

ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF MEETING—MONDAY 10 OCTOBER 2011—ARDGAY HALL

Present: Marion Turner (Acting Chair) Alan Lawrence (Treasurer), Phil Olson, Derek Matheson, David Laver, Peter Armstrong (Secretary), Liz Cormack, Cllr Linda Munro.

1. Welcome The Chair opened the meeting with a welcome to those present.

2. Apologies had been received from David Hannah, Doreen Gibbs and William McLaren.

3. Minutes of the last meeting held on 12 Sep 2011 were approved with amendments.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

New Migdale Liz Cormack reported that it was now planned to temporarily display the commemorative plaque purchased with the Stephen Mouat memorial fund in the seminar room of the new hospital. The balance of the money raised may be used to provide a memorial bench.

Struie Road A press statement from Highland Council had warned that routes such as the Struie road may be at risk of closure because of maintenance costs. Following concerns raised by the community council and Cllr Munro, the Council had given an assurance that there were no plans to close the route.

Ardgay Hill-Oakwood Footpath The community council had agreed to assume responsibility for the maintenance of the footpath on completion of the upgrade. £800 had been awarded from the Rosehall Wind Farm fund for the project, and an application had been made to the Ward Discretionary fund for the remaining £400 required to proceed with the work. It appeared that Highland Council felt unable to commit funds to the project without further assurances regarding public liability insurance and permissions from landowners. Cllr Munro undertook to clarify the issues involved with the Council.

Local postbox relocation It was reported in the minutes for 12 Sep that a local resident had suggested the local post box should be relocated because of the fact that it was currently located on property which might be sold at some time in the future. The resident had contacted the community council to make it clear that her concerns related particularly to problems of safe pedestrian access to the postbox, particularly in the winter months. In view of these concerns the community council agreed to arrange an onsite meeting with Post Office staff to discuss concerns and consider other possible sites.

5. Correspondence

In addition to routine notice of local planning applications, the secretary had received notification from Highland Council of an application to license premises at Alladale Wilderness Reserve.

A letter had been received from a local resident regarding her concern with access to the local postbox (see item 4).

6. Treasurer's Update

The treasurer noted that a sum of £1500 had been received from Highland Council with no explanation of what the money was intended for. Cllr Munro agreed that this lack of clarity could create problems for anyone managing the community council budget, and undertook to query this with Highland Council.

Treasurer's account the current cleared balance stands at £2200.08 with a cheque payment of £56 outstanding.

Projects account the current cleared balance stands at £4417.70 with a cheque payment of £365.00 outstanding.

Toilets account the current cleared balance stands at £1015.56.

7. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Benefit applications

Phil Gurr and Russell Taylor from the **Friends of Migdale** were attending the meeting to present plans to create a garden for the new Migdale Hospital. An earlier proposal, based on a community survey, had proposed integrating a water feature, but this had been rejected on health and safety grounds. The intention now was to create a Japanese style garden, featuring trees and shrubs which would be attractive at all times of the year. The first phase of the work would see the skeleton of the garden established, and would include acquisition and planting of selected mature trees. The trees would be surrounded by a bed of white marble chips with a scalloped edging in Caithness Marble. The project had been costed at £3000, half of which would be put up by the Friends, the balance to be requested from the Beinn Tharsuinn scheme through applications to the three local community councils (£500 each). The chairman thanked Messrs Gurr and Taylor for coming to make the presentation, and looked forward to receiving the funding application in due course.

An application from **Lairg Learning Centre** for funding of £3000 towards the employment of a Centre manager had been deferred pending the supply of further information from the applicant. An email had been circulated in reply from the centre's development officer Cara Harrison which explained the application in greater detail. It was still felt, however that the community council needed more evidence that the learning opportunities offered by the Centre would be readily accessible to local people, and it was decided to invite the Centre staff to attend a community council meeting in the near future to discuss ways of extending its service to local people.

