

Ardgay & District Community Council



**Meeting 14th November 2024
Culrain Hall**

Minutes

Present:

Les Waugh (Chair), Robert Sawyer (Vice Chair), Eilidh Forbes (Treasurer), Anne Henderson, Tommy Gordon, Robert Henderson, Samantha Kane, Kerry Hawthorne (Secretary), Marion Turner (Associate member)
Councillor Marianne Hutchinson (Highland Council), Councillor Michael Baird (Highland Council)

1. **Apologies** - no apologies recorded
2. **Chairs Welcome** - the Chair welcomed a large number of the community to the meeting requesting that everyone be courteous and respectful of each other's opinions and address all comments and discussion points through the Chair. Requested that mobile phones are kept silent and assured everyone that they would have the opportunity to speak.
3. **Minutes of previous meeting** - agreed
4. **Treasurer update** – update attached.
5. **Secretary update** – brief update on number of correspondence, back log due to the CC being in abeyance and planning consultation pressures
6. **KOSDT update** – David Watson attended to provide update from the Trust, thanks go to David. Trust AGM has been postponed to Wednesday 27th November 2024 at 6p.m. in Ardgay Hall. The Trust have been working on their Planned Strategic Direction for the next 5 years, this has been largely completed while the CC has been in abeyance, the Trust have worked with former Community Councillors from the past two community councils who have fed in to this process. Local Place Plan has been organised and is now nearing completion with the Plan now submitted to HC. (Further update on LLP in AOB)
7. **Local updates** –
 - 8.1 Update from Culrain kindly given by Graham Charge. Culrain Hall hosted RWE consultation on Inveroykel Windfarm on 5th November, a number of significant concerns were raised at this event including the number and size of turbines, impact on watershed and private water supplies, fire risk and safety hazards. Conclusion of the consultation was that the local community objected to the principle of this proposal.
Concerns are raised from Culrain at the lack of commitment from Highland Broadband to implement works despite many in the community signing up. (Note this was also raised in a separate correspondence to the CC)
Culrain are aware of a land purchase proposal put forward by Samantha Kane/Carbisdale Castle. (Note also addressed in correspondence)
Funding applications, Culrain Hall now have their building wind and water tight and their internal services safe for use. The next project for the Hall is to raise funds for the replacement of the exterior cladding of the building.
20th November – NoRoS meeting to discuss concerns regarding energy developments locally.
23rd November, Culrain Christmas lights switch on
Finally Culrain Hall is now one of the community causes you can “vote” for with the blue plastic coins in Tesco Tain. Please vote for the Hall if you are in shopping.

8.2 Update from Ardgay kindly given by Marion Turner (who was put on the spot without notice – apologies to Marion) Gearrchoille Community Wood has their AGM 17th November 2024. Ardgay Public Hall have the repair café on Saturday 16th November, AGM on Saturday 7th December at 12 noon, and their Christmas Fair on Saturday 23rd November at 2p.m.

Ardgay residents, like those of Culrain and the surrounding areas are concerned by the number of energy development proposals affecting the area and the potential cumulative impact of these proposals.

8. **Highland Council** Cllr Baird updated the meeting on the issues with railings and concrete foundations at Bonar Bridge. Also stated that there is still £5525 available in the Ward Discretionary Fund, Culrain Hall could apply.

Cllr Baird also gave an update on the submission of Scoping Opinions directly to the Energy Consents Unit. A&DCC asked that Cllr Baird raise the issue that it would be useful if the EPC or Planning Support Officers had answered emails in relation to the Scoping consultations. Several emails remain unacknowledged by HC officers and the EPC.

9. **Planning & Licensing** A number of larger developments are in for Scoping and require responses. No other applications of concern have been noted from the weekly lists circulated.

10. **Windfarms** – map of consented and proposed windfarms has been developed by a member of the community this has been widely circulated and is available to inform discussions and meetings and support Scoping responses. Thanks go to David Baker for the work that has gone in to this it is very much appreciated by all.

There is general consensus that the scale and number of proposals for windfarm developments and associated battery storage and infrastructure coming forward is of major concern to our community. It was tabled by RS and agreed that the CC would ask for MSPs to attend meetings to allow concerns to be raised directly at Scottish Government level.

