

ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 12th August 2013 in Ardgay Church Hall at 7pm



Present: Elected and co-opted members: David Hannah, Chair (DH), Alan Lawrence, Treasurer, Teresa Langley, Secretary (TL), Marion Turner (MT), Phil Olson (PO), Betty Wright (BW), David Laver (DL), Bob Sendall (BS)

Also present: Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF); nine members of the public attended to elect the community representative to the SSE & E.ON Community Fund Panel

Invited guest: Helen Houston, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (HH)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG) **Apologies:** None

Item 1/2/3. Welcome/Apologies (see above)/SSE & E.ON Community Fund Panel election. Chair David Hannah opened the meeting welcoming everyone to the Ardgay Church Hall. The process of the election of the community representative to the SSE & E.ON Community Fund Panel began with seventeen ballot papers being issued to all eligible voters present. The election period remained open until 7.30pm at which time DH closed the voting and he and MG, as the independent observer, counted the ballot papers and votes cast. With the results being Angela Banks, 6, Stephen Copley 6 and David Laver 5, the tied outcome was announced. The laid down procedure indicates that the tied nominees may choose by which method the final result will be achieved. Angela Banks was not present nor was she contactable. Steven Copley agreed to the toss of a coin, calling tails when the coin came down heads. This gave the result to Angela Banks who was then announced as the duly elected community representative for the Ardgay and District vacancy.

Item 4. Police report. No police representative attended the meeting and no report received.

Item 5. Guest speaker – Helen Houston, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. During the ballot counting Helen Houston gave her report to the meeting. Sixteen projects/items were covered in the report including work with the Bradbury Centre, Invercharron Highland Games Committee, a tenants/residents group, Falls of Shin, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, THC Ranger Service, Sutherland Radio Controlled Cars, Salmon Country Coast to Coast Relay Race, Climate Change Fund, Ardgay Public Hall committee and celebrations to make the 40th anniversary of the Bonar Bridge bridge. The full report is available from HH at Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. Establishing the area with CAM status (Community Account Managed Area) through working with HIE could lead to five jobs being created with community engagement activities commencing in September. While not considered a 'fragile' community the area could be designated as a 'Significant Area of Special Needs' especially in the light of the recent business closures/losses. It is estimated that 60% of the local population could be living in fuel poverty with a high percentage also falling into the under £10,000 per year earning bracket. More monies from Climate Challenge and Community Benefit schemes should be channelled into energy benefits.

Item 6. Minutes of last meeting. Several amendments were made to the Minutes from the June meeting after which these were adopted as a true and accurate record. Proposed: Betty Wright; seconded by Marion Turner. The amendments indicated that the CC would review the maps of THC Core Paths after which a response would be made to the Core Paths Officer in regard to the Core Path Plan review. The mention of the poorly attended Open Day at the Rosehall Windfarm was extended to record the difficulty experienced by those working during the day when such events are held during working hours. The CC's offer to work with the Heritage Society on celebrations for the Ardgay Station 150th anniversary was amended to show the request to the Heritage Society for details of their plans.

Item 7. Matters arising, not on the agenda. (1) Cycle ramp at Invershin. GF advised that major issues have arisen with this project mostly involving safety and maintenance. The matter is under discussion at Highland Council Cycle Division, with the ramp designer and Creich Community Council also being consulted as to the best way forward. Two main problems are with the non-slip requirements for the treads on the steps and the fitting of the attachments which must not protrude. Everyone is keen to resolve the matter as quickly as possible but all safety and maintenance problems must be overcome. THC and Sustrans both issue the advice to cyclists that is safer to take the seven mile detour. This will remain an agenda item until resolved. **Agenda item. TL action. (2) Royal Mail pillar box.** The box was moved on July 12th to the new location opposite the wall of Ardgay Public Hall close to the noticeboards, near the cycle stands. **(3) Newsletter.** Next copy date will be at the 20th of August. The editor requested contributions from all relevant sources. **(4) Ardgay Station anniversary.** The Heritage Society will be contacted for information as to their

