

Ardgay & District Community Council

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Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 14th August 2017 in Culrain Hall at 7.00pm

Minutes approved 11/09/2017

Present: Betty Wright, Chair (BW), Silvia Muras, Vice Chair (SM), Marion Turner, Treasurer (MT), Leslie Pope, Secretary (LP), Andy Wright (AW), Rob Pope (RP), Buster Crabb (BC)

Also present: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM). Kate Alexander (KA), Janet Mackay (JM)

Apologies: None

Police Scotland: None present

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder

Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies (as above) Chair Betty Wright welcomed everyone especially the Culrain representatives.

Non-agenda item. BW presented a tribute to Robin Ross who died recently. Mr Ross was a previous chair of A&DCC and a great supporter of the community. His family have crofted at Heatherlea for three or four generations. He will be much missed in the community. The sympathies of the CC were extended to his widow Margaret and the family. SM hopes to add an obituary to the next edition of the newsletter. **SM Action.**

Item 3. Minutes of last meeting. The minutes of the June meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed: Marion Turner; seconded: Betty Wright.

Item 4. Matters arising. (1) Defibrillator. SM confirmed that application has been made to SSE Resilience Fund with submission acknowledged. (2) Polling Station. Reply received from the Elections Manager with apologies that protocol was not followed ahead of the last election due to time constraints. A full review is to be carried out, confirmed by LM. SM passed on thanks from Hall Committee to the CC for following this through. (3) CC Insurance through THC. BW/LP continuing to follow this up. (4) Highland.gov email address for CC. BW will liaise with Ward Manager. **BW Action.** (5) Ardgay toilets. Delay in stock replenishment, now sorted out. Recent leak also fixed. Facility is being well used by locals and visitors. NO Smoking signs requested by caretaker. Project Manager for the Regeneration Project will be asked if KOSDT office can provide a couple of laminated signs. **MT Action.** Sheena Shaw was congratulated on the excellent caretaking of the facility.

Item 5. Police report. None available.

Item 6. Chairperson's report. (1) The agenda is produced with details of all items to be discussed, not just headings, to help public awareness of the matters which will be raised each month. Although this makes the agenda appear lengthy, many matters will be dealt with quickly with others requiring longer discussion. Chair aims to complete each meeting in approximately two hours. CCs were encouraged to try to keep within the time frame. (2) The next Sutherland Community Partnership meeting is scheduled for 25th August in Kinlochbervie.

Item 7. Secretary's report. All relevant email correspondence has been circulated.

Item 8. Matters raised by residents. (1) Road improvements at Kincardine Hill. Public meeting to be held in Ardgay Hall on 29th August at 7.30pm. Preliminary road marking has been done; residents aware of an increase in traffic already. The road sign advising slow driving, horses on the road has not yet appeared. All matters have been passed to THC Roads Dept. via Graham MacKenzie and can be discussed at the public meeting. (2) Staffing concerns at Gledfield School. This item has been removed from the public minutes for reasons of confidentiality. Sheila Lall will continue to liaise with CC when appropriate and was thanked for this. (3) Seat between Ardgay and Bonar Bridge. A request received to have a seat installed on the straight between the two villages to encourage local people to walk, by allowing one or two rest points. BW will talk to John Clark, Roads Department in Bonar Bridge, to see if this might be possible. Difficulties with proximity to the road, which carries a 60mph limit, are appreciated but the suggestion is a very valid one. After talks with THC, BW will report back as to what might be achieved and how. SM will contact the lady who raised the idea to find out if there is a story behind it which could be an item in the newsletter. **BW/SM Action.**

(4) Ardgay Hall Auction fundraiser. The event will be held on 26th August. CC approved the donation of £20 gift voucher valid for one of the local businesses. **MT Action.** The hall will be open for donations of items for auction on 22-25th August. Collection of large items can be arranged via the Hall Committee. (5) Non-stopping of trains in Culrain. Janet Mackay advised that the 9am train has not stopped at Culrain since 2014/15. This was the most popular train for Culrain residents and visitors as it allows for time in Inverness and to return, also for onward connections. There is no disabled access to southbound trains in Ardgay Station therefore the Culrain stop is essential. The lack of passing sections of track appears to be a major issue in maintaining the current timetables. Upgrading of the line is urgently needed. A sign should be erected at Culrain and Ardgay to encourage people to use the direct phone line immediately upon arriving at the station to ascertain if the train is running, is on time, etc. Many incidents reported of the non-arrival of trains when travellers did not find out until too late to make alternative arrangements. HITRANS Strategy Consultation has closed but all concerned should still make submissions to it. Secretary will do so for CC on behalf of the community and also contact Frank Roach. Scottish Government has a Far North Line Working Group – perhaps contact through Alan Brown at Scottish Government. (6) Paths at Ardgay end of viaduct cycle ramp. AW has written as an individual to Matt Dent regarding the overgrown paths which now mask a dangerous barbed-wire fence along the side of the track. The barbs on the wire face onto the path, not into the field. Should a walker stumble or a cyclist fall they could receive a very serious injury from the wire. BW will write to Matt Dent highlighting the issue and seeking swift action to remedy it. **BW Action.** (7) BC raised the issue that all the Forestry Commission signs for the walks and trails around Culrain have been removed. No maintenance has been done on the tracks; a picnic table has been removed leaving stumps which will prove dangerous when overgrown and no longer visible. Kyle of Sutherland Forest Trust is willing to seek funding to do maintenance on the trails but needs to make contact with the new owner of Carbisdale Castle as access to the trails is over Castle owned land. Secretary will write to FCS asking for clarification of its future plans for the woodland as these trails are much missed. **LP Action.** Many cyclists come to the area specifically to ride here and also link to Balblair woods thanks to the viaduct walkway and cycle ramp. It is noted that the ramp itself can be difficult to use..

