

ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 9th December 2013 in Ardgay Public Hall at 7pm

Present: Elected & co-opted members: David Hannah, Chair (DH), Teresa Langley, Secretary (TL), Alan Lawrence, Treasurer (AL), Betty Wright (BW), Bob Sendall (BS), David Laver (DL)

Also present: Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF), Andy Wright, Michael Baird, Colin Gilmour, Laura Humble, Derek Warburton, Johnny Shaw, PCs Neil Bremner (Dornoch) and Stephen MacKenzie (Brora)

Invited guests: Jessica Mills, Community Broadband Scotland (JM, CBS)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: Phil Olson (PO), Marion Turner (MT)

Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies (see above). Chair DH opened the evening welcoming everyone and invited Jessica Mills to make her presentation for Community Broadband Scotland.

Invited guest presentation. JM handed out copies of a presentation which explained the CBS was established to help communities which are unlikely to benefit from the Scottish Government's Step Change Programme. CBS has a network of advisers, can help with a start-up fund and has a website to provide online advice, guidance and tool kit resources. The start-up fund can help communities where the current Broadband speed is less than 2mbps, which applies to both the Craigs and Rosehall exchanges. The key elements work through community engagement, project planning, working towards capital assistance to make the programme happen. There are three stages to the funding programme, a Seed Fund Grant, a Project Planning Grant and the Capital Assistance Grant. Stage 2 (Project Planning) would require a technical expert assessment/review. A 'backhaul' exchange with available lease line capacity would need to be found, possibly Tain once it has been upgraded. Wireless connections seem the most likely for this area as comparative costs for fibre cabling are prohibitive. Masts would not be too conspicuous being around 5m to 10m in height and can be camouflaged. Option of using satellite connection exists but is also very expensive and cannot be funded by CBS. The BT scheme is expected to announce rollout plans in March 2014 after which time it will be clearer as to which exchanges will benefit. The CC agreed to await this announcement before considering the next move. CBS can offer support, advice and templates for all stages should the CC decide to go with the CBS option. A social enterprise company, such as Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust, would be required to oversee the whole project with one or two sub-companies carrying out the running of it. Further information is available on the CBS website www.communitybroadbandscotland.org This item will be an agenda item for the March meeting. With thanks from the CC, JM left at 7.50pm. **Agenda item (March 2014).**

Item 3. Police report. PCs Bremner and MacKenzie arrived during the CBS presentation which was interrupted to take their report. No incidents of note have been recorded in the last month. A road safety campaign and drink driving campaign are both currently underway. All drivers involved in incidents over the festive period will be breathalysed. The ongoing problem of drivers exceeding the 20mph limit at the school was highlighted; also mentioned were log lorries driving in convoy, traffic speeding, and the jumping of the red light at the Ardchronie lights. Cllr Farlow indicated that talks are proceeding between THC and the Forestry Commission to secure a land purchase which would allow a realignment of the road. The Police officers left at 8.35pm.

Item 8 Braemore windfarm. This item was brought forward to accommodate those members of the public who had attended specifically for it. CG stated that after considerable study of the addendum submitted by Wind Prospect Developments Ltd it is his opinion that the changes made do not meet the requirements of the objections made by THC and others to the original planning application. The visual, cumulative and noise impacts remain as before. The house at Middle Hill will become unsaleable due to the proximity of the turbines. Wind Prospect has stated it will implement 'curtailment' on turbines in certain wind conditions but it has been clear at other windfarms locally that this does not work to sufficiently reduce noise pollution. DH confirmed that the CC has already submitted objections to the proposal, that these objections stand and will be submitted again. **TL Action.**

Item 4. Minutes of last meeting/Matters arising. The Minutes from the November meeting were adopted as a true and accurate record, proposed by Bob Sendall; seconded Teresa Langley. **(1) 20mph speed limit at primary school.** GF advised that the date of a site visit by THC officials is to be confirmed. **(2) Training sessions for CC members.** DH attended the session in Dingwall and found it a useful event. **(3) VG-ES AGM.** Also attended by DH on behalf of CC. John Swinney, MSP, proved to be a good speaker. Information was discussed regarding the possible community buyout of the Dornoch Court Buildings which are in need of repairs, anticipated to cost in the region of £400,000. **(4) Queen's**

Royal Baton. It is understood that a nomination has been made for a representative of the Kyle of Sutherland Youth Development Group.

Item 5. Secretary's report. (TL) Notification received under Licensing Act of amendment to overall size in off sales capacity at the new Ardgay Stores & Highland Café- an increase from 10sqm to 19.8sqm.

