

# ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING—MONDAY 14 MARCH 2011—ARDGAY HALL

*Present:* David Hannah (Chair), Doreen Gibbs (Secretary), Alan Lawrence (Treasurer), Derek Matheson, Phil Olson, Marion Turner, David Laver, David Ross, Liz Cormack, Peter Armstrong, Cllr George Farlow. Betty Wright, Hilda Buchanan, Rhonwen Copley (Gearrhoille Community Wood)

**1. Welcome.** David Hannah opened the meeting with a welcome to those present.

**2. Apologies** had been received from Cllr Linda Munro.

**3. Minutes of the meeting** held on 14 Feb 2011 were approved as presented.

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

*Right of Way* Marion has contacted Matt Dent of Highland Council in an attempt to clarify the existence of a right of way from Ardgay Hill to the rear of the Lady Ross car park area. Access to this route was blocked off in 2010, and the community council are seeking to have it reinstated. Mr Dent has been unable to find any paperwork relating to the right of way. Cllr Farlow suggested we raise the matter with the Chief Executive's Office. It was felt we should also express a general concern about the encroachment of private developments on public footpaths. Marion agreed to do this.

*Christmas Lights* The Chairman expressed the hope that for future years, a local committee could be established to take specific responsibility for the erection and maintenance of public Christmas displays.

*Monitoring of Lorries* Following a discussion at our previous meeting, Northern Constabulary have stated that they were not informed by Highland Council of plans to monitor compliance with the weight restriction imposed on the Struie road. They have now undertaken to meet this requirement. Following a complaint from Marion, they have also been asked to make Kinlochbervie fish suppliers aware of the restrictions. Cllr Farlow will also raise this matter with the Harbours Board. It was felt that these issues demonstrated the need for the police to be represented at community council meetings.

*Struie Tree Risk* Cllr Munro had brought our concerns about the risk of weather damaged trees falling on the Struie road to the attention of Technical Services, who had agreed to check the route and report back. It would appear that until the trees have actually fallen on the road, their management remains the responsibility of the landowner (Mr C Brooke). The chairman felt it was important for us to have at least put our concerns on record about the issue, although it related to a road outwith our boundary.

*Mobile phone reception* Marion Turner had contacted Ofcom concerning problems with local mobile signals. Ofcom had written back to apologise for our difficulties – they are well aware of problems with coverage in some rural areas (known as “not-spots”) - but though they have now formally recorded our complaint, there seems to be little prospect of improvement in the near future. See Ofcom's report at <http://stakeholders.ofcom.org.uk/binaries/research/telecoms-research/not-spots/not-spots.pdf>

*Stephen Mouat Memorial* Liz Cormack, David Hannah and Marion Turner would liaise on the effort to raise funds for a memorial to Stephen Mouat at the new hospital he did so much to secure.

### **5. Chairman's Report**

*Byeways proposal* Following a feasibility study, it appeared that the proposal to purchase and convert a local property into flats would be beyond the means of the local community. Total costs for the project had been estimated at £650,000 plus the cost of buying the property. Although 50% of the costs could be met through grants, this would still leave the local community having to raise up to £400,000. Lynsey Mailer (Kyle of Sutherland Development Service) was currently looking into an alternative option involving new build property on the former filling station site.

Jeannie Sparling had offered to continue cleaning the public toilets this year. The Chairman proposed that her remuneration for this work should be increased by 5%. This proposal was unanimously approved.

Lynsey Mailer, who is providing the new development support service for Creich and Ardgay, has been busy meeting local people and groups. She aims to produce a development plan based on local priorities by the end of March.

### **6. Secretary's Report**

The secretary had written to Jonny Shaw expressing our support for his proposed scheme to promote conservation of salmon stocks in Glen Beag.

*The MoD* had given notification of a local low level flying exercise running from 14-18 March.

Ardgay Hall committee are planning to hold an Easter Fair, and had asked whether the community council would like to have a stall. Marion Turner and Phil Olson agreed to take this on to publicise the role of the community council.