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plans for this celebration. Secretary will also contact The Friends of the Far North Line to ascertain if they are planning any events. **TL Action. (5) Manse Road pavement.** TL raised this issue with John Clark, TECS Bonar Bridge, who indicated there is no budget for such repairs but did agree to take a look. GF confirmed that this is on a HC list of works to be carried out when money allows. The potholes at the recycling centre are also noted. **(6) Road junction at station.** After the report of the overgrown bushes, HC TECS did cut back some of the bushes, working within their budget/time restraints, but the problem remains. Three near accidents were noted this week. This is an unsatisfactory outcome regarding an extremely dangerous corner. Overgrown bushes and verges on many roads are also giving concern. DL was asked to continue pursuing a further solution. **DL Action. (7) Butchers' retirement.** Liz Cormack told the meeting that she had liaised with Creich Community Council with the result that she and Sandy Chalmers have placed collecting boxes in some shops in Bonar Bridge. Money raised will go to a commemorative gift which, it is hoped, can be presented to the butchers at a small buffet event. Mrs Cormack agreed to get quotes for costs and come back to the CC with an application for a donation to help run the event. **(8) Broadband.** TL has had a reply from Rhoda Grant MSP but not yet from Nicola Sturgeon. Standard reply follows the press release of 30th July which did not indicate where the high speed broadband areas will be. BT is the only contractor and it is not giving out any information. GF advised that replies from Government ministers take longer due to the cross-checking/research done by civil servants before letters are sent.

Item 8. Secretary's report. (i) Response to the Scottish Government's Consultation on a National Litter Strategy is requested by 27th September. Fly tipping is not seen as a big problem here, although mention was made of viewpoint spots on the Struie and at Loch Choille. HC's view is that fewer bins lead to better control. 'Adopt a Highway' scheme could be encouraged by HC. Local groups, businesses and organisations could be encouraged to take care of small sections of road/pavements in return for a small sign indicating that their group is doing this good work. Bags for waste, gloves, etc could be provided by HC. A litter pick-up village tidying day is to be arranged, proposed for November, following liaison with Gledfield School, Cadets and Boys Brigade. **(ii)** An email from the Ardgay Public Hall Committee requested urgent financial help from the CC with regard to the shortfall being experienced between secured funding and costs incurred on the present rewiring work. The shortfall amount indicated is £2,781. After initially stating he did not wish to comment, when asked to do so DL indicated that the essential work had begun under the assumption that funds would be forthcoming. Without the rewiring the hall would not gain liability insurance and would have to close, as it will if sufficient funds cannot be found to complete the work. All present who are involved with various funding bodies stated that no such organisation will give retrospective funding. Various suggestions were put forward as to how the Hall Committee might raise the shortfall amount. User groups could be asked to pay a share, or perhaps pay their upcoming annual subscriptions in advance, raffles and fund raising events could be held utilising the Bonar Bridge or Invershin Halls, an appeal for public subscription could be established. GF suggested that if ten groups would each undertake to pay £278.10 the shortfall would be covered. GF said that the HC Ward Discretionary Budget might be able to help with such a sum but that this fund did not normally make retrospective awards. If the Hall Committee has an Emergency Fund it should be utilised and replenished later by other fundraising. The question was also raised as to what plans the Hall Committee has for seeking funding for the rest of its future refurbishment plans, stressing that applications must be made to the appropriate funds well in advance of any work commencing. TL agreed to take back the suggestions to the Hall Committee. **TL Action.**

Item 9. Treasurer's report. Treasurer's account cleared balance stands at £1687.95 which includes the HC grant of £980.82. The Projects account balance is £3815.70 with outstanding cheque of £1207.50. £500 has been loaned to the Toilets account pending receipt of that annual grant. The Toilets account stands at £598.65. Currently unpaid billing for Newsletter advertising stands at £80, this will be followed up by the Chair. The approved grant payment to cover newsletter running costs has not yet been received. Treasurer will send letter to William Gilfillan at Highland Council stating that the HC annual Community Council grant is insufficient to allow the CC to cover its legitimate annual costs. The main expenditure is incurred by employing a Minutes Secretary, thus freeing all eight CC members from this duty and enabling full participation by all at meetings. Travelling expenses account for a further notable expenditure. These points will all be put to Highland Council. Another signatory is required for banking purposes. As Secretary, TL agreed to this and AL will advise the bank accordingly to deal with the appropriate documentation. **AL/TL Action.**

Item 10. Correspondence. Incoming mail included THC Winter Resilience Scheme, Foundation Scotland's acknowledgement that the CC agreed to the new format for SSE/E.ON Community Fund Panel fund sharing, an email from Mrs Copley regarding previous correspondence, and the Sutherland District Partnership advising of its name change to the Sutherland District Health & Social Care Partnership. A letter will be sent in reply asking why A&DCC, which is a statutory consultee, is not included on their agenda and asking for clarification as to which Partnership Ardgay