Costs put forward for the purchase of laptop but it was agreed that a desktop PC would be more appropriate, with the existing laptop undergoing repair. Secretary was authorised to proceed with purchasing a suitable PC. **TL Action.**

Item 6. Treasurer's report. (AL) Treasurer's account stands at £1449.55 with outstanding cheques of £118.30. The Projects Account balance is £5234.02 which includes £1500 received from THC as the Toilets grant for this year. The toilets account has a current balance of £3.65 and is now in arrears to the Projects account by £10 due to the late payment of THC grant. No further liabilities are expected in this financial year. £50 expenditure for the Remembrance Day Wreath and crosses was approved as was £1420.80p to THC for lighting frames and lights. **AL Action.**

Item 7. Correspondence. (1) Dounreay Planning framework. GF attended a meeting at which items discussed included the lack of consultation, an accident with a wagon in Barrow, and road shipments of 'exotic fuel'. Extra loops on the rail network were suggested which could come under the 'significant planning gain' proposals. Extra layby-type loops would also allow more passenger trains. **(2) Community Empowerment.** CC members were encouraged to visit the Scottish Government website for more information. **(3) Ardgay toilets.** The end of season report from Jeannie Sparling indicated a slight increase in usage perhaps due to the closure of the Falls of Shin facility. A small leak in the water supply will be fixed by TECS who will also turn off the supply and drain down the system. Thanks were once again expressed to Jeannie and Gordon for their excellent work. **(4) Flowers at station platform.** It was mentioned at a previous meeting that the KOS Heritage Society might take on these floral arrangements which would be of great help to Jeannie and Gordon. TL to check with KOSHS and Friends of the Far North Line with regard to funding, etc. **TL Action.** **(5) Flag Raising and Veterans reception 2014.** Letter received from Dr Monica Main, Lord Lieutenant for Sutherland, requesting a donation in support of next year's event which will also mark one hundred years since the outbreak of WW1. The sum of £50 was proposed; AL will check if this amount can be found within the accounts. Donations should be sent to VG-ES. **AL/TL Action.** **(6) KOSDT.** A letter of thanks has been received from KOSDT with regard to its successful application to the Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Fund. It is hoped that the appointed graduate will not only work alongside the community development officer but will be tasked with growing the business side of the Trust's operations. The welcomed support of the CC was noted as being of considerable importance and the Board will continue to keep the CC informed of projects and activities.

Item 8. Invershin cycle ramp. On behalf of the CC DL has carried out a risk assessment on the proposed addition of a cycle ramp on the steps of the viaduct. He raised four points in particular – it must be established that the rail company has given permission for the ramp to be added, THC Planning permission/building warrant must be obtained, as the plate will reduce the width of the step treads a relaxation of regulations would be required, and as the pitch of the steps no longer meets the regulations, although it did when erected, a further relaxation of regulations would be necessary, essential to securing insurance cover. DL has not seen a drawing or plan of the ramp. He stated that the existing fixings could be utilised to install a ramp. He recommended that the CC does not proceed with the project until these items have been clarified. This assessment is to be passed to Creich CC. A&DCC would require all points raised to be addressed. **MG Action.**

Item 9. Windfarms. Achany. Next Panel meeting will be on Monday 16th December at which a new format framework is to be approved. **Braemore.** See above. **Combined endowment fund with Creich CC.** **Agenda item (February 2014).**

Item 10. Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. AGM was held on 11th November with appropriate elections taking place. Information was given out regarding the proposed graduate placement scheme, the apprenticeship scheme and a new business plan. It was noted that recent KOSDT meetings have clashed with A&DCC meetings; it is hoped that this can be avoided in future. The full report is available in the current A&DCC newsletter and from KOSDT.

Item 11. Highland Councillor's report. Cllr Farlow advised that all filling stations in Sutherland have now submitted returns to Scottish Government in respect of the Rural Fuel Duty Discount Scheme. THC new budget should be approved before Christmas. Substantial savings have been made by the reduction of two director posts and restructuring of departments. Discussing the 'Safe Route to School' plan, CCs reiterated concerns regarding the lack of a crossing point en route to the primary school and the ongoing issue of reassessing the siting of the 20mph flashing signs. A site visit was called for to assess all relevant points. **GF Action.**

Item 12. Newsletter. Current issue handed out for distribution.

Item 13. Any other competent business. (1) Carbisdale Castle. CEO of SYHA has informed Creich CC that funding for repairs is still being sought and that the statues and contents are held in secure storage. Heating is maintained to preserve the condition of the interior and to assist with still drying out plaster repairs. No further decision will be made regarding the castle's future until the spring. Some debate exists regarding the listing of the building and the statues. Cllr Farlow will contact THC conservation Officer seeking an opinion in writing. **GF Action.** **(2) Noticeboards.** BS advised that the community noticeboard placed in Rosehall by KOSDT earlier this year has been seriously damaged in the recent storm. Creich CC and KOSDT to be advised with an enquiry made regarding repair/replacement. **MG Action.**

Item 14. Date and time of next meeting. There being no meeting in January, the next meeting will be on Monday 10th February 2014 at 7pm in the Ardgay Public Hall. Hall bookings have been made up to June 2014. Dates for 2014 meetings are proposed as February 10th, March 10th, April 14th, May 12th, June 9th (also AGM), July 14th, August 11th, September 8th, October 13th, November 10th and December 8th.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm.

Item 15. Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm grant applications (private session)

One application resulted in the unanimously approved award of £828 to the Kyle of Sutherland Youth Development Group to help purchase a screen printing kit.

Meeting closed 9.40pm.