

## ARDGAY & DISTRICT COMMUNITY COUNCIL



Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2016 in Ardgay Public Hall at 7.00pm

**Present: Elected & co-opted members:** Marion Turner (MT), Betty Wright (BW), Silvia Muras (SM), Andy Wright (AW), Sheila Lall (SL)

**Apologies:** Rob Pope (RP)

**Police Scotland:** No representative

**Also present:** Highland Councillor George Farlow (GF), Leslie Pope (LP)

**Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies** (as above). This was the inaugural meeting of the newly elected Community Council. Cllr Farlow took the Chair, welcoming all present and congratulating the new CC members, now elected for a four year term. He proceeded to the election of office bearers with the following outcome:

Position	Nominee	Proposed by	Seconded by	Accepted/Refused
Chair	Betty Wright	Marion Turner	Silvia Muras	Accepted
Vice Chair	Silvia Muras	Marion Turner	Sheila Lall	Accepted
Treasurer	Marion Turner	Silvia Muras	Andy Wright	Accepted
Secretary	Lesley Pope	Sheila Lall	Silvia Muras	See below

The position of secretary was accepted by LP following her election to the CC as an Associate Member. Associate Members have no voting rights but can act in an office bearing capacity. Her nomination was proposed by SL and seconded by SM.

The email mailbox of [secretary@ardgayanddistrictcommunitycouncil.org.uk](mailto:secretary@ardgayanddistrictcommunitycouncil.org.uk) operates well as a clearing house for all incoming electronic mail and this system will continue. MT will meet with LP to arrange handover. MT was thanked for maintaining the mailbox during the period while the CC was in abeyance. During the last administration the accounting system was changed to comply with THC standard format. Transparency is of the utmost importance and with these systems in place there have been no issues in the past.

The AGM will be held on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2016.

Chair BW then moved to the agenda.

**Item 3. Minutes of last meeting.** The minutes of the November meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed: Betty Wright; seconded: Marion Turner. These were the only returned CC members; the new CC approved the adoption of the November minutes on this basis.

### Item 4. Matters arising:

- Bank of Scotland, Bonar Bridge. SM advised that Michael Baird is in contact with MP Paul Monaghan who in turn has been in discussion with the Bank. Michael Baird has taken the matter to the Financial Ombudsman who is looking into the procedures undertaken by the bank as well as the situation with many rural banks with regard to population age structure, transport issues, distance from nearest branch, etc. This will be an item for the next CC newsletter. Individuals should continue to support the campaign to improve the business hours and should write to the Bank accordingly. Letters can be handed into the local branch – when it's open!
- Verges. Brash cutting is currently underway. GF confirmed that THC has a statutory duty to cut back the verges once a year for safety reasons. Strathcarron and the Culrain district have not been cut in the past year allowing for many line of sight issues. Cllr Morrison is due to meet the Director of Community Services for further discussion. THC is undergoing a major restructuring with Heads of Departments already reduced in number from eight to four with a full restructuring taking place over the next eighteen months. GF will seek to ascertain what the verge cutting policy is for 2016-17. One or two men with a strimmer or small tractor, perhaps sub-contracted locally, could easily maintain safe levels of growth. **GF Action.**
- Pylon line – Beauly to Loch Buidhe. A recent email from SSE indicated that whilst the expected upgrading of the Beauly-Loch Buidhe reinforcement has been put on hold, it is expected that the Lairg-Loch Buidhe development will still be required. The Lairg-Loch Buidhe project is driven by connection requests from wind farm developers in the vicinity of Loch Shin and does not require the further upgrade south of Loch Buidhe on its own. The company's decision, presented at a consultation in February 2015, was to take forward the SHE Transmission route into the detailed design process. On behalf of the Lairg community MP Paul

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Monaghan has indicated that he would oppose this route and asked SSE to reconsider. The company agreed to consider his request and to organise a site visit in May to review the options in further detail on the ground.

