

Ardgay & District Community Council



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Meeting 14th February 2022 - DRAFT Minutes	
Date & Time:	14 February 2022 at 7:00 PM
Location:	Zoom Web Conference
Present:	Betty Wright, Chair (BW); Silvia Muras, Vice Chair (SM); Marion Turner, Secretary (MT); John Denniston, Treasurer (JD); Andy Wright (AW); Buster Crabb (BC); Rob Pope (RP); Anna McInnes, Minutes Secretary (AM)
Also attending:	Anna Patfield, Planet Sutherland (AP); David Watson, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (DW); Stuart Hewlett (SH); Christine Mackay (CM); William Knott (WK); Helen Pollock (HP)

AGENDA ITEMS	
1.	Welcome: BW opened the meeting and welcomed attendees.
2.	Apologies: None
3.	Approval of December 2021 minutes: Approved as true and accurate record. AW proposed, RP seconded.
4.	Matters Arising: <i>i. Any Update on Inviting 16-18 Year Olds to Join CC?</i> It was agreed to defer this items until in-person meeting resumes in May.
5.	Chairperson's Report (BW): Items discussed from last meeting held: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to Gearachaille Wood from Ardgay Hill: BW will follow-up on this. ACTION BW. • Gates on Jubilee Hill: there now appears to now be CC-TV installed up there.
6.	Secretary's Report - Including Correspondence & Matters Raised by Local Residents (MT): All correspondence circulated by email prior to meeting. No items of note.
7.	Treasurer's Report (JD): Report circulated by email ahead of the meeting. As of 28th Jan 2022 balance at the bank was: £48,936.84. This comprises: Restricted funds: £48,421.67; CC Admin fund: £423.20; Windfarm Admin fund: £91.98. The balances of the restricted funds are: CnC: £22,827.02; BnO: £24,099.37; BTWF Community Projects: £1,422.08; RWE Path: £73.20. Expenditure since 30th Nov 2021: £71.95 for Zoom for 5th Aug to 4 Jan for our meetings; £120 to the Minute's Secretary Nov & Dec from admin funds. Income since 30th Nov 2021: None. Expenditure not in statement yet: £20.00 Membership of The Scottish Rights of Way and Access Society.
8.	Regular updates Planning issues: <i>(i) Application 21/05786/FUL Development of 47 holiday lodges, conversion & extension of existing building to form spa, gym, offices, restaurant and ancillary facilities, car parking and access. Land 150m NE of Gledfield Farm Cottage Ardgay.</i> BW recapped interactions to date: online meeting with John Morphet and article in Kyle Chronicle in Autumn 2020. In 2021 A&DCC submitted comments to pre-planning consultation broadly supporting development, welcoming access to facilities and potential for career-path job opportunities; also highlighted several issues including sewage, refuse, core paths and pedestrian access, and health

services. CC members met onsite in January 2022, then in-person with Mr Morphet to address lodge specifications, light pollution, felling of mature lime trees. BW then opened the floor to comments.

HP: raised environmental concerns: riverbank erosion, habitat loss, sewage concerns, potential for river contamination. Lack of clarity around jobs; feels 20 jobs not enough to merit risks involved. Lack of carbon-neutral commitment, paths and foundations covered in bitumen, removal of stone walls along pathway. BW noted footpath was at CC request to support core path network and safe walking. Concerned PLG puts profits over community; potential expansion could set precedent for future area developments. Decision should be in community interest, irrespective of personal views.

WK: circulated petition with more than 60 names, still ongoing. Sent email to CC members prior to meeting, summarised concerns: increased road traffic; hazardous single-track roads even with more passing places. Increase from 35 to 47 lodges could double Ardgay population with potential to become housing estate. Near-identical Isle of Man development was withdrawn over public concerns. No explanation of jobs, no staff accommodation apart from GM, implying GM will be hired from outwith local area. Proposal is poorly put together, relies on outdated data and photos of other developments. WK's land is designated for use in development but he has never been contacted. Water supply risks to residents' and to water table from bore holes.

SM: noted site has been empty and in ruins for 8 years and sees positive opportunity to bring back to life. Creation of 20 direct jobs and potential for indirect jobs through other services. Area suffers from population decline, job loss, access to services; there is need to make economy more sustainable. Planning issues will be addressed by THC and non-planning issues not insurmountable. Petition would have been more constructive to send people to planning portal to view documents and comment online rather than asking to sign petition based on opinion. Signatories include non-residents and children and only 17 households, which is 5% of Ardgay which doesn't fully represent majority community views; easy for people to sign without engaging with planning application.

