

Ardross Community Council

Minutes of Management Meeting

9th October 2023

8.00pm

Ardross Community Hall

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

Cllr Maxine Smith

C Brett, Clair Bale, Neil Wilson, David Bentley, James McDougall and Elliott Blaauw

Meeting started at 8.00 pm.

The Secretary reminded everyone that the Ardross Community Council was meeting as the old Community Council. If matters came to a vote then it was the old Community Council Members that voted on these matters. The new elected Community Council Members not taking their position until Wednesday. And until the Inaugural Meeting then the Community Council was without Office Bearers.

1. There were apologies from McTaggart and Sandra Cunliffe.
2. The September Minutes were approved.
3. The problems at the Dalnavie cross-roads were continuing. A meeting had taken place between the Iain Moncrieff from the Roads Department and a Safer Routes to School representative which had excluded community stakeholders and the school to discuss various safety aspects around the cross-roads. This wasn't just about the hedge and fence at the Old Smithy; it was about improving the safety around the cross-roads including the introduction of a speed limit, a safer crossing, painted junction, moving of signs etc. It was agreed to keep on trying to improve the safety at this junction.

The wind farm at Swordale had written back accepting our proposal as far as community benefit.

There had still be no news from the Access Officer.

There were no consultations at the moment, but DropBox was probably the best route to go down.

4. Rory Bews on behalf of the Ardross Community Hall had been in touch to thank the Ardross Community Council for the funding received.

It was agreed to donate £700 towards the Lunch Club this year.

Because there were more people eligible for the Christmas Treat it was agreed to donate £1500 towards this. The **Treasurer** agreed to get in touch with Kerry Dolan and Joan Scott and inform them of the awards.

The Chair gave an update on the last AGM of the Beinn Tharsuinn Windfarm Community Ltd [BTWC]. The meeting included the presence of two representatives from Scottish Power [SP]. These two representatives made it clear that they thought that the Ardross Community was not spending enough of the money. The discussions got quite heated. The Scottish Power suggested that a different form should be used. However Peter Allen thought that there was no need for this and it wasn't up to SP to tell us what we should be spending the money on if the rules of BTWC were being followed. SP said that they would draft a new form. But the SP representatives were not Directors of the company and had no entitlement to be present at the meeting and certainly no authority to tell BTWC how to conduct its business. The SP representatives did not even have the correct figures for the balance for Ardross as they had failed to take into account the £60,000 just spent. We as a Community Council preferred to bank our benefit over the years and use it on big ticket items such as the broadband and play park rather than fritter it away each year, which of course was our prerogative.

The BTWC agreement allowed money paid from SP to be carried forward without penalty. We did try and spend the money first, but not all applications could be passed through the BTWC fund because of the rules surrounding the fund. The pressure was coming from SP so that they could use it for publicity

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

5. The Community Energy Payments was then discussed. There were approximately 128 households eligible for the payments. With the electricity payments this was a total of 200 cheques.

Households had to apply for it. The standing charge had increased by a 67% in the Highland region. And in addition there was less government help. There were also significant increases in oil prices. Emma Chisholm thought we could invite several suppliers to compete for our electricity supply and John Edmondson thought that we should be looking at funding longer term ways of saving energy and hence costs, but given the fact that a new community council was about to be formed; tonight was not the time to have an in-depth discussion about any of these thoughts.

It was agreed that every household meeting the same criteria as last year would be eligible for a £150 one-off payment towards energy costs. This would have to be applied for and the **Treasurer** was to keep records of households that applied.

6. The Secretary had already explained about the new community council at the beginning of the meeting. But there was an obligation to have the inaugural meeting before our regular meeting in November and this meeting required at least 7 days notice. As the new elected community councillors were present we were able to choose a date. It was agreed to have the Inaugural Meeting on the 18th October 2023

at 7.00pm at the Ardross Community Hall. Cllr Maxine Smith would be able to Chair the meeting in the first instance. The **Secretary** to book the hall and inform Helen Ross. Co-option would be something for the new community council to consider.

7. The Treasurer distributed her report the contents of which were noted. The annual Highland Council grant of the princely sum of £460.01 had been received. A total of £75, 246.50 had been spent since April 1st 2023 from the community benefit funds on local projects.
8. Although the Ardross Community Council had not been officially told, the bin days were changing soon to a Monday, starting with the recycling bins on the 23rd October 2023.

Cllr Maxine Smith left the meeting.

9. The applicant for the battery storage facility at Contullich had come back for their second public information event. They had first tried to say that the neighbouring battery storage plant was nothing to do them; but when it was pointed out that they would have to consider it in the EIA that they produced they conceded it was a consideration. They had still not sent the Fire Standards previously requested. Fire was a large risk. The only other issues was that they were hoping to use the existing gate for the substation, but another option was an existing field entrance.

The other matter was a mobile mast at Kildermorie. This would require regular refuelling with ATV's which could only take 200 litres at a time, as this was the primary source of energy, and the equivalent of a car ticking over constantly. Several return journeys a month were required to keep the size of diesel generation going, which would be burning 1000 litres every 3 weeks. The solar panels and wind turbine should be constructed and used from day 1, and the generator should only be temporary generator. Access would have to be by the Inchlumpie forestry track and not up Strathrusdale. It was also a TNS site which means emergency cover would not necessarily be available. There was also an issue that Pay as You Go and older 'dumb' phones would not be work on this particular mast. In any case there was a mobile signal on the summits of the surrounding hills. These observations to be outlined in a letter to the applicant.

There being no other business the Chair closed the meeting.

Next Meeting is the Inaugural Meeting on the **18th October 2023** at the Ardross Community Hall.