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and District actually belongs. The next meeting of this Partnership will be on 4th October. **TL Action.** Chair announced that Ardgay had received 98% in the recent War Memorial Competition. The other two percent was lost due to uncompleted cleaning and pointing by John Hood/ Highland Council. An email has been received outlining a 20 Point A9 Improvement Plan, circulated by BW. All agreed there were many very valid points made including those referring to upgrading the rail network where more loops and double track sections are urgently required. Secretary will reply to the email and also write to Keith Brown, Transport Minister. It was suggested that funds for track improvements could come from the huge budget dealing with decommissioning at Dounreay Nuclear Power Station which has to deal with the transportation of nuclear waste by rail. **TL Action.** The Road Safety Seminar which was due to be held in September has been postponed to November. This should deal with issues such as traffic calming, speeding, traffic lights, cycle tracks, etc.

Item 11. Windfarms update. Nothing new this month. Up to date information is available on the Highland Council website under Planning Applications North. The next SSE/ E.ON Community Fund Panel meeting will be held on August 26th.

Item 12. Planning & Licensing applications. None this month.

Item 13. Falls of Shin update. Deep concern was expressed at the failure by Highland Council to install temporary toilet facilities at the site. This is the number one priority. From many miles away, brown tourist signposts still clearly indicate that a disabled toilet facility is available and it is totally unacceptable that no provision has been made. It is obvious now that visitors are using the surrounding bushes and countryside, creating a major health hazard. Now that the building site has been cleared the drainage would be available to link to a toilet system. Failing that, at the very least, a composting toilet should be sited at the car park. The falls still attract large numbers of visitors, the salmon are still jumping and children still play at the playground which is being maintained meantime by the Forestry Commission. This great asset will become a major liability if steps are not taken swiftly. **GF Action.**

Item 14. Highland Council. This item was to discuss the Community Issues Survey, (no details were available at the meeting) and general dissatisfaction about how long it is taking THC to action CC requests. The Tuiteam bridge closure/maintenance dispute is ongoing with still no-one accepting responsibility for it. At a recent Access Forum, PO was assured that the archive records would be checked while another former Highland Council official, Bruce Fields, stated that he had supervised maintenance work by HC in the past. GF conceded that HC, with the Forestry Commission, had carried out bridge repairs at Rogie Falls where a similar ownership dispute occurred. **GF Action.** Phil Waite has still not visited Ardgay Hill. The CC continues to await a list/map of HC owned property within its boundaries – four years since first requested. **GF Action.**

Item 15. Councillor's report. Nothing to add to discussions already taken place during the meeting.

Item 16. Newsletter. Another delivery area is without a distributor. BW will discuss deliveries in the strath with DH to sort out who does what. MT and PO offered to take on from MacNeill's to Cornhill. Copy date for next issue is 20th August.

Item 17. Any other competent business. (1) Bus timetables. Timetables have slipped one behind the other at the Ardgay bus stop making consulting them impossible. New timetables were due out in July and should now be placed at the bus stop. **(2) Highland Third Sector Partnership.** DH complained that circulation from this group is not including Community Councils. **(3) Village clean-up day.** As mentioned above, a village clean-up day is to be arranged in November. **(4) Remembrance Day.** This year's parade will be held in Ardgay at 11.00 on November 10th and arrangements are underway. Highland Council is to be asked to maintain the water supply to the village toilets until after November 10th. **(5) Ardchronie traffic lights.** John Clark, TECS Bonar Bridge, has advised Cllr Farlow that the lights cannot be moved which had been suggested to save road wear and stop red light jumpers. **(6) Data Protection registration.** Treasurer has received a demand to complete a direct debit mandate but little information was given, particularly the amount of payment required. He will ask for further details before completing the form. **AL Action. (7) Tenants' Association.** TL asked why such a group needs to be formed, would it simply duplicate the work of the CC? Some things are dealt with by the CC but others would fall to a tenants' association. More information about THC Tenant Participation Officer is available from THC Service Point in Bonar Bridge, or online at THC website.

Item 18. Date, time and place of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Monday 9th September at 7pm in the Ardgay Public Hall, if available.

Public meeting closed at 10.15pm

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Benn Tharsuinn Windfarm Applications. Discussed at private session after the meeting, an award of £175 to the Sutherland Radio Control Club was approved to help with costs of running a Championship event on 25th August. An award of £135 was also approved from the Beinn nan Oighrean fund to the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust to help two people attend the annual conference in Cumbernauld of the Development Trust Associations of Scotland.

Meeting closed at 10.30pm (approx.)