Concerns were also raised over the Scoping opinions being put forward, in particular the level of information and detail which is being “scoped out” as not relevant to the EIAs for these large scale developments.

KH stated that other CCs had been in contact for a collaborative approach to responding to such developments in terms of added weight to objections, economic benefit negotiation and shared expertise between communities. SK voiced concern that the CC is in place to represent A&DCC community and should not be concerned by what is happening in neighbouring CC areas. SK felt that there could be conflict of interest if CCs work collaboratively. LW and AH stated support for collaborative working and forming a partnership approach to shared issues. All agreed that, subject to the caveat that the priority of A&DCC is serving and representing the interests of our own community, a collaborative approach would be good going forward.

Inveroykel – the Scoping response for Inveroykel was submitted after no response was received regarding the agreed extension. Response was issued both to HC and the ECU.

Balblair – wind farm and BESS – a request has been received from a member of the community that the community council write a letter raising community concerns about this development proposal as the CC was in abeyance during the consultation and Scoping phase. Of particular concern is the battery storage, the potential of associated fire and potential for environmental risk from toxic gases, pollution and contamination of water courses in the event of a fire. Additionally, the lack of infrastructure and Scottish Fire and Rescue resources available locally to tackle any incident which may occur is of great concern to the community. Agreed A&DCC would write retrospectively regarding Scoping and consultation of this development proposal.

11. **SSEN Pylons** Scoping Opinion has been received for the Spittal, Loch Buidhe, Beaully power line proposals. Some discussion regarding objections, potential impacts and specifically and crucially cumulative impact on designated sites, landscape, tourism, ecology and hydrology. Fire risk as discussed at item 11 is also a key concern. SK stated that she would like to submit and contribute to the A&DCC Scoping response for this development proposal. Agreed that all comments to be incorporated in A&DCC response would be put to the Secretary by Monday 19th as deadline for submission is 26th November 2024.

12. **Correspondence** - 9 items of correspondence were received and considered.

13.1 Agreed that the CC would write to Network Rail regarding the poor and unacceptable state of the railway yard and sidings in Ardgay.

13.2 Agreed the CC would write to Highland Council regarding concerns over the mothballing of Gledfield nursery and seek reassurance that HC will reopen the nursery for the 2025/26 academic year.

13.3 RS confirmed that the Christmas lights will be now be taken on by the Kyle Action Group and will be maintained and looked after with those for Bonar Bridge. All agreed that this was positive and good for the villages to be working collaboratively.

13.4 Boundary change, agreed that subject to affected constituents being happy with the change A&DCC do not have any concerns regarding the proposed boundary review between A&DCC and Creich Community Councils.

13.5 Community update letter received from Coille Beath windfarm – agreed that the CC would write retrospective letter raising concerns as per Balblair as the CC was in abeyance and missed the opportunity to represent community views on the proposals.

13.6 Agreed that the CC would write regarding fibre broadband connections after community concerns have been raised at the length of time that has lapsed since connections were proposed and signed up to by members of the community.

Any Other Competent Business

13.7 Samantha Kane/Carbisdale Castle correspondence regarding a proposal to purchase 517 acres of forestry around Carbisdale. Forestry and Land Scotland have confirmed that A&DCC would be a consultee on any proposal which they are minded to consider. The CC agreed that their response was that a private proposal was not competent business for the Community Council until such time as they are formally consulted by FLS. SK expressed their view that they would like to present their proposal to the community formally. The CC suggested that SK could do this but that this would be a private matter for which they would have to organise their own community meeting in the same way as other developers conduct their community consultations on development proposals.

Other items of correspondence related to representation on wind farm fund panels and will be addressed in financial discussion.

14 Any Other Competent Business

14.1 Alladale consultation on new woodland creation – proposal is mixed deciduous woodland, no concerns raised

14.2 Local Place Plan – Catriona Hill of Oberlanders has been in contact to let the CC know that the Local Place Plan has now been submitted to Highland Council and Review 4. This review is currently on hold so there is a very short window for A&DCC to add comments. Opportunity for changes to the plan are limited though but Oberlanders will try to incorporate any comments put forward where possible. Agreed that comments would be formulated via email and collated for submission.

