

Ardross Community Council

Minutes of Management Meeting

10th July 2023

8.00pm

Ardross Community Hall

Present: Peter Allen (Chair), John Edmondson (Secretary), Alison Gordon (Treasurer), Willie Beattie and Emma Chisholm

Sandra Cunliffe

James McDougall

Meeting started at 8.00 pm.

1. There were apologies from George Mackay, James McTaggart as well as Clair Bale.
2. The June Minutes were approved.
3. The Secretary was still trying to sort out a way of collaborating on documents rather than just sharing. There was a possibility of setting up an iCloud account for the Community Council. It was work in progress.

We had still not had any response from the Highland Council about the Dalnavie cross-roads. Cllr Tamala Collier has been dealign with this but has not been able to get any response. It was suggested that we try and get Cllr Maxine Smith and may be Helen Ross to pursue this as we really needed answers. There was still an outstanding issue with the crash barriers at Stittenham. There was also the Lealty bridge.

James McDougall mentioned an advertising hoarding in the field which had just been planted with trees, between the Dalnavie cross-roads on the way to Stittenham. It was an advertisement for concrete silo. Technically such advertisements required planning permission.

4. We had had a thank-you letter from the Ardross Primary, they had been able to use the grant to send the pupils to Landmark, as well as for sporting competitions.

Notification of the Novar 1 payment had been received and it had now been transferred to our bank account.

A consultation on Visitor Tax was about to launch. This would have to be a collaborative response. [This has now been extended until the 13th September 2023]. The general impression was that the levy although partly designed to help the smaller rural communities where services struggle to be delivered, would be spent entirely in Inverness. Especially as Inverness councillors will have the majority in the Council Chamber with the new boundary changes. Willie Beattie didn't think that it would generate much revenue and revenue would be swallowed up in costs; John Edmondson agreed as in other countries where Visitor Taxes were collected there was more of a Commune structure where smaller local areas had more responsibility for the roads and services such as toilets rather than the larger Local Authority system in place in Scotland and the money was collected locally and spent locally without going to the regional authorities.

The draft letter on behalf of all the community councils along the pylon routes produced by Ron MacAulay was then discussed. Willie Beattie thought that it was well written with some good points. Others felt that it wasn't really saying much however, it was trying to appease and that meant chinks in the argument. It was a fine line to be struck. There was no need to concede that the lines were required as this was still not evidenced and it has been demonstrated. Sandra Cunliffe thought we should be asking for a few more facts from SSEN.

The points made about the possibility of several more lines going into 2050 was a fair point, we certainly did not want to be discussing this for the next 20 years. And this was also an argument to really challenge the current proposals as no doubt the same route that was being put forward now would be the one to be used in the future. The letter was correct to say that it was all about SSEN saving money.

The proposal to bury the existing 132kV line and put up a 400kV line following the existing route would just not work in Ardrross, because of houses and Designation restrictions.

John Edmondson pointed out that Scotland reducing its carbon emissions was not going to have any noticeable effect on global warming. Scotland contributed less than 0.1% of the world's greenhouse gas emissions and electricity production was a fraction of this. This did not mean that we shouldn't be doing things to help reduce our emissions, but that we should be taking a more balanced approach and respecting other aspects of the environment. It was agreed that the draft letter presented a scenario that somehow Scotland was going to make a difference to global warming by building these Overhead Lines [OHL]; this was factually incorrect.

During the ensuing discussions it was agreed that the draft letters did not ask or contain enough facts; that using the existing route would not work for Ardrross; that to present the idea that Scotland could somehow save the planet from climate change by building these lines was factually incorrect and a poor negotiating tactic. It gave a platform for SSEN to come back on. Willie Beattie however was quite happy with the draft letter the way it was, and thought the infrastructure was necessary. But the majority of Community Councillors felt that the draft letter was making too many concessions and hooks for SSEN to come back to us on and that aspects of the letter were factually incorrect. We should ask SSEN for greater details of why the OHL was required and point out that using the existing route would not work in Ardrross.

A brief discussion about the National Grid and the implications for an independent Scotland ensued. Currently apart from a small interconnector to Ireland all the large inter-country connectors went to England. With England investing in nuclear energy

there was no guarantee that England would need or want to take Scotland's energy. In fact during times of low wind Scotland would be dependent on England's electricity. It was even more important that the need for the OHL was demonstrated. And despite requests from others the answers had not been forthcoming.

Any correspondence received had been forwarded to community councillors for information.

5. The Treasurer presented and distributed the accounts for the last month. So far £3,385 of Community Benefit had been paid towards community projects. The Electricity Payments were due to be distributed in the next month.
6. James McDougall was having problem with the internet and so was Willie Beattie, but it was now resolved. It was thought it was trees. **John Edmondson** promised to look into this. James McDougall mentioned that his neighbours had tried to join Highland Broadband, but thank had finally come back to them they had said that they weren't going to get a connection. It was the same story in Strathrusdale. John Edmondson explained that Highland Broadband are preventing CFWN rolling out a gigabit internet connections in Ardross as the grants were not available to them during the length of this contract.
7. The Abhainn Dubh Wind Farm was discussed the would be very prominent from the Fyrish Monument, access would be from Fannyfield. There had been 2 peatland restoration projects in this area! Emma Chisholm pointed out that many of the surveys seemed to be a desktop exercise where it was stated that many of the surveys were not undertaken on site because of COVID restrictions. She was concerned about the Red Kites in the area. The RSPB held the unsubstantiated view that building wind farms was going to save birds lives, despite the collision risk one of the problems were that young raptors need to migrate to different areas, and these areas are getting smaller and smaller as wind farms encroach into their habitat and this was just as bad as turbine strike.

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting.

Next Management Meeting **14th August 2023** at the Ardross Community Hall

