

ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 8th June 2015 in Ardgay Public Hall at 7.00pm

Present: Elected & co-opted members: David Hannah, Chair (DH), Marion Turner, Vice Chair (MT) Alan Lawrence, Treasurer, (AL), Teresa Langley, Secretary, (TL), Phil Olson (PO), Silvia Muras (SM)

Apologies: Betty Wright (BW), Bob Sendall (BS)

Police Scotland: PC Ian Forbes

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Also present: Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF), Lesley Pope, Sheila Lall, Mary Stobo

Items 1/2. Welcome/Sederunt & Apologies. As above.

Item 3. Minutes of last meeting. The minutes of the May meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed: Phil Olson; seconded: Silvia Muras.

Item 4. Matters arising:

- (a) Carbisdale Castle update. (AL) Invited by Culrain Hall Committee Secretary Anne Henderson, AL attended a meeting on 4th June. At this he heard there had been two largely positive meetings between the Culrain Hall Committee and the developers but also a third which was less so. New plans have been brought forward which include the proposal for 10 -12 houses which it is hoped would help with the provision of funds for the hotel development. The number of rooms in the hotel has been reduced to 19 with the expected staff number reduced from 90 to 57. A helipad for up to 6 helicopters is proposed. Planned site for the staff quarters has also been moved. Culrain Hall Committee gathered 47 positive votes to proceed with the Community Right to Buy action and is now going down that route. The land within that proposal is out-with the 56 acres which the developer wishes to purchase from the Forestry Commission, apart from one corner which affords a viewpoint. It is hoped the developer will agree to this proposal. MT read out the statement issued by CC on 13th May and which was published in The Northern Times. The text of that statement was as follows: 'Following the CC meeting in Culrain on 11th May 2015 the CC has taken some actions: on 13th May in response to a number of members of the CC having been approached by significant numbers of residents concerned about progress the CC decided to issue a statement to the press indicating that it is supportive of the castle development and the economic benefit it would bring. The statement also expressed the wish that an agreement could be arrived at with the Culrain Hall Committee so that both the castle and the Culrain woodland development could progress. Public opinion through the A&DCC area continued to put pressure on the CC to show support for the development. On 28th May 2015 AD&CC wrote to the developer indicating its support for the project, and its support for the sale, by FCS, of the 56 acres of forestry land required by the developer to make the project viable. As CCs are generally advised by THC not to hold assets the CC indicated that it had no intention of purchasing land at Carbisdale forest.' The two Culrain residents present stated that everyone hopes the development will go ahead.
- (b) Invershin Cycle ramp. (PO) Latest designs approved by THC and Network Rail. Non-slip paint also approved. Awaiting installation.
- (c) Culrain junction flooding. (GF) THC has nothing within this year's or next year's budget to allow for work at this junction. No engineer's time is available for proper assessment. The problem will remain an ongoing issue. It was once again stated that one elderly lady resident is often isolated in her house when the flooding arises and that this situation is unacceptable.
- (d) Gledfield School warning signs/Safer Routes to School. (TL) It is understood that the CC request for a H&S survey has been passed to Campbell Stewart, TECS, but no further action or reply has been noted. GF has emailed the Parent Council Chair again stating that the Safer Route to School Plan must be prepared by the Head Teacher, approved by the Parent Council and submitted to THC at which point THC can take it to Scottish Government for approval of action. Safer Routes to School now comes under the Planning Department and the CC is advised to write to that department. **TL Action.** After school hours children walk from the school to the Youth Group premises in Bonar Bridge and a more comprehensive plan for safe routes in the area is required. GF encouraged to take the issue further. **GF Action.**

- (e) Service Point downgrading. GF advised this subject is scheduled for further discussion at THC on 25th June. MT reiterated that all comments made on the recent consultation indicated that face to face contact with a local THC representative is essential for many in local communities. Figures for footfall in Bonar Bridge have yet to be released. GF stated relevant figures will be in the papers published one week before THC meeting. The proposal stands for a facility within the Bonar Bridge library and face to face meetings can be arranged as required. The loss of an employed position in the area was also highlighted to have significant effect. CC will write to protest the changes once the papers are published ahead of the upcoming meeting. **MT Action.**

Item 5. Police report. Thirty-one incidents logged in the Bonar Bridge/Ardgay area including three thefts, two fixed penalties for road traffic offences and two road collisions. Internet fraud continues and the public is advised not to reveal any personal/financial details unless completely sure of the safety of so doing. Parking at the school was raised as causing obstructions to traffic during drop off/pick up times. A piece of land beside the school, currently zoned for housing, was identified as being a possible parking area which would relieve this congestion which at present often places traffic on the wrong side of the road at busy times, and on a bend in the road where line of sight is obscured.

Item 6. Newsletter. (SM) New issue is printing and will be ready for delivery next week. Costings working out at £1 per copy. New advertisers and contributors have been secured for this issue. The next issue will cover the upcoming elections in November and encourage people to consider standing for CC membership. SM was congratulated for another excellent issue.

Item 7. Secretary's report/correspondence.