14.4 Minute Secretary – agreed to advertise for a minute secretary for future meetings of A&DCC

14.4 Cllr Conduct - A member of the public raised issue regarding the recent conduct of a Highland Council ward Councillor. Concerns were specifically relating to press reports and statements made which are/were not favourable to the community. The Chair stopped the address and further discussion as the CC is not the correct place to deal with such matters. The public were advised that if they have concerns there are formal channels and due processes for dealing with issues. The CC has no way to address such matters.

15. **Next meeting** 12th December 2024, Ardgay Hall, 7p.m.

Secretary, Ardgay & District Community Council

Secretary@ardgayanddistrictcommunitycouncil.org.uk

Private session minute

Present

Les Waugh (Chair), Robert Sawyer (Vice Chair), Eilidh Forbes (Treasurer), Anne Henderson, Tommy Gordon, Robert Henderson, Samantha Kane, Kerry Hawthorne (Secretary), Marion Turner (Associate member)

EF presented financial report (attached) funding approved for community groups

SK stated that members RH & AH of the CC were compromised as they had a conflict of interest because they were on Culrain Hall Committee

EF stated that neither RH nor AH are on Culrain Hall Committee

SK stated that there was still a conflict of interest as it is still obviously their hall as they live in Culrain.

KH stated that that same principle would apply to SK

It was confirmed and agreed by a 7/1 majority that there is no conflict of interest.

SK stated that she was not happy with KH as secretary and accused KH of sending out letters from the CC without the agreement of other members

KH stated that no letters have been sent out from the CC which have not been agreed. The only letter sent out had been the Inveroykel Scoping Opinion which was circulated and agreed.

SK stated that KH had sent a letter regarding war memorial wreaths.

KH confirmed this was not a letter but an email to Phil Tomlin (Ward Manager) seeking clarification on HC provision of wreaths for war memorials after a member of the community had queried no wreath being laid at Ardgay War Memorial.

SK stated that no correspondence should be issued without SK first approving it and that she wanted access to the CC email.

MT explained that this has never been the case for the CC and some items of correspondence etc have always been dealt with directly by the CC secretary.

All other members agreed that they are happy with the current process and access arrangements and do not want a change.

SK stated that she was not happy to accept this and stated that there was a dispute between themselves and other members of the CC. ALL other members confirmed that they have no dispute with SK. SK stated that she is concerned by this as she may want to make an application to the CC for funding at a later date through the Lady Carbisdale CIC and do not want the outcome to be prejudiced.

Concern was expressed that the accusations are repetitive and are becoming personal towards three members of the CC all of whom are clear that there is no dispute.

All also agreed that no such dispute between individuals would be relevant or competent in terms of Community Council business.

Minutes from Treasurers Report

As of 31 October 2024, the balance at the bank was £97,702.77.

This notionally comprises:

- Restricted funds: £96,600.66
- CC Admin fund: £541.70
- Windfarm Admin fund: £560.41

Annual incomes from the Coire na Cloiche and Beinn nan Oighrean funds received in September. While in abeyance, the only expenditure incurred was for website and email domain, which was collected by Direct Debit.

Funding discussions

Recurring annual applications from Ardgay Hall £3,000 (yr 5 of 5), Gearrchoille Community Woods £1,000 (yr 5 of 5), Culrain Hall £3,000 (yr 5 of 5), KoS Heritage Society £1,500 (yr 4 of 5), Gledfield Primary School Parent Council (yr 4 of 5) were received and will be paid Nov from CnC fund.

The CC wreath laid at the War Memorial on Remembrance will be paid from the BnT Projects fund (£33).

The CC approved an application to the Beinn Tharsuinn WF fund from Primary School Parent Council, for £750 towards minibus driver awareness training (MiDAS) costs for x7 volunteers, to enable the GPSPC to use the local community minibus facility and reduce future transport costs.

BoS have written to inform the CC their Treasurers Account will be changed to a Community Account in Jan'25, at a monthly charge of £4.25. EF to challenge this with the bank.