

Ardgay & District Community Council



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Minutes of meeting held on Monday 10th December 2018 in Ardgay Hall at 7.00pm

Minutes approved 11/02/2019

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

Invited guest: Alan MacIntyre, Energiekontor (AM), Martin Thomsen, Community Engagement Officer (MTh), Valerie Houston, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (VH), David Watson, Trust Manager KoSDT (DH)

Police Scotland: PC 864

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder

Apologies: Highland Councillor Kirsteen Currie (KC)

Items 1/2/6. Welcome/Apologies (as above)/ **Police report.** Chair Betty Wright welcomed everyone. The police report showed thirteen incidents comprising one domestic, one missing person – traced, two assistance to members of the public, one medical death, two public nuisance, two planned shoots/pest control, one alarm and two advice calls. The public were warned against a winter surge in petty crime, also to be aware of computer scams by phone or email which could access confidential information, bank details, etc. The regular drink driving campaign is underway as is usual at this time of year. Chair advised that she will contact Sgt Allan regarding the campaign to introduce a 40mph speed limit on the Ardgay-Bonar Bridge straight. **BW Action.**

Item 3. Guest speaker: Alan MacIntyre, Energiekontor. AM began with a brief introduction to the company and its plans for the extension to the Lairg Windfarm. The company started in Bremen in 1990, has built 118 windfarms and currently operates 34. Office in Glasgow, opening one in Edinburgh and possibly one in Inverness. Two years ago, a 24-month bird survey on the proposed Lairg extension site began. The site is owned by Lairg Estate. Meetings with consultees such as MoD, NATS, SNH, etc took place in May of this year. In June presentations were made to Common Grazers, meeting with Highland Council and pre-planning application was submitted. July saw Phase 1 of the peat depth survey. In August meetings took place with various local CCs. The 24-month bird survey finished in September. Public exhibitions were held in Rogart and Lairg. In October the site design was finalised, and a presentation made to Dornoch CC. Further CC presentations/updates are planned in December. Planning application is expected to be submitted in February/March 2019 with more public exhibitions arranged at that time. As well as the bird survey, peat depth, ecology, aviation, noise, and shadow flicker surveys have all been undertaken. The access is planned to be from the Mound on the A9, via Rogart on the A939 to Lairg, then on the A836 to utilise the existing windfarm access via Torroble. Discussions are ongoing with CCs regarding community benefit. The company will offer the maximum of £5,000 per megawatt in line with government guidelines. A shared ownership scheme will also be established allowing local investment. AM will supply further information to be circulated to CCs leading to further discussion in the New Year.

Guest speaker: Martin Thomsen, Community Engagement Officer. As arranged at the CC meeting in August, MTh returned to update the CC regarding the work carried out on the Community Plan. The questionnaire sent out locally saw one hundred and thirty-one responses which identified four key areas of local concern. Transport, work/economy, housing, and digital communications. Workshops held have further noted the transport issues with the distances to key services and the lack of community transport. A liaison group has been set up to look into this. Employment issues highlighted the insufficient job opportunities and the lack of appropriate child care provision as well as there being no job centre within reasonable travelling distance. A need for more affordable housing was identified, also heating costs being too expensive. Care/sheltered housing is required. Internet and mobile provision are too patchy. Under 18s highlighted lack of places to go or how to get to those that are, and poor sports facilities. Over 18s gave jobs and housing as their main concerns. Workshop at the Bradbury Centre threw up issues for the elderly including the need for more policing, NHS drop-in clinics and improved out-of-hours health care, poor service from mobile banking, especially re access and the facility's capabilities. Tourism – more cycle tracks and water sports were suggested. The Community Plan is available via the KoSDT website and could be useful tool for groups seeking funding. Editor will place an item in the next

newsletter. **SM Action.** Health issues raised are disturbing with a higher than average suicide rate, hospital admissions due to alcohol/drug misuse. The many areas addressed in the Plan all require much further thought and action

Item 4. Minutes of last meeting. The minutes of the October meeting were approved as a true and accurate record, proposed: Marion Turner; seconded: Silvia Muras.

Item 5. Matters arising. (1) Locality/Community Plan, (see above). (2) Recycle bins. BT Openreach are due to inspect the overhead wire to the HUB to establish if it can be removed to allow the siting of the glass recycling bins in front of the Fire Station. (3) Tree planting on Jubilee Hill. CC will have an opportunity to comment in due course. (4) Ardgay/Bonar straight. See Item 6 at start of these Minutes. (5) THC Community Council Review. All CCs encouraged to complete the questionnaire individually and return to THC. At a recent meeting with Donna Manson, CEO, many CCs within Highland reported similar problems/issues. All have no cash. There is little appetite to accept any further responsibilities; CCs would like THC to listen and be more responsive. (6) Ardgay toilets. Facility now closed for the winter. Recent good meeting with Debbie Sutton, THC; possibility of keeping the toilets open 24 hours next season, assurance received that maintenance will continue, electric hand driers may be installed.