*New Migdale* A number of members had accepted the invitation to tour the site of the new hospital on 18 February. The new hospital was due to come into operation in August, with the official opening planned for September.

## 7. Treasurer's Report

<u>Treasurers account</u>	£1395.36 (outstanding credits £63.20, outstanding liabilities £78.20)
<u>Projects account</u>	£3801.07 (outstanding liabilities £200.00)
<u>Toilets account</u>	£9.58

Alan Lawrence reminded members that any outstanding claims for petty cash or other bills needed to be submitted before the next meeting in order to finalise the end of year accounts.

## 8. Wind Farm update

### *Braemore*

Over 500 objections had been received to the Braemore development, with the closing date for submissions next week.

### *Glenmorrie*

The developers (Wind Energy UK) had asked if they could mount a public exhibition at the Hall to display their plans.

In the ensuing discussion it was felt that local communities had little effective control over planning consent for wind farm development. Cllr Farlow maintained that local opinion could still be important – at Strathy North, where a development had been recommended for approval, all the local community councils had been in favour of the proposal, whilst in the case of Braemore, all the community councils were opposed. Rhonwen Copley suggested from the floor that we write to Highland Council to ask why community benefit agreements were voluntary rather than mandatory.

The Chairman reiterated his view that because of the volume of applications, the wind farm debate was beginning to overwhelm any other community council business, and that there was now a need for a separate, dedicated forum on this issue. This could involve representation from community councils across the region. Marion Turner proposed that the idea of assigning specialist work areas to individual community councillors be discussed at our forthcoming AGM in April.

**9. Gairrhoille Community Wood** Members of the association had attended the meeting to explain the background to a recent request for funding support from the community council. Rhonwen Copley briefly recounted the history of the project and the establishment of the Association as a charitable company limited by guarantee. Despite enthusiastic support from the community, the Association had ongoing difficulties in meeting its core costs. Betty Wright pointed out that the Association may be able to reduce its overheads to some degree by adopting the new SCIO structure for charitable businesses, which would be available from next month. It was felt that if the community council were to make a contribution to the running costs, it would be easier to attract match funding from other agencies. It was agreed to make an immediate award of **£500** to the Association, and for this award to be reviewed annually.

Doreen Gibbs asked whether it was possible that the Association's public liability insurance could be combined within the community council's own policy. She will inquire into this possibility. David Laver suggested that the planning application for signage for the woods could be made through the community council. This was agreed.

**10. Oakwood Place-Ardgay Hill Footpath** An earlier plan to involve CSV (Community Service Volunteers) in this project had now been abandoned. Nick Mellish of Balnagown Estate had indicated that the estate would be able to provide materials for the work required, provided the work was carried out to meet Highland Council standards. Matt Dent had indicated that Highland Council could carry out the work with costs being met from the Core Path fund. The secretary would contact Matt Dent to request the work to be done.

## 11. Ward Forum in Melvich

David Laver and Doreen Gibbs had attended the forum at the Melvich Hotel on 26 Feb. The topics covered included the review of Scottish Policing Structures (forces do not wish to amalgamate) and the strategy behind the reform of the Council's community care services, which hopes to see more volunteer involvement in local care provision and an increased emphasis on preventative services.

## 12. Any other competent business

Cllr Farlow reported that the new national scheme for the establishment of community councils had now come into effect. Ardgay and District council would have a maximum of 8 full members, plus co-opted (or Associate) members who would be appointed for a defined period/project. Residents aged 16 and over would now be eligible to vote or stand for election. All community councils would be required to hold new elections in November 2011. For full details see <http://www.highland.gov.uk/yourcouncil/yourward/findyourcc/cc-review-final.htm>

The Spring edition of the Ardgay newsletter had been printed and was ready for distribution – members were asked to volunteer to deliver copies.

**The meeting ended** at 9.25pm. The next meeting will be the **Annual General Meeting** on **Mon 11 April** at 7pm, which will be followed by the ordinary business meeting.