

Ardgay & District Community Council

www.ardgayanddistrictcommunitycouncil.org.uk



Minutes of meeting held on Monday, 11th February 2019 in Ardgay Public Hall at 7.00pm

Minutes approved 08/04/2019

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

Apologies: Buster Crabb (BC)

Also present: Highland Councillor Kirsteen Currie (KC), MSP Gail Ross (GR) and 7 members of the public (listed at foot)

Police Scotland: No representative

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder

Items 1/2. Welcome/Apologies (as above). Chair Betty Wright opened the meeting, welcoming everyone to the first meeting in 2019. Thanks were expressed for the award of £200 from THC Ward Discretionary Fund which will allow for this and the next meetings to be held. The CC greatly regrets that funds from this small budget had to be accessed to make up for the loss of funding caused by the cut to the annual grant.

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

Item 4. Matters arising. (1) Secretary has written to Graham MacKenzie, Head of THC Roads Dept, regarding the transport plans for construction traffic during the building of the new pier in Invergordon. Issues with lorry traffic arose the last time stone was being moved from Ardchronie to CFPA on the circular route using the B9176 Struie road and the A836 Tain to Ardgay. There has been no agreement on this. Mr MacKenzie advised that the letter of concern had been passed forward appropriately in the Inverness office but to date there has been no reply to the CC. **MT Action.** (2) Tree planting on Jubilee Hill. In October 2018 representatives from the public attend the CC meeting at which Chris Gordon, Factor, Balnagown Estate, outlined plans for replanting on the hill. Revised plans were issued in December. A public meeting with Forestry officers took place last week which did not resolve any issues concerning land use. Local residents wrote to the CC and their letter of complaint has been forwarded to Nick Richards, THC. No response so far. CC will submit its objections ahead of the deadline, based on the strength of local feeling. Many issues were raised from the floor including the misleading and inaccurate information on the FCS website, the strong opposition locally and from the wider community, inadequate timescale allowances for objections/approvals, lack of communication and clear information, and the process followed by FCS in reaching this stage. GR and KC will enquire. The CC stressed its role of representing all views in the local community and that it supports tree planting in appropriate areas. **BW/MT/GR/KC Action.** (3) Recycle bins. The road surface within the industrial estate is in very poor condition with many deep potholes. THC has no funds to repair. A local contractor had previously made an offer to one of the businesses at the industrial estate to resurface the area, but this offer was not taken up. CC will enquire if the offer still stands. It is essential that the bins are returned to this area. **BW/KC Action.** (4) Local Community Plan. This has been circulated. No further comment made. (5) Croick Church maintenance. Mary Stobo, Session Clerk, advised that the Church is in consultation with various bodies seeking assistance to look after the church building. A full survey has been done by an architect, a major refurbishment was carried out in 1980s and maintenance/ painting etc is done on a regular basis. A professional survey is done by the Church of Scotland every ten years. A bow in the roof is not expected to lead to a danger of collapse. Trees are an ongoing issue with a dispute as to whether they belong to the church or THC. The pine trees are now so old they could easily come down in any bad storm; there is no tree protection order in place. The viewing platform for the etched window is rotting and in need of replacement. The local Heritage Society has also offered to help publicise the church which is open every day, an annual communion service is held and a summer service once a month on the second Sunday, May– September. The building enjoys an international interest, is part of the Clearances Trail and part of the Telford Trail, as a testament to the strength of the local people at that time. It should be preserved and maintained as fit for purpose for occasional use. Various ideas are forthcoming to promote the church more widely as a cultural

tourism venue. CC applauded the work being done and will support in any way possible. MS was warmly thanked for bringing the matter to the attention of the CC and the public.

Item 5. Police report. The police report was received by email after the meeting along with apologies that duties had made it impossible for an officer to attend. In the last month there were fourteen reported issues: two communication calls, three advice calls, three road traffic matters, two false calls, one fraud, one loud music call, one fire and one sudden death.