WK feels petition represents community view and A&DCC should present to THC. BW replied that petition has not come to CC. HP asked why CC didn't issue questionnaire to gauge community views; BW replied CC meetings are open forum for people to bring views to CC, and best way to comment is via THC planning portal. CC doesn't make decision on this; up to Councillors and THC officials. CC role is to try to make the most of it for community if it goes ahead.

MT: Important to engage community. CC has statutory duty to respond to planning applications. CC needs to take all views into account and response must raise issues pertinent to planning process, ask planners to look very carefully, because we want to get the best outcome for everybody.

DW: KoSDT is supportive, but it needs to go through planning process; planning considerations including concerns for river, water supply, environment, will be dealt with according to planning laws. There is opportunity here and many Highland communities will want this type of opportunity.

Additional comments from floor: BC agreed with all comments so far and is also concerned with sewage risks. SH supports development if managed correctly, as it could add value to community. AP raised issue of affordable housing for staff, can this be emphasised as local housing is expensive. BW noted holiday accommodation could reduce pressure on second homes in the area. CM met with Mr Morphet; found him very amenable and he answered her concerns to her satisfaction. AW supports development; has tried to form balanced opinion as both individual and CC member and has written comments that he's happy to share; feels Mr Morphet seems very cooperative. JD did research into other PLG properties which have mixed reviews from both guests and staff on TripAdvisor, Trustpilot, and Indeed, with suggestions from people on the internet that sometimes parks start off

	<p>well but then standards slide and they are eventually sold. How company manages its parks is relevant to Gledfield development.</p> <p>BW thanked everyone for sharing views; noted water is problem that CC will continue to question, also pointed out Carbisdale Castle caused traffic issues when in operation. Next step is for CC to submit comments to planning portal. CC will broadly support development but will take onboard all comments made tonight and state they need addressed before it can be approved. Must be carefully considered so people in area get best out of it so it adds value to community. ACTION BW</p> <p>(ii) <i>Proposed Telecoms Mast at Amat.</i> MT wrote to query additional mast placement in an area with good coverage already while other areas nearby have none. Most houses in Strathcarron have no mobile phone signal. Awaiting response from telecom entity.</p> <p>(iii) <i>Application 22/00337/FUL Construction of shelter containing WC & shower facilities, provision of services to provide serviced overnight parking and camping site Land 40m east of South Bonar public toilets.</i> Resubmission from KoSDT. THC has indicated they will give sympathetic objection; councillors can overrule to trigger challenge to SEPA objection and send to Scottish Government. BW proposed to approve, JD seconded. MT will write to confirm support. ACTION MT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Climate Issues: AP gave updates on Climate Challenge Fund and Highlands Adapt project. Highland Community Waste Partnership received £1.5million funding from National Lottery Comm. for initiatives, raise awareness, and 7 jobs. BW to invite Amanda Coghill of North Highland Climate Hub to the next Zoom meeting. ACTION BW • Windfarms: no updates • Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (DW): DW acting chairman of Community Rail Partnership; sustainable travel initiatives such as E-bikes to hire off train. Helmsdale and Thurso projects will start first, other communities to follow. Sutherland Adaptive and Collaborative Communities Project staffing issues so Scottish Govt and HIE are extending. New larder opening in Shed with seating area for tea/coffee, expanded to meet 4200+ people. Community café in Bonar Bridge Hall up and running by April. Helping Hands fuel project funds spent already; more people than ever need support. Successful funding applications: outdoor green gym at Falls of Shin, garden beside Bonar Bridge post office, part-time community gardener. Falls of Shin operator exploration ongoing. Working on woodland habitat restoration strategy. Planning to hold AGM in April. • Highland Council: Despite sending meeting invitation to all three councillors there was no councillor in attendance for the sixth consecutive meeting.
9.	<p>AOCB:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AW raised topic of footpath policy for future meeting. CC can play role in facilitating engagement, mapping, keeping track of challenges. HP noted record should be kept of instances where landowners have challenged walkers.
10.	<p>Date of Future Meetings: Next meeting 14th March 2022 via Zoom. In-person meetings will restart in May, location TBD.</p>
11.	<p>Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund Applications (private session): None submitted.</p>

Meeting closed at 21:30