Item 7. Treasurer's report. (MT) The 26th November balance at the bank is £18,393.87 of which £18,186.26 are restricted funds. The CC Admin fund has a balance of £33.82 and the Windfarm Admin fund a balance of £173.70. This meeting will be the last which can be funded from THC Annual Admin grant. The balances of the restricted funds are: toilet Caretaking £50.31; BTWF – Community Projects £1,516.42; Newsletter £2,955.15; BNO £13,494.98; E.ON Path £170.40. Until further funding is received, future alternate monthly meetings will open and close at 7pm with an empty agenda. This will satisfy the requirement to hold six meetings per year. A closed session will take place to administer the community benefit funds; those discussions will be paid for from the windfarm admin fund. Concerns raised that the difficulties caused by the cut in finances may make it more likely that the CC may fail to form following the next election due in November 2019.

Item 8. Chairperson's report. (BW) Relevant items covered through the agenda.

Item 9. Secretary's report. (MT) All correspondence had been circulated by email. For future meetings if and CC member wishes to raise anything from the correspondence they should flag it up to the Chair before the meeting.

Item 10. Correspondence/Matters raised by local residents. (1) All received emails have been circulated. (2) Winter Maintenance Plan received. (3) Trees at Croick Church. Editor has received a letter of concern regarding the overgrown trees which are damaging both dykes and the structure of the building. Some roof damage was mentioned. Church of Scotland is responsible for the upkeep of the building; THC is responsible for the trees. SM will liaise with the writer, also advise KoSDT as the building is a valuable asset as an historical tourism attraction. Heritage Lottery might be approached for window repair/restoration. **SM Action.**

Item 11. Regular updates:

(1) **Planning.** Nothing relevant this month.

(2) **Newsletter.** Latest edition has 36 pages and includes an E.ON Rosehall newsletter to share distribution which is expected around the 15th December. As the current funding for the newsletter will run out by mid 2019, consideration should be given as to how to take the newsletter forward. **(Ghost) agenda item.)**

(3) **Broadband.** Highland Wireless is now connecting customers in Rosehall.

(4) **Windfarms.** (1) Sallachy. Discussions on target to sign off agreement re community benefit.

(5) **Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust.** David Watson, newly appointed as Trust Manager, introduced himself and outlined his priorities for taking the Trust forward. His main aim is to improve the communication between the community and the Trust as he feels that often the community learns about what the Trust is doing but not the reasoning behind decisions. He also hopes to raise more private sector income with sustainable projects which will allow the Trust to work better for the good of the area. He is encouraged by the excellent record of the Trust since its inception and the exceptional projects which have been successful. The two issues which are showing as being the most challenging are child care and transport, both of which will be given due attention in the coming months. CC agreed that two-way communication will be essential in moving forward and welcomed ideas such as a monthly Open Afternoon when the public can call into the office to discuss any/all relevant matters and ideas. Transparency and seeking to remove any mystery are top of the plans.

Item 12. Highland Council. Nothing added to topics already discussed and noted elsewhere in these Minutes.

Item 13. AOCB. (1) It was noted that Marine Scotland is planning an extension with another berth in Invergordon. This will entail thirty-six weeks when trucks will travel between Invergordon and Ardchronie Quarry making fifty-four trips per day carrying stone for the construction. Peak traffic times are to be avoided with loaded trucks using the bottom road to the A9 and returning empty via the Struie. Concerns raised regarding this increase in heavy traffic over the B9176 Struie road where the several bridges already suffer considerably from overuse by heavy vehicles.

Secretary will write to Head of Roads Department, THC, Graham MacKenzie and will liaise with other local CCs which will be affected. **MT Action.**

(2) Flow Country World Heritage Site. SM has been in touch with Joe Perry and has details of the proposals to be put forward in support of this application. (3) Christmas tree. All involved were warmly thanked for the supply and erection of this year's tree in the village. This became a community event and was enjoyed by all present. There are no plans this year to use the lights which the CC currently has in store.

Item 14. Date of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Monday 11th February at 7pm in Ardgay Public Hall. As already indicated this meeting will have a strictly limited agenda. On conclusion, any windfarm business, applications, etc will be discussed.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm.

Beinn Tharsuinn/Beinn nan Oighrean discussion. Following the closure of the main meeting the private session considered three applications. Beinn Tharsuinn – The Friends of the Bradbury Centre application was awarded £500 towards music and alternative therapy sessions. The same awards had been approved by Creich and Lairg CCs subject to match funding from all three local CCs. Phil Tomalin, Company Secretary, and the applicant will be advised that full approval has been granted. **MG Action.**

Beinn nan Oighrean. Application by Invershin Village Hall for £150 towards running bike maintenance sessions was approved. Application by Gearrhoille Community Wood Association was awarded £120 towards the costs of reprinting information leaflets. **MG/MT Action.**

Meeting closed at 10pm.