

# ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING—MONDAY 1 DECEMBER 2010—ARDGAY HALL

*Present:* David Hannah (Chair), Alan Lawrence, Phil Olson, Marion Turner, David Laver, Peter Armstrong,

**1. Welcome.** The chair opened the meeting with a welcome to those present. He then introduced Jeannie Sparling, who had asked if she could address the meeting. Jeannie said she felt the village seemed to have lost its heart, both in a physical sense and in terms of people not appearing to look out for each other as much as they used to. She referred to the example of the Bradbury centre, which had become a focal point for the community in Bonar. She wondered whether it would be possible to organise a regular bring and buy market in Ardgay where people could share goods they no longer needed. This might be particularly useful for young people starting out in life, perhaps looking to furnish a new home.

There was agreement that the closure of the Lady Ross, the post office and the local general shop had created a problem by reducing the opportunities for people to meet and share their news and views on a day to day basis. On a positive note, David Hannah pointed out that there were in fact initiatives now being taken to support young people, including a proposal to create new flats in a property at the centre of the village, the New Start project which provided second-hand furniture, and the Achany windfarm apprenticeship scheme, which had seen two young people taken on by local employers. He pointed out that there seemed to be a limited appetite for any community activity, on the evidence of the poor attendance at community council meetings and the youth cafe which had been set up by John McMurray through the Bridge Project. Marion suggested that the new development service for Ardgay and Creich might also help generate new local opportunities. David Hannah thanked Jeannie for her contribution, and invited her to consider joining the community council.

**2. Apologies** received from Doreen Gibbs, Liz Cormack, Robbie Rowantree.

**3. Minutes of the meeting** held on 3 Nov 2010 were approved as presented with amendments.

### **4. Matters arising from the minutes**

*Core Paths.* Phil Olson reported that neither of the community council's proposals for works under the Core Paths scheme had been successful. Marion Turner had spoken with Matt Dent regarding the blocked access to the Lady Ross car park which it was felt had denied an established local right of way.

#### *Forestry Roads*

Marion had witnessed two forestry lorries travelling in convoy despite agreed guidelines. She had noted registration numbers and contacted Nick Lindsay at Highland Council with details as requested.

*Byeways Project* A feasibility study was to be conducted on the redevelopment of a local property to provide flats for local people. David Laver said he had been advised that the development would need to include provision for nine parking spaces and rights of access to the rear of the building, pointing out that the roadway to the rear of the building was owned by the railway company. David Hannah felt that the property could be advertised specifically as being without parking. Marion felt the railway company could be asked to contribute to the community by providing the required access rights. It was agreed to await the findings of the feasibility study, which would no doubt consider these issues.

### **5. Secretary's Report**

Our nominations for the Council's quality Awards scheme had been submitted (Bonar Bridge Service Point staff and Kirsty Coghill).

A request had been submitted to John Clark to provide a dog waste bin on the Ardgay- Bonar road.

### **6. Treasurer's Report**

#### *Treasurer's Account*

The current cleared balance stands at £1547, with no outstanding liabilities.

#### *Projects Account*

The current cleared balance stands at £4366.64 with outstanding liabilities of £205.32

*Toilets Account* The toilets are now closed for the winter and no further expenditure anticipated this year. The surplus balance of £640 has been transferred to the Projects account leaving a balance of £9.58 in the Toilet account.

**7. Broadband Provision** Phil Olson reported that he had followed up on the information provided to our Secretary Doreen Gibbs by Peter Peacock MSP about broadband provision in rural areas. It appeared that fibre optic cable connections would only be provided if there was evidence of significant demand for service, and that

this was unlikely to be the case in our area. The government and a commercial operator had recently announced that they were investigating connections via satellite link for rural areas.

#### **8. Gearrchoille Community Woodland**

A letter had been received from the Association highlighting the need for an ongoing means of funding necessary annual core costs as well as essential woodland maintenance work. The association wondered if the community council, given its role in the inception of the project should bear the responsibility for sustaining its existence. In recent years the project had been supported through grants from the Awards for All and windfarm benefit schemes which were intended to support start-up activity rather than ongoing running costs. The only income at present came through an annual membership subscription of £4 from its 40 current members.

Marion had studied community council minutes dating back to the original lease of land from Balnagowan estate in 1989, the subsequent gifting of the woodland to the community, and the registration of Gearrchoille Community Wood Ardgay as a charitable company in 2004. Although the group was originally an initiative developed by the community council, it had become an independent entity with responsibility for its own future. It was asked what would happen to the company's assets if it were to become financially unsustainable. This would depend on provisions made in the constitution. Phil wondered whether the costs associated with company registration, such as accounting requirements could be avoided by the group adopting a different legal structure. It was agreed to ask the company to provide a copy of this to clarify the position and to consider options for the future.

#### **9. Windfarms update**

*Beinn Tharsuinn*

No update

*Braemore*

A proposal had been submitted for a 27 turbine windfarm at Braemore Wood 6km SW of Lairg.

*Achany*

Grants of £7550 and £7450 had been made respectively to the local halls in Bonar Bridge and Invershin for ongoing plans to support energy efficiency. £5004 had been awarded to E Sutherland Citizens Advice Bureau to contribute to costs of outreach services in Lairg and Bonar Bridge. A further grant was made to Lairg Community Association to assist with costs of a new part-time administrator post.

*Rosehall*

During construction of the windfarm, £10000 would be made available annually to support community projects. Developers E.ON would also be donating £2000 for the Lairg *Mayfest 2011* event.

*Salachy*

A meeting with community representatives would take place this month to discuss proposals for a 30 turbine windfarm at Sallachy by Loch Shin. It was anticipated that construction would start in 2011.

**10. Creich/Ardgay Initiative update** David Hannah reported that the closing date for tenders for the development service contract had been extended to the end of the week owing to the bad weather. There appeared to be at least 13-14 applicants for the contract, for which interviews would be held in the near future.

**11. Community Councils Review** the third phase of this consultation was taking place from Nov 2010-Jan 2011. Phil Olson noted that while there appeared to be plans for boundary changes in our area (see Highland Council website <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourward/findyourcc/cc-review-stage3/boundaryamendments.htm>), he was unaware of any local consultation having taken place on this issue. Marion agreed to draft a letter to query the issue which she would pass to the secretary for submission to Highland Council.

#### **12. Any other competent business**

Robertson Highland, contractors for the New Migdale Hospital, had issued an update on their progress. The company are now providing community tours of the site and are also making available waste timber from the building works to anyone who can find a use for it. Further details will be printed in the Winter newsletter, which is being distributed this week.

A card has been sent to Mary Stobo expressing condolences on the loss of her husband Bill, who made such a positive contribution to the local community.

**The meeting ended at 8.25pm** Next meeting **Monday 14 February 2011** at 7pm in Ardgay Hall.