Item 9. Treasurer's report. (MT) The 27th July 2017 balance at the bank is £19,425.15 of which £18,488.32 are restricted funds. The Admin/General Fund has £936.83 available to carry out the business of the CC. The annual admin grant from THC was received on 10th July 2017.

The balances of the restricted funds are: Toilet Caretaking - £929.76, BTWF - Community Projects - £2,145.15 Newsletter - £4,540.81, BNO - £10,202.20, EON Path - £670.40. MT posts bank balances at the start of each month on Dropbox for ease of access to information for CC members.

Item 10. Regular updates:

(1) Planning. Nothing relevant this month.

(2) Newsletter. (SM) The copy deadline for the next edition (#37 Autumn) is 28th August with delivery expected after 12th September. The Editor is pleased to report that already clients are contacting her to book advertising space.

(3) Ardgay Regeneration. Project is on schedule. It is hoped that the scaffolding can be removed ahead of the Fundraising Auction on 26th August. The traffic lights are required presently to allow work in connection with the site to take place.

(4) Broadband. It is understood that Cameron Warren of Highland Wireless is working with Ron Boothroyd of Creich CC with plans to bring an effective service to the area. BT is making offers which may work in conjunction with the UK Universal Service Obligation. CC will continue to monitor all such projects.

(5) Windfarms. (1) Coire na Cloiche. A document received regarding arrangements between the developer and the CC is very poorly written and very confusing. Other CCs are having this checked out and A&DCC will proceed once matters are clarified. (2) Meall Buidhe. Angus Elder of Muirden Energy will attend the November meeting. A meeting will be held in the new year regarding community benefit/ownership schemes. It is hoped to discuss these with Mr Elder in November. Scoping report was well done; deadline for comment is 18th August. BW will submit comments from CC including the possibility of shared access with Braelangwell windfarm and concerns regarding the Carron Bridge. **BW Action.** (3) Braelangwell. Nothing new. (4) Sallachy. BW and MT attended a recent meeting to hear the latest plans, the originals having been turned down. This will be a smaller development requiring only THC approval.

(6) Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. (MT) A detailed updating report was received from Helen Houston, Development Manager in July. This covered twelve different projects and areas on which the Trust is currently working. The next major project which the Trust is hoping to progress is the Kyle View supported living development. Talks are at an early stage to determine the feasibility of the project. The CC accepted Helen Houston's offer to come to a meeting to

give an update in person; BW will contact her to arrange the date. **BW Action.** LM passed on the praise which the Trust receives from the wider area within which the Trust is considered an excellent example of community working and achievement.

Item 11. Highland Council. LM spoke of her concerns of the major inequality of service provision within THC region where small communities are constantly losing out to the urban areas due to lack of population numbers. Many of the smaller communities can be classed as areas of deprivation as a result. These are fragile communities, struggling to maintain populations and withdrawal of services simply aggravates the situations. Threshold populations are too high for many of the rural and remote areas and there appears little political will to help establish equality. A creative approach by the eleven CCs in Sutherland is needed. THC has to be reminded that it represents the whole area and not just the urban areas. Sutherland has the best record for paying Council Tax, for recycling, etc and yet is still ignored. LM agreed to provide a piece for the newsletter and will liaise with the Editor. **LM/SM Action.** BW will look at the Survey Monkey for the Draft Outcome Highland Improvement Plan and will complete it on behalf of the CC if possible. **BW Action.**

Item 12. Any other competent business. (1) KA advised that the Culrain Hall Committee is having to consider the closure of the hall due to lack of support in the local community. Most of the present committee is standing down. The hall is very old and in need of major refurbishment or replacement. Some feel that a smaller unit is essential to maintain social contact and perhaps a number of interested locals can be found to take this idea further. A large project requiring serious funding is out of the question. The CC wishes to support the Culrain community to operate a smaller, practical venue for meetings, social gatherings, etc and asked to be kept informed. The Hall Committee is urged to check the constitution to be sure of how the position should they disband, especially in regard to liability. LP and LM will have further discussions and keep the CC informed. **LP/LM Action.** (2) RP and LP continue to run the CC surgeries once a month in Ardgay Café. Overall the attendance is low, but slowly building. RP and LP are happy to continue the CCs presence in the village in this way. They received thanks from other members.

Item 13. Date and time of next meeting. The meeting will be held on Monday 11th September at 7pm in **Ardgay Public Hall.**

Private Session. Beinn Tharsuinn/Beinn nan Oighrean Community Benefit awards.

There were no new applications to discuss. During the summer recess application was received from the Kyle of Sutherland Gala Week Committee. Owing to the tight time deadline an exception was made to make an award decision by email consultation amongst CC members. The award of £330 was approved with final overall approval given and noted this evening.

Meeting closed 9.28pm.