- (d) Wi-Fi for Ardgay Hall. The CC had approached the Bonar Bridge hall committee to find out more about their Wi-Fi Hotspot provision. It was suggested that perhaps the Ardgay Hall committee might put together a funding application to seek funds to have this facility installed. Access to Wi-Fi is no longer considered an 'extra' but an essential in public places. **BW Action.**
- (e) Christmas lights. At this the first meeting of the CC since Christmas thanks were recorded to all those involved in erecting and taking down the Christmas lights in the village.
- (f) Outgoing CC. Thanks were recorded to all outgoing Community Councillors for their years of service to the community. An item will appear in the next edition of the newsletter. **SM Action.**

**Item 5. Police report.** None submitted.

**Item 6. Highland Council report.** GF attended the Highland Environmental Forum; he will email information which can be circulated to CCs. A dedicated post for a wildlife crime officer has been created. Noting the difficulties locally with banking service provision GF advised that Royal Bank of Scotland in Ullapool has a five-day per week service in addition to the Bank of Scotland and there are three ATMs in the village. The public toilet facility at South Bonar is under review with a report expected. The Countryside Ranger post in Lairg has been deleted with Ian Paterson now taking voluntary redundancy. Budgeting – THC is trying to balance the budget with minimal effect to services where possible. Stoer Primary School has been temporarily mothballed allowing a small saving. A public meeting is to be called to discuss Participatory Budgets. £15,000 will be made available to fund community empowerment groups working on community benefitting projects. A press release will be issued informing the community and encouraging groups to apply. The application form will be made as straightforward as possible. THC Ward Discretionary Budget has been slashed.

GF is still seeking figures for the costs of the Ardchronie traffic lights to make a case to ensure such a situation is avoided in future. GF confirmed that THC does not discriminate against communities with community benefit income and he reminded the meeting that any community may seek to buy into windfarms out with their own area as well as locally if they wished.

**Item 7. Ardgay Regeneration Project.** Helen Houston of KoSDT and THC were commended for their efforts in bringing in this very exciting project. The Partnership has worked well. Over one hundred people attended the public exhibition which put forward the plans. The siting of the CC noticeboards should be fed into the overall planning of the site, with the wall barrier between the hall and the rest of the village reviewed.

**Item 8. CASPLAN.** Deadline for submission of comments is 18<sup>th</sup> March. CC has previously made important changes which have been incorporated. "128 The Gearchoille Ancient Woodland is in the care of the local community" should be updated to reflect community ownership: 128 The Gearchoille Ancient Woodland is owned and in the care of the local community. "127 land behind the public hall could be a potential location for additional car parking for the village, subject to suitable funding being found." Currently this is a green space which from time to time has vehicles and even a boat parked on it. It would make more sense to consider how this area is used to meet needs when drawing up the plans for the regeneration of the Lady Ross site rather than be piecemeal and definitive at this stage. An explanation will be requested for the phrase shown on the map as, 'an area of co-ordinated tourism connection'. **MT Action.** MT was thanked for all her work with this and the HwLDP.

**Item 9. HwLDP.** MT responded on behalf of the previous CC in November; available for viewing on THC Planning website.

**Item 10. Toilets in Ardgay.** GF was asked to ascertain if the CC will still be paid by THC to operate this facility. Previously a grant of £1,500 per year went towards the costs. **GF Action.** MT will discuss with Jeanie Sparling if she is still willing to take on the role of caretaker/cleaner. **MT Action.**

**Item 11. Flower tubs.** In the past an award was received from THC Ward Discretionary Budget towards the flowers and plants. It is currently unclear if such an award will be forthcoming this year. The CC must decide if it is taking on this village enhancement and if so who will undertake the actual work involved. This should be an agenda item for next month. In the meantime local keen gardeners, especially those in the new growing group started by Greening Kyle, could be asked if they wished to become involved. **BWAW Action. Agenda item.**

**Item 12. Broadband in Ardgay & district.** (MT) KoSDT has undertaken a local survey, with good responses, prior to working with Community Broadband Scotland. BT is currently working though a post code analysis to establish which

areas will/will not receive Superfast Broadband through its network. An article on this subject appears on the front page of the new issue of the CC newsletter.

