

Ardgay & District Community Council

Minutes of AGM held on Monday, 13th August 2018 at 7.00pm in Ardgay Hall
Approved 10/06/2019

Present: Elected members: Betty Wright, Chair (BW), Marion Turner, Treasurer (MT), Andy Wright (AW), Rob Pope (RP)

Also present: Highland Councillor Kirsteen Currie (KC), David and Patricia Hannah (DH/PH)

Invited guest: Martin Thomsen, Community Engagement Officer

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Apologies: Vice Chair Silvia Muras (SM), Buster Crabb (BC)

Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies (see above) The Chair opened the meeting and welcomed all present, particularly DH and PH.

Item 3. Minutes of last AGM. The Minutes of the last AGM held on Monday 12th June 2017 were accepted as a true and accurate record. Proposed: Marion Turner; seconded: Betty Wright.

Item 4. Chairperson's report. (BW) The report is copied here:

I'd like to give a short summary of the work of the community council during the past year. It is often a valuable task to take a step back & review what has been achieved, what is still a work in progress & identify those things that seem to turn into an oft- recurring theme. Although with our excellent newsletter, we do have a good record of our undertakings.

But first, a few thank-yous: to my fellow councillors for all their voluntary efforts, attending meetings, delivering newsletters, and generally being concerned about & wanting to give something back to their community; to our treasurer/ secretary Marion who does a great job looking after our money & Leslie who was our secretary until she had to stand down for health reasons,; to Linda one of our ward Highland councillors who puts in a lot of hours to attend our meetings – often driving through some pretty bad weather; to Silvia for producing our excellent newsletter; to Phil Olson who manages our website; and of course Mary, our marvellous minutes secretary. This cc really would not function without her. Also, thanks to members of our community who have raised various issues with us - that is why we are here!

But it's not all thank-yous. I must express my personal disappointment with the way all community councils have been treated by The Highland Council. I feel their actions in cutting our budget by 50% is nothing short of an attack on the most local level of democracy. Our grant this year from THC is not sufficient to run our cc. I can only think that THC acted upon a poor understanding of the funds held by various ccs – the bottom line looks very healthy, but the vast majority of the funds we have in our bank a/c are restricted funds that have come from Windfarm community benefits, not to be spent on subsidising THC statutory functions. We will discuss actual amounts later & also a proposal to reduce the number of times we meet to 6pa – the minimum required under the Highland Council Scheme of Establishment for ccs. We can only hope that by the time we run out of Admin funds, THC will have realised our dilemma & re-instated our budget for next year.

So, what changes have we seen over the last 12 months? There has been a huge impact on the centre of Ardgay with the completion of works on the Barn & stage 1 of Drovers square. Not only has this greatly improved the appearance of the village, but several businesses are housed in the Barn providing much needed job opportunities. Thanks to KoSDT for all their work on taking this & so many other projects forward on behalf of the local community. Last summer saw the opening of The Hub which is now providing a variety of activities for children & families, including soft play area, café, youth clubs, gym, yoga classes. This is an example of a project which brings together the 2 communities of Ardgay & Bonar Bridge. The 2 villages are separated by a very fast stretch of road. We were approached by a customer at the Community Food stop (several of the regulars come from Ardgay) asking about the possibility of providing a seat or two by the side of the pavement to make the walk less challenging for those with health or mobility problems. I am happy to say that we now have permission from THC to install 2 benches & have the money from Beinn Tharsuinn Wind farm community benefit & look forward to their installation over the summer. We are also pursuing the possibility of a speed restriction along the straight as this would greatly improve the walking experience & help bring the 2 communities closer.

