

Ardgay & District Community Council

Draft Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 13 February 2012 at 7pm in Ardgay Hall

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

Members of the public: Neil McInnes, Paul and Vicky Whittock

Minute Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM)

Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies (see above) Chair David Hannah welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Paul Whittock to address the meeting regarding the Christmas lights. Paul sought to gain Community Council approval to purchase replacement lights as required and to plan a theme for next season's display. Within reasonable costs this was agreed. The CC is still awaiting a reply from Highland Council regarding the setting up of the three lights outside the school. Paul will liaise with DH. Paul and Vicky were thanked for attending and left at 7.05pm.

Item 3. Minutes of January meeting. The minutes from 9th January were accepted as a true and accurate record, with appropriate amendments as noted below in Matters Arising; proposed: Marion Turner; seconded: Betty Wright.

Item 4. Matters arising from January minutes. (1) Access permission from Village Hall for work at The Lady Ross. David Laver informed the CC that it is noted in the minutes of the Village Hall Committee that no written permission was either sought or granted by that committee. **(2) Letter to KPMG re Lady Ross.** The minutes should be amended to state that a letter would be sent to KPMG asking that they urgently resolve the situation at the Lady Ross and that they outline their proposals for the building. **MG/PA Action.** **(3) Station road junction.** DL suggested that Highland Council should be approached at this time asking for safety improvements to be considered at this dangerous junction. If such improvements, to sightlines in particular, might require use of land currently part of the Lady Ross site, this would be a good time to instigate discussions between HC and KPMG. Secretary will write to TEC Services. **PA Action.** **(4) Ardgay Hill-Oakwood Place footpath.** Matt Dent was unavailable to attend the site meeting last month; Andy Mackay attended but was not in a position to respond to all the points which the CC wished to raise. Matt Dent was expected to make a report to Cllr Munro who would then liaise with the Tenants Association Officer. The matter rests meantime with HC. **LM Action.**

(5) Signatories. Alan has this in hand. **AL Action.** **(6) Phone box.** The box at Amatnua at the junction of the Amat/Croick road is the second box acquired by the CC although AL advises that no payment has yet been requested from BT for either box. Suggestions for use of the boxes are welcome, e.g. local information regarding the nearest telephone/mobile signal etc. **(7) Minutes content.** It was agreed that no post-meeting information should be included in the Minutes. Problems experienced by MG with including the two logos (CC and KOSDT) will be looked at by the Secretary, possibly with a new sketch design for the CC. **PA Action.**

Item 5. Ward Forum feedback. Phil reported that the most interesting part of the Forum was the information given by the Inspector Matthew Reiss. In addition to reporting on drug abuse, scrap metal thefts, and progress towards the single police force, Mr Reiss also give details regarding traffic fatalities stating that half of those which occurred in Highland were in Caithness, Sutherland & Easter Ross. There is no particular pattern for this with various factors given as causes. There were only five Community Councils represented at the Forum and only five members of the public attended. Questions must be asked as to whether the Forum should continue as it is clearly poorly supported. On the housing issues raised by Ardgay CC, no figures were given for the housing register nor was there information available concerning what land within the CC boundaries is owned by Highland Council. A review of assets is being carried out but the report is not expected for two years. Locally only 11% of Council housing is suitable for elderly/disabled residents, way below the 25% in the rest of Scotland. Currently housing is being allocated to those on the housing list with 90-100 points. Anyone with less than 45 points is unlikely ever to qualify for housing – medical considerations are the only ones which will add points. The question of the unoccupied house at Gledfield School was raised. Cllr Munro will be asked to check this out. **LM Action.** Ongoing issues with Broadband speeds and service indicate poor planning by BT with no proper response to public questioning. Phil encouraged everyone to conduct speed tests, the BT test being the most appropriate, and to advise him of results. An item will be in the next newsletter.

Marion advised that she raised the issue of appropriate training for Community Councillors, with particular regard to encouraging community engagement and communication/working with Highland Council departments. None of this was mentioned in the official notes of the Forum. Nor was her vote of thanks to the Highland Councillors for their help and support in this area. Such training as appears to be being planned by HC is expected to be inappropriate and also the timescale for dates of training sessions is unacceptable. Previously Cllr Munro suggested she bring a high-ranking HC official to meet the Community Council and this was still felt to be a better way forward. How the CC works with Highland Council officials remains at the heart of the problem. **LM Action.** The consensus remained that the Ward Forum format be scrapped as it is not working. The next scheduled one is on Saturday 26th May in Skerray. Anyone planning to attend should inform the Chair.

Item 6. Correspondence. Peter has received emails from **ScotRail**. They are apparently looking into a mobile ticketing option to deal with the problem of purchasing tickets for travel from Ardgay's non-manned station. The CC is advised to contact HITRANS directly to pursue the issue of lack of service to Ardgay after 17.54hrs. The CC was also invited to consider 'adopting' the station to restore a floral presence. No-one is sure just what that would entail in the future. Secretary has written again.

