



Ardgay & District Community Council

Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 12th December at 7pm
in Ardgay Hall

Present: Elected members: David Hannah (DH), Phil Olson (PO), Marion Turner (MT), Betty Wright (BW), Bob Sendall (BS), Peter Armstrong (PA), Alan Lawrence (AL), David Laver (DL)

Also present: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM), Inspector Aitken and Sgt McCaffrey of Northern Constabulary

Members of the public: Mr Snowy Hull, Mrs Angela Marwick, Mrs Mairi Munro, Mr Andy MacKenzie, Mrs Kirsty Coghill

Minute Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: None, all elected members present

Items 1/2/3. Welcome/Apologies (see above)/election of office bearers. Highland Councillor Linda Munro opened the meeting at 7pm, welcoming all present and proceeding immediately to the election of office bearers for the new Community Council, sitting for the first time tonight following the recent elections. The office bearer election results were:

Chair: David Hannah, proposed by David Laver; seconded by Betty Wright

Secretary: Peter Armstrong, proposed by David Hannah, seconded by Phil Olson

Treasurer: Alan Lawrence, proposed by David Hannah, seconded by Marion Turner.

Item 4. Minutes of November meeting. The minutes from 14 November 2011 were accepted as a true and accurate record; proposed: Phil Olson, seconded: David Laver.

Non-agenda item (1). School transportation. The Chair then called upon Mr Hull and other members of the public to discuss the problem of the recently announced changes, to come into force on the 12th January, to the concessionary travel arrangements for school children attending Dornoch Academy. Marion Turner gave a brief summary of the history of school transportation arrangements. Mr Hull advised that at a meeting earlier in the year, Mr Graham Nicol of Highland Council had given an assurance that bus places would be secured for children in exam years. It appears that this is no longer the case although transport will be available to paying passengers on the new service provided by MacLeod's Coaches. Places on feeder routes to and from the pick-up points will also be withdrawn. Cllr Munro stated that she is to have a meeting with the Director of Education on Wednesday and will put forward the strong case for continuing transport for exam year children, although she stated it would be unlikely that she could effect any further change to the new arrangements. She agreed that the timeline allowed between the announcement of the changes and their coming into effect was unreasonable. The public representatives were encouraged to email Cllr Munro prior to her meeting on Wednesday, after which she will advise those who do of the outcome of that discussion. **LM Action.**

Non-agenda item (2). Police. Inspector Ramsay Aitken introduced himself and Sgt Alan McCaffrey and stressed the importance of the links between the Police and the Community Council. Two-way communication is at the heart of providing a good local service and it is hoped that regular attendance at CC meetings can be maintained. Sgt McCaffrey will undertake to provide a relevant article for the CC newsletter. Cllr Munro reported that there is usually good attendance by the Police at Ward Forums and that it would be helpful if questions/items for Police attention could be submitted ahead of time. Inspector Aitken commended the public for their behaviour during the recent bad weather stating that only relevant calls were received by the force and that no rescues had been necessary as people

had heeded the warnings not to venture out. The crime detection rate stands at 65.1%. The main causes of crime, in an area of relatively low incidents, are those of alcohol related local problems and thefts by 'passing criminals' of items such as lead, copper, fuel, etc. The public is encouraged to be extra vigilant and to report any suspicious vehicles or activity. A reference number is attached to each report and if not given by the receiving officer should be asked for by the caller. Date and time of the call can also be used to follow up on a report and it is hoped to improve the feedback system. Between 9am and 5pm calls from the public are received in Dornoch or Tain, out of hours they are transferred to Thurso, Wick or Inverness. People should not be deterred by this as all calls will be followed up locally and officers will attend when appropriate. The number of Police officers stationed in the area is at full strength but it should be understood that they can be called away to help with incidents in other parts of the country. This would work in reverse should a serious situation ever arise here. Cllr Munro raised the ever present problem of wood haulage lorries, travelling in convoy, speeding etc. On average the police receive about one complaint a month. All complaints are followed through and the operators made aware of incidents even if no legal action can be taken. Previously held Community Planning Days, although poorly attended, have proved useful in spreading understanding of the many and varied roles the police carry out, such as child protection issues, control of firearms, public order, etc. Both officers were warmly thanked for attending and furthering the communication with the Community Council.