**Item 13. Newsletter.** (SM) E.ON funding has now finished therefore new funding sources must be found. Next issue is due to distribute on 15th June. It was suggested that an application could be made to the Beinn Tharsuinn Fund for short term funding for two issues to allow time to consider other funding sources. Printing costs are currently £360 per issue with various other costs - a fee must be established for the Editor's time. Sponsorship from local businesses could be encouraged and advertising increased. Copies could be made available for sale out with the village. The online version should perhaps not be available until two weeks after publication. SM will bring ideas for discussion at next meeting. **SM Action.**

**Item 14. Secretary's report.** Correspondence. Much of the incoming mail now arrives by email and is circulated by the Secretary as appropriate. The Police Scotland questionnaire was completed tonight ahead of the 31<sup>st</sup> March deadline with traffic/road safety given as the main priority, also speeding throughout the area but at Gledfield School in particular, local vandalism, scams on the elderly, wildlife crime, and control of dangerous dogs all noted for attention. CC stated it is reasonably satisfied with police liaison but indicated that the information passed by the police is not targeted to specific areas/districts which would be helpful.

**Item 15. Treasurer's report** (MT) THC annual administration grant of £977.55 had been received in September 2015. A operating deficit of £620.24 was carried forward from the previous year which reflected the cost of a new laptop bought for use by the Secretary. Currently the Admin fund stands at -£219.19. The restricted Toilet fund stands at -£24. There is £878.48 in the CC environmental fund, the newsletter account has £498.95 which reflects a tribute to its value, the Beinn nan Oighrean account stands at £9,275 with the E.ON path fund holding £800. The balance at the bank is £12,022.95. £100 received from THC Ward Discretionary Budget last year for floral displays were used throughout the year. The accounts will now be made up for the end of the financial year. **MT Action.**

**Item 16. Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust report.** (AW) An amazing energy is experienced when visiting the Trust office with the young people working there becoming part of and contributing to the local community. Many projects are currently running and the Trust has brought in upwards of £2m to the local economy. A list of local contractors is being compiled to ensure they receive invitations to tender for project works locally. The Trust's surveys have proved there is significant fuel poverty in the area and several of the Trust's projects have made a difference to the lives of those in difficulty. It is important that the CC maintains a representation on the Board of the Trust with appropriate declarations of interest made to each body as appropriate. The overall impression is that the public has a very positive regard for the work of the Trust. It was confirmed that the burger van/snack food outlet will be in place again at Falls of Shin this season until the new development is up and running.

**Item 17. Windfarms.** Due to the changes within the CC new representatives were appointed to the SSE & E.ON Windfarm Panel. These are MT and SM with BW and Angi Banks remaining the community representatives. The proposed Glenmorie development was turned down on appeal with both Glen Cassley and Sallachy recently rejected. The Scottish Government decision regarding Braemore is not expected until later in the year.

**Item 18. Any other competent business.** (a) Sutherland Housing Conference 21<sup>st</sup> March. SL and LP hope attend on behalf of the CC. Those attending will provide a short bullet point report to the next CC meeting. **SL/LP Action.** (b) Website. This is to be an agenda item for April. Also copies of the Declaration of Interest forms used by the Achary Panel will be emailed for use in regard to CC membership. **Agenda item/MG Action.** (c) Home insurance issues. It has come to the notice of the CC that many insurance companies are designating houses to be in 'flood risks areas' due to the SEPA flood map which is based on post code identification. In this area post codes can cover a wide area and often properties near/in a flood risk are situated some distance below others on much higher ground. BW will ask SEPA about its use of post codes in this regard. **BW Action.**

**Item 19. Date and time of next/future meetings.** In the past the CC met on a two meetings/one off schedule throughout the year. Normally April would not see a meeting but as this CC is newly inaugurated it was agreed a meeting should be held. The future dates are therefore:

April 11<sup>th</sup>, May 9<sup>th</sup>, June 13<sup>th</sup> (AGM), August 8<sup>th</sup>, September 12<sup>th</sup>, November 14<sup>th</sup> and December 12<sup>th</sup>. There will be no scheduled meetings in July or October although meetings may be called in the event of urgent matters arising.

**Beinn Tharsuinn Community Benefit awards.**

At the private meeting following the CC's monthly meeting Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust, Keep Active Together Project, was awarded £1,500 to match fund the Scottish Government award to extend the project for another year. It

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was stated that the Beinn Tharsuinn Fund application form still requires amending – the breakdown of expected expenditure should be clearer. MG will advise KoSDT to arrange payment. **MG Action.**

Meeting closed 10pm.