- (a) Scotways renewal request passed to Treasurer.
- (b) NHS offer to talk to CC. An invitation was agreed, initially for July but this meeting was later cancelled so the invitation should be for the August meeting. **Agenda item TL Action.**
- (c) R. Copley's letter ref – Paths For All. CC has funds aside for this plan. Mrs Copley will be advised that a small group needs to be formed to take on the project and utilise this funding. **TL Action.**
- (d) Letter received from Foundation Scotland regarding newsletter funding application.
- (e) Letter from Rhoda Grant regarding improvements to the Far North Line. Suggestion made that a 'Friends of Ardgay Station' group could be established to seek funds for further improvements beyond those proposed by Abellio. More passing places are required on sections operating on single tracks to improve timetables and schedules; Abellio should influence Network Rail on this. The nuclear waste trains passing through several times a week also disrupt passenger services with local stops being affected. The Friends of the Far North Line should be pushing for some compensation/consideration to be made to the local stations. Board members of FFNL will be contacted to take this further.
- (f) Thank you letter received from KoSDT regarding the recent Beinn Tharsuinn award in respect of its project at the Falls of Shin.
- (g) KOSHS application to Beinn Tharsuinn. Mary Stobo had attended primarily to give the CC further information which might be helpful to members when making the decision on the group's recent funding application. Research for this book has taken five years resulting in what it is hoped will be a useful reference and information tool, copies of which will be placed in the local school and library. Hardback is preferred for its sturdier qualities and longer lasting abilities. E-printing was considered inappropriate. The selling price per copy will be in the region of £15 - £20 (a common price for a book of this type) but the book will be on sale at the launch, planned for September, at £10. The first run will be of 200 books with hopes to reprint at which time profits from sales will help to support the Heritage Centre. The centre provides a venue for many local groups and artists in particular of find hire of local village halls is not suitable due to other scheduled events. SM will liaise with Mary Stobo and publish an article in the next newsletter to help promote the group and this publication. **SM Action.** The application was discussed further at private session after the main meeting and resulted in an award of £940 being approved.

Item 8. Treasurer's report. (AL) The report show a cleared balance of £11,722.09 with the transfer of £6989.53 from the Projects account balance of £1666.66 from E.ON for newsletter costs. One outstanding cheque for £189. The balance remaining for CC admin is £1214.81 The Toilets account is awaiting the bank transfer of £11.65 to the Treasurer's account. The letter requesting the closure of the Projects and Toilets accounts was posted on 21st April.

Item 9. Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust report. (MT) The recent Development Officer's report has been circulated; the addition of the Greening Kyle and Keeping Active Together reports was welcomed. The DO report is

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circulated to members of KoSDT, membership of which is free to all. The recent Falls of Shin exhibitions outlining plans for development were well received.

Item 10. Highland Council. (GF) The administration of THC will be changed due to a shift in the alliances of the various parties. A new leader and convenor will be elected in the coming week. The Independent group in overall control will be supported by the SNP councillors until the elections in May 2017 to ensure continuity as far as possible. More financial cuts are to be expected; the proposal for THC to go against Scottish Government and increase the Council Tax could lead to the loss of the government subsidy. Council Tax covers only 17% of THC costs. It is understood that various road repairs are scheduled, e.g. at Ardchronie and Culrain bridge and also along the road between the Bailey Bridge and Rosehall.

Item 11. Windfarms. Braemore – going to PLJ. **Caplich** – to Planning in October. **Dalnessie** – dropped by SSE but E.ON is looking at this site. **Glen Cassley** – to PLJ. **Sallachy** – awaiting Section 36. **Strathkirry** – now four turbines only; MT is in touch with developers regarding community benefit. **Coire na Cloiche** – papers will be signed by CC with regard to the change of name.

Item 12. AOCB. (a) Creich and Lairg CCs' Minutes. All received. **(b) Schedule of future meetings.** In order to retain the CC meetings cost within the budget supplied by THC, all agreed to hold eight meetings per year, therefore no meetings will be held in January, April, July or October from now on. The already publicised July meeting is postponed to August. **(c) Community Notice Boards.** In response to a request from Ardgay Public Hall it was agreed to move the notice boards when notification received of developments to take place at The Lady Ross site. **(d) Gearrchoille Community Wood Planning application** for metal container/shelter. Agreed to submit via CC. **(e) Highland Leader nominations.** Endorsed nominations for DH and Helen Houston (KoSDT). MT withdrew. **TL Action. (f) Railway verges.** This is a Network Rail issue. Sec will pass on contact information to enquirer. **TL Action. (g) Toilet cleaner's remuneration.** Complicated issue as toilets are owned by THC but operated through the summer season by the CC using the services of Jeanie Sparling for cleaning and maintenance. Her work is highly commended and all agreed should be worthy of earning the 'living wage'. THC annual grant falls short of expenditure, already resulting in a £24 overspend over the last two years. Consideration given to reducing the number of hours the facility is open, perhaps a bonus scheme, but discussion failed to reach a decision. Everyone reluctant to set a precedent by using windfarm community benefits for this purpose which it is felt should be covered by THC as it is in neighbouring facilities. **(h) Minute Secretary's hourly rate.** In line with the recent increase agreed at both Creich and Lairg CCs it was agreed to raise this rate to match at £13 per hour. Proposed: MT, seconded: DH. **(i) Ardgay Public Hall Committee** is holding an auction on June 27th and is appealing for items for sale. **(j) Separate email mailbox for Chair** – not required. **(k) Co-option of members.** Clarification given that co-option can only take place when a vacancy occurs on the CC. At present A&DCC has a full complement of elected members but would be willing to consider any applications as Associate members.

Item 15. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held in the Ardgay Public Hall at 7pm on Monday 10th August 2015.

Meeting closed at 9.45pm