Item 5. Matters arising from November minutes. (1) Lady Ross. The Police have now handed over their files regarding the recent theft of roof slates to KPMG. It is for them to report to the Crown Office if they see fit. Concerns still remain regarding the overall safety of the building. **(2) Local post box.** A site meeting has taken place. Mike Thompson of Royal Mail has agreed that the box should be situated on public ground with ease of access for both the public and postal staff. It will take some time to arrange re-siting; planning permission is required. A mail count will be conducted to ascertain if a larger box is justified. One capable of accepting A4 envelopes would be of great benefit to the area. **(3) Flower tubs.** Marion is still trying to source half barrels for this. **(4) Christmas tree/lights.** Tree has been delivered and Derek Matheson will erect it. Christmas lights have been put up though there were problems as some of the old lights were not working. Paul Whittock at Ardgay Garage will become involved with this project in future. It was agreed to liaise with Highland Council to have brackets fitted to allow for Christmas lights outside the school. Thanks were expressed to all who have helped bring about the seasonal lighting displays.

Item 6. Ardgay Hill-Oakwood Place footpath. Paperwork appears bogged down. Suggestion raised that a Tenants' Group should be formed to deal with this. Cllr Munro will liaise with HC Tenants Association Officer and members of this group if it is formed. Marion should send appropriate details to Linda with regard to foregoing efforts. **MT Action.** The Chair indicated that the CC could take responsibility for the path, adding it to their liability insurance if necessary but no decision taken on this as yet.

Item 7. Forest Design Plan/Forestry Commission Consultation. Marion had reviewed the documents which mainly covered the future felling plans, removal of timber and replanting. There is no mention of forestry crofts or land for the community. Some references are made to continuing recreational aspects of forest walks, trails, etc, but mostly in a maintenance mode and not an expanding one. Chair advised that the Development Trust is looking into these issues.

Item 8. Correspondence. (1) Standing water at Culrain station. Acknowledgement of letters received from both Scot Rail and SEPA but with no other comments. **(2) Request to amend minutes of 11 July 2011.** Mrs M Munro of Oakwood Place has written to clarify that the damage to the plastic goal posts on the playing fields at the school was not caused by the

older children of the village. She stated that the first came to grief thanks to cleared snow being placed on top of it, and the second broke after a visiting child continued to swing on it in spite of being asked to stop by local teenagers. For the benefit of any future generations who might read through CC minutes she wished to point out that the local youth is not destructive and is in fact currently involved in improving local extracurricular needs. (3)

Welcome letter. All incoming CC members had received a letter of congratulations on their election from MSP Rob Gibson.

Item 9. Treasurer's report. Alan Lawrence passed round the report for December (copy held on file). An error made last month when transferring the surplus balance from the Toilets Account to the Projects Account will be rectified on 13 December (see below). The account balances stand at Treasurer's Account: £2144.08, Project Account: £4784.70 and the Toilets Account is nominally overdrawn at £32.35. £40 will be transferred to rectify this. Alan said he would provide a spreadsheet for the Newsletter by the next meeting, showing grants, income, donations, advertising and expenditure. **AL Action.**

Item 10. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm funding applications. Phil Olson stated there was one outstanding application, from Lairg Learning Centre for the sum of £3,000 to help fund an administrative/development post. This has been discussed twice previously, being held over while discussions took place to ensure that courses would be held in the Ardgay area. The award of £1,000 to be paid now was approved with a further £2,000 being held to help fund such local courses. It was agreed that Mary Goulder will take over the correspondence required to inform applicants and Phil Tomalin, Company Secretary, of the outcomes of applications and therefore will advise Lairg Learning Centre and Phil Tomalin in respect of this application. She will also liaise with CC and applicants if required on initial receipt of applications when further relevant information is required to aid decision making. After much discussion it was agreed that application forms will be circulated to Lynsey Burns, Development Officer, but that any further supporting documentation will only be seen by the CC members. As a result of meeting with Gearrchoille Community Wood Ardgay board, mentioned at our last meeting, Phil will liaise with Phil Tomalin to amend the application form regarding confidentiality of submissions. **MG Action and PFO action.**