Emails received from Highland Council regarding **Community Benefit training workshops**. Posters are on display in the Library. Phil will attend in Inverness on February 24th as Ardgay CC representative. General discussion on the proposed HC pan-Highland community benefit plan indicated the wish to remain outside this new system and continue direct negotiations with developers as at present, perhaps with ongoing support in administration by SCF. The Achany Panel is a good example of the communities working together with SCF and developers to the benefit of the immediate local area.

Colin Gilmour has requested nominations for person/s to attend the **Royal Garden Party** in Edinburgh this summer. Agreed to put forward the names of Liz Cormack (previously nominated but unable to attend) and Gillian Glennie. Following receipt of information from the **Highland Community Care Forum** it was agreed to invite a representative to attend a CC meeting. **PA Action.**

Item 7. Treasurer's report. Alan Lawrence gave the following report: Treasurer's Account: cleared balance stands at £2,070.08 with one outstanding open cheque for £15.00. Projects Account: £4,329.70. Recent deposits have been made of £140.00 and outstanding cheques add up to £148.35. Toilets Account: £7.65.

Item 8. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm funding applications. There is a current application from the Gledfield Primary School Parent Council Fundraising Group. Mary has approached the applicants to supply the further information requested by CC members but has no reply as yet. She will chase this up. Discussion of application held over till next month. **MG Action.**

Item 9. Windfarms update. Sallachy. Meeting scheduled for 14th February. **Glenmorie.** Meeting scheduled for 16th February. Marion will take the EIA and expects discussion regarding the nine turbines which are to be removed.

Achany. Carol Elliott has been appointed to the Inverness office of SCF. The next meeting is in April. **Braemore.** Alan reported watching a helicopter working over the Braemore site all day last Saturday apparently depositing 'slung loads' on site. It is understood this planning application is being re-submitted. **Rosehall.** E.ON is reported to be considering administering community benefit through the Achany Panel. **Glencassley.** Scoping now. **Coire na Cloiche.** Nothing new at this stage.

Item 10. KOSDT update. The sixth monthly report has been received. Everyone is satisfied with this continuing as a six monthly update. The website is now running and regularly updated. Photograph submissions would be welcome. A local query regarding the mention of a 'safe space' at the old filling station refers to fencing erected to avoid access to the railway land behind the site. Decontamination has also been carried out.

Item 11. Floral displays. Jeanie Sparling has offered to deal with displays in the village, and perhaps at the station platform. She would welcome volunteers. She also seeks greenhouse space for the development of plants. Perhaps these could be mentioned in the upcoming newsletter. Marion is still optimistic about securing some more half barrels.

Item 12. Public toilets. A leak reported in November remains in spite of John Clark having passed the complaint to the relevant department in Highland Council. Secretary will write again, via John Clark. The floor painting must wait until the leak is repaired.

Item 13. Communications with Highland Council. Unable to discuss in detail without the presence of a Highland Councillor but talk did cover the apparent lack of understanding by HC employees with regard to how Community Councils operate. Very poor response from HC when the CC writes with complaints or queries. Also prior notice of events, e.g. training dates, is often far too short. It seems to be irrelevant that many CC members are in employment and cannot always make arrangements in time, if at all. It should also be stressed once again that CC members are unpaid volunteers.

Item 14. AOCB. (1) Beinn Tharsuinn Endowment Fund/Creich Community Council. It was noted from the Creich CC Minutes that it was hoped to establish some discussion between the two CCs with regard to jointly setting up an endowment fund. So far no approach from Creich has been received by the Treasurer. Phil will check with Phil Tomalin, Company Secretary, if such a venture would be allowed under the regulations. **PO Action.** Members were requested **to include Mary** in their email circulation of relevant information.

The next edition of the **newsletter** is in preparation and will be at the printers next week. So far no item has been received from the Police for inclusion. Marion offered to contact Sgt McCaffrey to urge him to supply a short article. Mary will provide his email address to Marion. **MG/MT Action.**

Betty reported the **dangerous condition of three or four patches of road**, each about 20 -30 feet in length, **between Ardgay and Edderton** where overflowing water remains constantly frozen causing hazardous conditions. At least one of these is on an unmarked bend. Secretary will write to TECS requesting improved drainage and signage. **PA Action.**

Transportation of **radioactive material** from Dounreay. Concern was expressed regarding the safety precautions in place, with specific regard to the containers used, procedures to deal with possible derailment or delays, etc. BW will seek out further information and liaise with PA to send a questioning letter to the appropriate body/bodies. **BW/PA Action.**

Core paths/Tuiteam bridge/Oakwood-Ardgay Hill. This should be an agenda item for next month. Funding could be available. Phil will bring appropriate forms. Marion will email Matt Dent with ideas and points for discussion. **PA/PO/MT Action.**

Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Monday 12th March 2012 at 7pm in Ardgay Hall.

Meeting closed at 9.20pm.