Item 6. Chairperson's report. (BW) BW wished to bring to members' attention two grass roots environmental organisations taking actions recently. Strike action is being taken every Friday by school children in Lochaber and Ullapool High Schools in an attempt to help highlight the issues of climate change. This action is being taken nationally, highlighting 'There is no Planet B.' A Junior Shark Ambassador has been appointed from Ullapool. The CC appreciates the efforts being made, though difficult to support the lost education hour. Another group is 'Extinction Rebellion' which has been organising actions throughout the UK to raise awareness of our global emergency due to climate breakdown and biodiversity loss. An agenda item will be listed at the next meeting to discuss the issues further and perhaps ask THC to declare a Climate Emergency. GR advised that the Scottish Government has a Stage 1 debate due with a Transport Bill dealing with emissions legislation. **Agenda item. BW Action.**

Item 7. Secretary's report. (MT) All relevant correspondence has been circulated. Electronic information signs are to be installed at Ardgay Station and a Request Stop push-button system will be in place at Culrain Station. Secretary will write to Frank Roach to ask if the fall in passenger numbers at Culrain since 2015/16 is due to the change in the 06.18 train from Wick which no longer stops by request at Culrain. **MT Action.**

Item 8. Treasurer's report. (MT) The 25th January balance at the bank is £17,230.31 of which £16,946.75 are restricted funds. The healthier balance in the CC Admin fund is due to a successful application for £200 to the Ward Discretionary Fund giving a balance of £161.02. It is hoped that this may cover CC admin costs for the rest of this financial year. Regret was again expressed at having to apply to this source. The Windfarm Admin Fund has a balance of £122.54. The balances of the restricted funds are: £44.70 -Toilet Caretaking; £1,516.42 -BTWF Community Projects; £2,201.25 Newsletter; £13,013.98 – Beinn nan Oighrean; £170.40 – E.ON Path.

Item 9. Correspondence/matters raised by local residents. (1) A Health & Wellbeing Partnership meeting will be held in Tain Royal Academy on March 28th at 7.30pm. Everyone was encouraged to attend if possible. (2) GR advised she is seeking information regarding Mental Health Service issues in the area. KC confirmed that THC has agreed a motion to be 'trauma informed' regarding 'difficult behaviour'. Better understanding is sought of mental health problems in children from an early age; understanding is an issue in schools believed to be worse, and often hidden, in Sutherland.

(3) A Flood Forum is to be held in Perth, date not yet available.

Item 10. Regular updates: (1) Planning issues. CC supported an application for glamping pods at Poplars Farm

(2) Newsletter. The Spring edition of the newsletter will be out for delivery around the 15th of March. The copy date for contributions to this issue is Thursday 21st February. There are still funds to produce a Summer and Autumn edition. The Editor, SM, has had further talks with David Watson, Kyle of Sutherland Trust Manager and David Knight, from Business Gateway, who are helping to develop a 5-year plan.

The intention of the editor is to create a separate entity, possibly a limited company, which will continue publishing the magazine even in the event of no Community Council being formed in the future. Public funding will be obtained through the Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. In this new stage, the newsletter will enlarge its scope to cover Creich CC area, which will allow also for more revenue from advertising.

The Editor wished to reassure Ardgay & District Community councillors and residents stating that the format will be very similar, there will be pages for CC business and, if the CC still wishes to do so, it can obtain copies that can then be distributed for free using the same voluntary distributors. It was agreed to discuss the matter further at the next CC meeting. **Agenda item. BW Action.**

(3) Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust. AGM is planned to take place in April, date to be confirmed.

Item 11. Highland Council (KC) Budget discussions taking place this week. Chair expressed the CC wish to be able to return to holding ten meetings per year. This was reduced to eight and is now only six due to lack of funding by THC. There is much concern that without proper funding, the CC may well cease to exist, new people will not be encouraged to stand for election, due this November. Without funding, having no power and, increasingly it seems, little influence Community Councils across the region may well disappear. THC must listen to the CCs which do work and which hope to continue. KC advised that a new THC Chief Executive is now in post.

Item 12. Any other competent business. None raised.

Item 13. Date and time of next meeting. The meeting will be held on Monday 8th April at 7pm in Ardgay Hall.

Item 14. Beinn Tharsuinn/Beinn nan Oighrean Community Benefit awards. Beinn nan Oighrean. At the private session following the main meeting application by Culrain & District Hall Committee for £210 towards replacement Christmas lights was ratified. This application had been approved by email decision during the recess period. Application by Ardgay Public Hall received an award of £250 towards the costs of renovation of the fire escape pathway. Secretary will amend the address shown on the form for postal applications. **MT Action.**

Beinn Tharsuinn. Gearrchoille Community Wood Ardgay applied for £900 to help with running costs for 2019-20. The CC is pleased to continue support for this popular local amenity. All applicants and BTWF Company Secretary will be advised. **MG Action.**

Meeting closed 9.36pm.

Public attendees re Jubilee Hill issue: Bill Knott, Irene Knott, Helen Pollock, Chris Ladley, Alison MacGregor, Iain MacGregor, Mary Stobo