Item 11. Windfarms update. Dalnessie. Several CC members attended the recent Open Day held by SSE at Lairg and were surprised that no visitors' names were taken nor were there any feedback forms available. **Glenmorrie.** Marion has secured an extension of time until February for the CC to make its views known but she will in fact submit the CC letter of objection before then. Visual cumulative impact, aviation lighting, restriction of rights of way during construction, and the pylon route through Strathrusdale will all be given as some of the reasons for the objection. A major concern was raised with regard to the environmental impact on the Wester Fearn Burn and the subsequent pollution which will be caused by the road and track upgrading. No mention of the fish farm situated at the foot of the burn appears in any of the proposals. With previous experience of substantial problems, the owners of the fish farm are extremely concerned that this development will have serious impact on their ability to operate their business. A letter will be sent to the developer highlighting this extremely important factor and seeking an undertaking that proper measures and independent monitoring are put in place to safeguard the water supply to the fish farm. Marion Turner and Angela Marwick will work together on this issue. **MT/AM Action.** Discussions should continue with the developer with regard to the Community Benefit being channelled into local projects, one suggestion being a bursary scheme, working in conjunction with the local schools, to assist young people in taking up careers in related environmental work and engineering. Betty Wright wished it recorded that she was not objecting to the windfarm in principal but with regard to the individual problems faced by the fish farm. **Coire na Cloiche.** A pre-planning application has been made. To be discussed

further once full application is submitted. **Sallachy.** Ardgay will also be involved in discussions when this development progresses.

Item 12. KOSDT update. Marion had highlighted some of the significant points in the November report from Lynsey Burns. Items for the Events Calendar are requested. In addition to the 200th anniversary celebrations for Bonar's bridge consideration should be given to the many other bridges of similar vintage in the area – Carron Bridge also will soon be 200 years old. Kyle of Sutherland logo is now available and should be used appropriately by local businesses and organisations. Content is requested for the KOSDT website. Local notice boards are proposed with the bus shelter in Ardgay suggested as a suitable site. Suggested uses for the old paper shop in Bonar were a charity shop or a community shop. A site visit is being arranged with regard to the siting of bike stands in Bonar and Ardgay.

Councillor Rowantree is working with KOSDT to move these plans forward; Linda Munro will also liaise with him. **LM Action.** Marion will provide feedback to Lynsey. **MT Action.**

Item 13. Ward Forum. The next Ward Forum will be in Lairg on Saturday 29th January. The topic will be housing. Relevant comments and questions should be submitted to Andy Mackay, Ward Manager, ahead of the meeting. Marion plans to attend on behalf of Ardgay CC.

Item 14. AOCB. (1) Signatories. Peter agreed to become the second signatory for cheques.

(2) Damaged pylon at Oldtown, Ardgay. Marion will draft a letter of concern to SSE questioning the safety issues, the requirement for twenty-four hour security, and the possible removal of equipment. Peter will send it on CC notepaper. **MT Action.**

(3) Proactive consultation with the community. Peter Armstrong urged everyone to seek more ideas to engage the public with the work of the CC. Come prepared to discuss at next meeting.

(4) Work sharing within the CC. Much of the workload is already shared out but all members should consider areas of responsibility which they could take on.

(5) Associate members. It was agreed to invite Jeanie Sparling to accept Associate Membership of the CC with responsibility for the toilets care and the flower tubs. **DH Action.** Angela Marwick was also asked to become an Associate Member of the CC. This entails attending meetings when possible and having the right of discussion but no voting rights. She declined to accept this nomination, but agreed to work with Marion Turner on the Glenmorie Wind Farm objection.

(6) Minutes Secretary. Mary thanked the CC for inviting her to take on this role and for accepting her terms. She explained that as she also works for Creich and Lairg CCs it will not always be possible to arrange her holidays/business trips to accommodate all three so there may be occasions when she is not available. Every attempt will be made to avoid clashes with advance notice given to enable alternative arrangements. In addition to duties mentioned earlier, Mary will also prepare the Minutes summary for the Northern Times.

(7) Sharing of Minutes. It has been suggested that it would be helpful for the Minutes from both Ardgay and Creich CC meetings to be circulated to all members. All present felt this was acceptable. Mary will discuss with Creich. **MG Action.**

(8) A vote of thanks was expressed to Councillor Munro for her attendance and continuing support of the CC and the community.

Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Monday 9th January 2012 at 7pm in Ardgay Hall.

Meeting closed at 10pm.