We have addressed several issues around the village. We are once again organising the caretaking of the toilets in Ardgay – thanks to Silvia & Marion for this & Sheena Shaw for her hard work; the flower tubs were watered by a

small number of volunteers last summer - tubs have been removed for renovation & replanting by Jean Richardson & Steve Wilkinson. The polling station was temporarily moved to Gledfield school, but we are confident that it will be back to Ardgay Hall for the next election. There are now 2 defibrillators in our area – 1 outside the Hall in Ardgay & the other in the old telephone kiosk in Culrain. We again had a Xmas tree on the green & arranged for the lights to be on during the day. A lack of volunteers meant that there were no lights on lampposts as per previous years, but we are hopeful that these will reappear next winter. The road up Kincardine Hill has been resurfaced & has new extended passing places to make it up to standard for timber extraction lorries – although whether this standard is high enough remains under discussion – I think it highlights the problems we have with our roads & ever-increasing size of lorries.

We continue to communicate with ScotRail & HITRANS about our rail service re timetabling & possible provision of electronic signs at Ardgay & Culrain stations.

Windfarms & Community Benefit: There has been an amount of activity over the last year. Braemore WF obtained consent from Scottish government whilst Caplich - with whom we had signed an MOU re shared ownership - was refused. There is a proposal going to planning from Meall Buidhe renewables for a WF on Croick Estate. At present, A&DCC administers application to funds from BnO (£2,500 p.a.), Beinn Tharsuinn (£14,500 pa). We also have 2 reps on SSE Achany & EON Rosehall panel (£130k between 3 ccs = £43k)

As part of our regular meeting, we often invite others to speak on issues of particular concern. This year we welcomed: Helen Houston, updating us on the many projects of KoSDT; Reps from Muirden Energy re proposed WF at Meall Buidhe; Jason Gardiner from SF&RS – who is also a member of Sutherland Community Partnership. Although we have not been involved directly in this, there is something we have talked about at every meeting - Broadband. BT have delivered superfast broadband to Ardgay exchange & KoSDT are now working with a local provider on a scheme to provide wireless broadband to properties who do not benefit from BT's provision by virtue of being too remote from a green cabinet.

This is a brief summary of some of the issues dealt with by your community councillors over the last 12 months.

There are full accounts of all our projects reported in our quarterly newsletter. I would once again like to thank Silvia for the excellent job she does; together with all our contributors & those who deliver to all houses in our area.

Item 5. Treasurer's report (MT). This report is copied here:

The 2017-2018 accounts show that the CC has a balance of £18,202.93 of which £17,892.93 are restricted funds. Each year the CC is given two grants from THC.

1. Toilet Caretaking Grant

This HC grant is given to pay for caretaking the toilet. A&D CC has been for some years organising the caretaking of the toilet in Ardgay. In financial year 17-18 THC reduced the grant amount by £100. The balance in the Toilet account is £29.76. Discussions will be sought with THC regarding future arrangements.

2. Admin Grant

This grant is intended to cover the costs of running the CC. In year 17-18, the CC received £896.16 from THC. This was fully spent.

Next year the Admin grant will be halved to £485.03. The CC is conscious of how tight this budget is and has already reduced meetings to 8 per year. Next year serious consideration will have to be given as to how the CC can fulfil the requirements of the Highland Council Scheme of Establishment within this severely reduced budget.

The balance in the Admin account is £310.88 which is what remains of windfarm community benefit funding drawn down in previous years and carried forward. The admin of the Beinn Tharsuinn and the Beinn nan Oighrean wind farm funds is paid for from this sum. In future to provide more clarity this will be shown separately as Windfarm admin. This will result in the CC Admin account starting the financial year 18-19 with a nil balance.

The balance of restricted funds is £17,892.05. The bulk of these restricted funds arise from the Beinn nan Oighrean windfarm benefit which is held by the CC for the community and is disbursed to community groups through the CC's Small Grants Applications. The balance in the Beinn nan Oighrean account is £11,810.73. The accounts show that in 2017-2018 four BNO awards were made totalling £891.47. These are reported separately.

Other restricted funds: Toilet Caretaking, £29.76

Beinn Tharsuinn Community Projects Fund, £3178.15

Newsletter EON award + newsletter income, £2,203.01

EON Path fund, £670.40.

Item 6. Report re Beinn Tharsuinn community benefit fund. (RP) Unfortunately due to computer issues there was no printed report available for tonight.

