

# ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

## MINUTES OF MEETING—MONDAY 9 MAY 2011—ARDGAY HALL

*Present:* David Hannah (Chair), Doreen Gibbs, (Treasurer), Derek Matheson, Phil Olson, Marion Turner, David Laver, Liz Cormack, Jeannie Sparling, Peter Armstrong (Secretary). Keith Legge, Markus Riebicke-Carrington (Scottish Youth Hostels Association). Members of the public: Louise Worthy, Sheila Rhind, Alan Rhind, Sandy Chalmers

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

**2 Guest speaker** Mr Keith Legge, Chief Executive of SYHA had agreed to attend the meeting to discuss issues arising from the present closure for repairs of the Carbisdale Castle hostel following weather damage sustained during the winter. Mr Legge was accompanied by SYHA Northern Services Manager Markus Riebicke-Carrington. Mr Legge gave a brief overview of the Association's activities - around half a million people a year used the hostels, roughly one third each from Scotland, the rest of the UK and overseas (mainly Europe). The organisation employs 260-290 staff in high season, around 170 of whom are employed all year. Accommodation ranges from a 20 bed cottage at Loch Ossian to a 300 bed hostel in central Edinburgh. Carbisdale Castle itself can cater for 150 guests. SYHA is the largest provider of accommodation for school activities, catering for parties from within and outwith the UK.

The severe cold and abrupt thaws last winter had resulted in water damage to all three floors of the North wing, which was fortunately a less ornate part of the building. The strip-out of damaged areas had now been completed, but Mr Legge said the pace of the repairs was being dictated by the requirements of the insurers, and the current estimated date for reopening was the beginning of August 2011.

There followed a question and answer session covering several issues. Mr Legge described the ways in which he felt Carbisdale contributed to the local economy, by promoting the accommodation and activities available at the castle, and by serving as a tourist information centre for the area. He felt that the local area needed a greater range of visitor attractions to satisfy the needs of the increasing number of young families holidaying within the UK. He did not feel that the hostel was having a negative impact on local businesses by holding occasional licensed events. He said any promotional materials for local businesses would be displayed at the Castle if space was available. While he himself did not see wedding receptions as an appropriate role for the hostel, they were an important source of revenue in an increasingly difficult economic climate; the idea of running theme weekends in the winter was also being discussed. £80000 was to be spent on restoring the Carbisdale clock to working order, and there were plans to build some Yurts on land within Carbisdale Forest.

David Hannah thanked Mr Legge for his contribution and hoped to see good communications established between SYHA and the community as regards events and developments at the castle.

**3. Apologies** were received from Alan Lawrence, William MacLaren and Cllr George Farlow, who has also submitted apologies on behalf of Cllr Linda Munro.

**4. Minutes of the last meeting** held on 11 April 2011 were approved after clarification of amendments.

**5. Matters arising from the minutes** Nothing arising not already on the agenda.

### **6. Chairman's Report**

The Chairman had no items to report beyond what was on the agenda.

### **7. Secretary's Report**

The secretary had received two consultation documents from Highland Council, namely the *Highland Development Plan Scheme 2011* and the *Draft Supplementary Guidance for Onshore Wind Energy*. Closing date for submissions to both consultations was 24 June 2011.

### **8. Treasurer's Update**

<u>Treasurers account</u>	Current cleared balance	£887.40	Outstanding liabilities	£0		
<u>Projects account</u>	Current cleared balance	£2174.80	Outstanding liabilities	£0	Recent Deposit	£20
<u>Toilets account</u>	Current cleared balance	£649.58	Outstanding liabilities	£190		

The 2010/11 accounts had been audited and sent to the Highland Council for approval. The treasurer had proposed that a donation be made from funds to the *Help for Heroes* charity at the request of the auditors. The donation was approved.

### **9. Kyle of Sutherland Development Service**

The first Board for the new Development Trust is now in place. Marion Turner will act as the representative for Ardgay Community Council.

## **10. Windfarm update**

*Rosehall* Doreen Gibbs would attend the next meeting of the Liaison Group. It was noted that Pete Campbell (Creich CC) and David Walker (Lairg CC) had attended a meeting with Scottish Community Foundation, after which agreement had been reached to set the level of benefit paid at the rate of £2500 per mW. Members were interested to know how this figure had been arrived at, and what had been discussed at the SCF meeting, from which there had been no feedback. David Hannah said he had been trying to arrange a meeting with Edderton and Ardross CCs to discuss a shared strategy in any future negotiations. He still believed there was a need for a community champion to coordinate local policy on the issue of windfarms. It was agreed to write to the Association of Community Councils to ask if they could help in this process, and to invite their Highland representative to our next meeting.

## **11. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Benefit Applications**

*Dornoch Firth Group – Bridge Project* The Dornoch Firth Group had submitted a revised application for a grant of £426 for a holiday activity programme for children. The application was approved.

## **12. Oakwood Place-Ardgay Hill Footpath**

Doreen Gibbs reported that Eon, developers of the Rosehall windfarm proposal, had awarded us £800 towards this project from their community projects fund. Marion Turner had applied for the remaining £400 required from the Ward Discretionary Fund, and had been asked who would be responsible for the maintenance of the path. David Hannah said he had understood Highland Council would adopt the path, but the Ward Manager had said this was not the case. Balnagowan Estate have already made it clear that while they can help with materials, they are unable to maintain the path. It was agreed to inform the Council that the Community Council would assume responsibility for the upkeep of the footpath if the Council provided us with adequate funding. Doreen Gibbs would inform the Council of this decision.

## **13. Migdale Hospital**

There was to be an Open Day for the general public on 8<sup>th</sup> June to mark the opening of the new hospital. Collection tins for the Stephen Mouat memorial fund would be left in local shops till the end of May.

**14. Members' responsibilities** This item was held over until the next meeting.

## **15. Newsletter**

David Hannah reminded members that the deadline for submissions for the summer newsletter was 16 May. This edition would be kept fairly short to contain costs. Marion suggested an item explaining the procedure for the election of a new community council in November. Doreen wondered about an item offering local B&Bs a link from the community council's website.

## **16. Any other competent business**

*Invercharron Games* Phil Olson had been asked if the community council wanted to have a stall at the Invercharron Games again this summer. After discussion it was agreed that on the basis of last year's experience, this was not a worthwhile exercise. David Hannah proposed asking the new Development Trust if they would want to take up the offer instead.

Members commented that there had been no notice of local planning applications this month. The secretary agreed to notify the Council and ask for these to be sent as required.

David Laver had been asked to do some work for Kyle of Sutherland Heritage Society in connection with a project to document Kincardine graveyard. He wondered whether the OS sheets he required could be purchased at the concessionary price available to the CC. This was approved by members.

Cllr Farlow had been asked to obtain an update on plans for Gledfield Schoolhouse. The Education service had provided the following statement : *"The schoolhouse is unoccupied and is under the consideration, like all schoolhouses, of the Property Board. It is a difficult house to dispose of because physically attached to school."*

Phil Olson wondered if we could ask for the local post box to be repositioned given the uncertain future of the Lady Ross site. It was agreed to seek the opinion of local postmen about a possible alternative site and then write to Royal Mail.

Phil Olson reported on the stall he and Marion had hosted for the community council at the Ardgay Hall's Spring Fair. In the course of the event, they had conducted an informal survey asking members of the public what they would like to see for Ardgay. The priority expressed by over a third of those polled was to see a new shop in the village. More details available on our website <http://ardgayanddistrictcommunitycouncil.org.uk/cc/told/> .

**The meeting ended at 9.15pm. Next meeting will be at 7pm on Mon 13th June.**

18/5/11