.

The Community Council in conjunction with our neighbouring Councils, made strong representation to Scottish Water raising concerns about the provision and condition of water in the area. Our concerns were well received both by Scottish Water and local MP's, and we will continue to monitor the situation for improvements.

The Council has continued to look closely at transport needs in the area, and was able to welcome Sheila Fletcher (Community Transport Association) and Frank Roach (HITRANS) to our meetings to speak about a number of transport issues. Unfortunately, a transport survey carried out by the Council through our own newsletter yielded a poor response. As fuel costs continue to rise, transport will become a major problem in our rural community and we will continue to look closely at future needs.

The Community Council is constantly seeking ways to improve the appearance of the Village. Unfortunately, we still have the problem of prominent unsold properties and empty business sites, which do not enhance the appearance of the village. We will continue to see that Flower Tubs are established where possible to provide a welcome splash of colour. We are very grateful to Jeannie Sparling for her labours and green fingers. At Christmas, we will continue to see that the Village is suitably decorated and the Christmas Lights are hung to add a sparkle at that time of the year. For this, we are also grateful to those who help with the decorations and the decorating of the Christmas Trees in Ardgay and Culrain.

Officers and members of the Community Council have attended meetings of the North West & Central Sutherland Ward Forum, which have been held throughout the year at various locations. Ardgay were pleased to host a meeting of the Ward Forum in September 2009, held in Ardgay Village Hall. The meetings are an opportunity for members of Community Councils in the area to meet with Officers of the Highland Council to discuss and debate community matters. Members of the public are also welcome to attend.

As we come to the end of the financial year, and look to the start of the 2010 financial year, we are all painfully aware of the many forecasts and predictions of difficult decisions to be made leading to challenging times to come. The Highland Council, as with other Councils throughout the UK, has had to look hard at their budgets for next year and following years. Full consultations on the budgets were held at the recent Ward Forum meeting held in Lairg. Also ongoing, is a Review of Community Councils, which is now into a second phase. A new project being set up by the Highland Council is the development of a Citizens Panel. Invitations have already been sent out inviting interested citizens to join. The purpose is to gauge representative views of the Highland population on Council Services and specific issues.

A successful Community Council relies on the, loyalty and hard work of its members, who unreservedly give of their time, and I thank each member for their co-operation, and help to me, during my tenure as Chairperson. Special thanks must go to the Office Bearers David Hannah, Alan Lawrence and Doreen Gibbs, for without their generous and unstinting efforts in carrying out their various duties; the Community Council would not have been able to function. Lastly, I would like to thank our Highland Councillors, Robbie Rowantree, George Farlow and Linda Munro, and Andy Mackay our Ward Manager, for their support, help and advice always generously given; and at all times a regular presence at our meetings.

Tony Gibbs
Chair.
April 2010