& Beinn nan Oighrean community benefit fund. (MT) Beinn nan Oighrean community benefit is worth £2500 annually. It is disbursed to community groups through the CC's Small Grants Applications. The maximum award from this fund is £250. Details of the fund and how to apply can be found on the A&D CC website and in the Ardgay & District Community Council Newsletter.

During the year 2017-2018 four awards were made totalling £891.47 The balance in this account is £11810.73
BNO awards made 2017-2018

- The Hub – Staff development - £250
- Ardgay Public Hall - Gents toilet refurbishment - £250
- Invershin Hall – Balance bikes activity for children - £191.47
- A&D CC – Newsletter art competition - £200

Item 7. Report from Newsletter Editor. (SM) This report is copied here:

This year we have continued growing. We have passed from 32 pages to 36 on the last three editions. We have welcomed new contributors, advertisers and, for the first time, we have subscribers who pay a yearly fee to receive the newsletter on the post. Also, we have consolidated our sale points (Ardgay Store & Cafe and Bonar Bridge Post Office).

In March this year we held our 2nd "Ardgay Newsletter Children's Art Competition", with 200 entries. Almost all children from the local Primary Schools participating in the contest and coming along to the exhibition. Thank you to Kirsten Macneil, Lisa Mackenzie, Marion Turner, Vicky Whittock, Doreen Bruce, and everyone else who helped or came to the event.

A very warm thank you to our volunteer distributors: David Hannah, Vicky Whittock, Jeannie Sparling, Anna Sutherland, Iain Worthy, David Ross, David Knight, Rhonwen Copley, Brigitte Geddes, Bob Sendall, Teresa Langley, Marion Turner and Betty Wright. A special thanks to Alan Lawrence, who has now moved South. His route on Strath Oykel is now covered by David Mackay, with assistance from Graham Charge. Thank you both for coming forward as volunteers to distribute our newsletter.

The funding awarded in April 2016 (Beinn Tharsuinn) and December 2016 (E.ON Rosehall) is now into its 3rd year. A new funding application is being put forward to cover these last months of our 3-year project. The revenue from donations, sales and advertisements has been slightly bigger than predicted, which means the grants have gone a longer way. I hope this will encourage our funders to renew their support.

Thank you all for your continued support to the newsletter.

Item 8. Election of Office Bearers 2017-2018. All members of the Community Council stood down and Councillor Currie took the chair for the purpose of electing the Chair. KC said how pleased she was to be attending Ardgay CC and chairing the election

Betty Wright was proposed to continue as Chair; proposed: Marion Turner; seconded: Andy Wright.

Silvia Muras was proposed to continue as Vice Chair; proposed: Betty Wright; seconded: Marion Turner.

Marion Turner was proposed to continue as Treasurer; proposed: Andy Wright; seconded: Rob Pope.

Marion Turner was proposed to continue as Secretary; proposed: Andy Wright; seconded: Betty Wright.

Sylvia Muras was proposed to continue as Newsletter Editor; proposed by Betty Wright; agreed by all.

Mary Goulder was proposed to continue as Minutes Secretary; proposed: Betty Wright and agreed.

Two representatives to the SSE/E.ON Achany Panel will be Silvia Muras and Rob Pope.

One representative to KOSDT will be Andy Wright.

One representative to Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Company will be Rob Pope. He indicated that he will be unable to attend the next meeting of the company on 18th September.

Item 9. Dates of meetings for 2018-19. Following the THC budget cuts, A&DCC will reduce the number of meetings held to the minimum requirement of six per year, meeting therefore every other month on the second Monday. The next meeting will be in October, followed by December, February, April and June, which will be the AGM. Owing to these date changes the new deadlines for applications to Beinn Tharsuinn and Beinn nan Oighrean windfarm funds will be clearly indicated in future editions of the newsletter. **(SM Action)**

Item 10. Any other competent business. DH and PH expressed thanks to the CC on behalf of the community for the ongoing work with a special mention for the excellent newsletter which is now being circulated as widely as the USA, New Zealand and Kurdistan.

Item 10. Date and time of next AGM. This will be on 10th June 2019.

Meeting closed at 7.37pm.