An application for funding towards the erection of a fence around property at the former site of the local filling station had previously been deferred on the grounds that it was made by a private individual and related to improvements on private property. The application had been resubmitted with **Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust** as the applicant, on the basis that it would constitute an enhancement to the appearance of the village and that the enclosed area could be of use

for community events until it was developed. It was felt that the community council should make the award of a grant contingent on specific benefits in terms of the use of the site.

An application had been received from **Bonar Bridge and Ardgay Golf Club** for a grant towards the purchase of new green-keeping equipment to replace old and inefficient machinery currently in use. Of the £23,340 total cost, £10000 was being requested from the Achany Wind Farm benefit fund, £8000 from the Beinn Tharsuinn fund (applications for £4000 to Creich and Ardgay CC) and the remaining £5340 supplied by the club itself. It was agreed that the funding should be approved given the valuable resource represented by the Golf Club as a provider of recreation and healthy outdoor activity for local people and visitors which brought significant benefit to local businesses.

Phil Olsson, who represents the community council on the Beinn Tharsuinn board, agreed to write to the applicants to communicate our views. He has also written to all previous recipients of grants through the scheme to ask if they can provide evidence how the funds have been spent.

8. The Lady Ross

A substantial proportion of the slate roofing from the stone barn adjacent to the main building had recently been removed. Although it is understood the police intervened to stop the removal proceeding, it remained unclear whether any of the required consents had been sought for the removal. It was agreed, however, that the removal of slates rendered the remainder of the roof unsafe and created a risk of injury to the public. It was noted that the property was now being administered by KPMG, and it was agreed that the secretary should write bringing the matter to their attention, and seeking reinstatement of the roof slates as a matter of urgency. A letter had already been sent from Ardgay Hall Committee to raise the issue with the Environmental Health Department at Highland Council. Cllr Munro pointed out that if the building was deemed unsafe, the Council would be able to demand replacement of the roofing at the cost of the owners.

9. Timber Lorries

Marion Turner recounted having photographed two lorries travelling in convoy in contravention of regulations. It appears that on this occasion the leading driver had contacted his employer to report being followed by a driver from another company. There had been further reports of lorries speeding through the local villages, which should be reported to the police.

10. Windfarms update

It was noted that the Achany Wind Farm had been shut down for most of the past week. It is believed that this follows an agreement that to avoid excessive noise levels, the installation would be shut down in specific wind directions.

11. KOSDT update

Marion reported that Lynsey Burns had agreed to provide regular updates on the activities of the Development Trust for the community councils.

12. Community Newsletter

The closing date for submissions to the next newsletter is 17 November. Members were asked to encourage any voluntary group members they met to share news of their activities.

13. Ward Forum The forthcoming ward forum on January 12 was to focus on local authority housing issues. Cllr Munro suggested the agenda might include clarification of the points system used for allocations, promotion of the downsizing initiative which offers support to people willing to move to smaller houses, problems with empty housing, antisocial orders, availability of affordable housing and help for house buyers.

14. Community Council Elections 16 Nov 2011

The chairman said a notice of uncontested election had been posted on the community notice board to confirm that the 8 nominees for the incoming community council would now be considered elected. The final meeting of the outgoing council would be held on 14 November.

15. AOCB

Liz Cormack asked if action could be taken to resolve the continuing problems with standing water in Culrain and at Culrain station. Marion Turner said the same problem existed on Ardgay Hill Road. Cllr Munro said she would ask John Clark to assess the sites.

Derek Matheson asked if members felt able to offer support in collecting signatories to a petition drawn up by Mr Jonny Shaw seeking changes to the regime of extraction from the River Carron for hydroelectric generation. The community council had already written to express its support for the petition, but it was felt that the task of approaching individuals should be left to the petitioner. It was felt that as it stood the argument of the petition was perhaps too technical for people unfamiliar with the issues involved. It was suggested that enlisting the support of bodies such as the Crofting Commission or local MSPs might help highlight the issue. Phil Olsson suggested a proforma letter to the local MP could be prepared by the petitioner and made available in local shops.

The meeting ended at 9.15pm. Next meeting will be at 7pm on Mon 14 November.