

Ardross Community Council

Minutes of Public & Management Meeting

11th July 2022

7.30pm

Ardross Community Hall

Present: Peter Allen (Chair), John Edmondson (Secretary), Alison Gordon (Treasurer), and James McTaggart (via FaceTime)

Cllrs Tamala Collier

Sandra Cunliffe, James McDougall, Rory Bews, Hazel Bews, Sylvia Mardon, Elliot Blauw, Imogen Percy-Bell, Sue Drever and John McGeogh

Meeting started at 7.30 pm.

The Community Council was not quorate to make decisions on Community Benefit.

1. Their were apologies from George MacKay. As well as Cllr Maxine Smith

Cllr Tamala Collier took no part in the discussions in Agenda Item 2, but stayed to hear the views from the community.

2. The Secretary on the invitation of the Chair gave a brief presentation on the Strathroy Wind Farm Amendment planning application, using information supplied in the Environmental Impact Assessment [EIA]. A hard copy of the EIA was available for viewing.

Elliot Blauw was extremely concerned about the sheer scale of the turbines. Looking down from Cnoc Ruadh or Dublin to sea level was a fair a representation of the height of the turbines. "A long way down". The Chair pointed out that the photomontages were not reliable as the turbines when built were a lot different in real life.

3 turbines would be lit at night. Various photomontages were shown, as well as cumulative visibility maps.

The transport routes were discussed. Both routes proposed using the Golf Course Road. It would mean felling of large trees and the removal of a wall. The corner in Alness by the memorial garden would also have to be altered as well. The access to the wind farm site was seen as being dangerous in the location being proposed.

Rory Bews was appalled by the whole process, and the overturning of local decisions. He had requested information from EnergieKontor which had never been forthcoming.

He was extremely concerned about the access to the site. We should fight this. He personally was appalled about how the Harington's had behaved. Richard Harington had persuaded him to become Chair of the Ardross Community Hall and do his bit to help the community. It seemed there was no interest now in the community and it was all about money. It was confirmed that the woodland at the moment screening the proposal in Strathy had been sold on the open market, it was believed that the Harington's had purchased it. They could fell it anytime after any permission was granted.

Sylvia Mardon echoed the views of Rory Bews. Personally her main concern was the introduction of lighting which none of the other wind farms had. The reality was always worst than the photomontages. She thought that there was a lot of fatigue in the community, because of the overturning of the decisions of democratically elected members and developers did this on purpose, to wear communities down. The way the whole matter had been dealt in a way which was disrespectful to the community of Ardross.

There was skepticism that a large company like EnergieKontor failed to grasp that the original proposal was uneconomic. The feeling of the meeting was that EnergieKontor had followed this as deliberate strategy. There was annoyance that one unelected and unrepresentative person could overturn the decision of the elected Members of the Highland Council. John Edmondson said that the Scottish Government made all these noises about community engagement and empowerment, but it meant nothing as they were quite prepared to override the views of local and regional representatives. Such unilateral decisions would always undermine democracy and was a reason why the turnout in Ardross at the Local Elections was so low in his view.

Having considered the application it was decided to object to the Strathrory Wind Farm Amendment application.

The Secretary explained to Sandra Cunliffe that for some reason the Planning Authority grouped objections from one single household together. This was archaic as it denied each individual living in a household a voice in the Planning system and went across all equality legislation.

James McTaggart suggested that people wrote to their MSP do express their frustration about the behaviour of EnergieKontor in keeping on producing new EIA's and changing the height again, as well as the undermining of democracy in the Planning system. And asking them how they intend to remedy the situation. There was surprise as the Secretary explained that this situation of multiple applications for a wind farm in a community who didn't want it would not have arisen in England where an objection to an onshore wind farm by a Parish Council would have prevented the application from proceeding.

Since the Scottish Parliament election and the alliance with the Green Party the Scottish Government had allowed a lot more Appeals on wind farms, even though planning legislation had not changed.

Several people left the meeting.

3. The Minutes of the June 2022 Management Meeting were proposed by Alison Gordon and seconded by Peter Allen.

4. Cllr Tamala Collier's reply from the Port Authority about the Ardross Pipe Band had been forwarded to Paul Harrison and there were discussions taking place about this.

The Ardross Woodland Group had indicated that they were paying back the grant issued, but it did not appear on the last bank statement.

Iain Moncrieff had replied regarding the roads and Neil Reid about the bridges. The bridge at Lealty was due for repair, but even though it was in a poor state it was unlikely to be dealt with until drawings had been completed and contracts awarded. The Dublin bridge was not a priority as there were a lot more bridges in a worse state of repair.

5. The Treasurer had received a thank-you from the Ardross Primary including a card made by the children for the grant sent after the AGM.

The School Board had sent an email regarding the fence and hedge at The Old Smithy and the junction at the B9176 as they were concerned with the visibility. Although this had been discussed at a previous meeting, nothing had been done. But following up from this representation, **Cllr Tamala Collier** agreed to have a look at the junction and get someone from the Roads Department to look at the fence and hedge at the junction and report back at the next meeting.

Email correspondence already circulated was noted.

6. The Treasurer's Report was presented. Copies were made available at the meeting. The contents were noted. So far over £15,581.18 Community Benefit had been distributed since April 1st 2022. The Ardross Pipe Band had received their grant. The Fire Alarm grants were still being distributed.

Since April 1st 2022 the ACC had granted £15,581.18 as Community Benefit. Some £9,000 on the Energy Grant.

Alison Gordon wanted to thank the Heritage Centre for getting the Newsletter out so quickly. And in turn John Edmondson wanted to thank Alison for getting the Newsletter out in time.

It was agreed to send an email out to ratify some financial decisions taken at the AGM.

7. The Secretary explained that he was still trying to obtain demographic information for Ardross before deciding on the Electricity Payments. He was waiting for Phil Tomalin to return his call. The Census information from 2011 was displayed and discussed, the demographic's were not obvious.

The subject of co-option was briefly discussed as the Community Council had had some loss of community councillors and we still had the ability to co-opt. It was quite important that this was addressed in the near future.

James McDougall had noticed the entry written for the Ardross Church Board in the Newsletter. The Ardross Community Council had been very clear about the Trustee Document and invited them to a meeting and it was now very much in the hands of the Church Board.

Next Management Meeting on **8th August 2022** at the Ardross Community Hall

