

Present: D Steel (Chair); I Burnie; J Jameson; D McIntyre; W McKie; J Morton; K Smyth.

1. Apologies: P Addison; D Finlay; W Finlay; R Forster; .

2. Minutes 30 September. Accepted.

3. Matters arising:

Snowdrops Info Panel: The costs for producing this are all now being met by Forestry and the NSA. A draft panel has been designed.

4. Finance

Bank balances:

Main Account £10380 (After allowing for all known liabilities. Of these funds, approximately £5000 are Restricted)
No.2 Cally Boundaries Account £2900. Further grant funds of £13200 from the Heritage Lottery Fund are expected shortly.

Financial report.

Principal restricted funds are : The Kiosk £1900; and Carbon Trust £1500

Unrestricted funds encompass: Electricity £1400; Country Markets £1130; Website £2640; and Cally booklets £520.

Thanks to the patient efforts of the Rainton team, the wind-turbine has been producing electricity income again since Nov.14th. Information is awaited on the maintenance and servicing costs incurred to bring this successful outcome about. The freeze on fresh expenditure from unrestricted funds must therefore be maintained for the time being.

VAT matters

The proposal reported at the last GDI meeting to create a wholly owned GDI subsidiary as a step to de-registering the main GDI account from VAT will be revisited once some stability in the development of electricity income from the wind-turbine has been re-established.

Visit Scotland have not yet refunded the rates rebate for the Kiosk to the GDI and will need chasing.

Climate Challenge Fund. The grants have been awarded for the Carbon Communities Fund project in Gatehouse. The funds coming to the Initiative will need to be managed in a separate bank account for this purpose. This was agreed by the meeting.

5. Current Projects

Cally Designed Landscape. The annual report on the project has been submitted to the funders, and the next tranche of money is expected shortly. David Steel also reported that he has been researching the history of the walls and has been able to trace which sections of wall were built by which dykers as this was all recorded at the time. Irene Burnie queried why the height of the wall varied. It seems likely that this is due to past repairs when sections of wall were lowered during rebuilding.

Carbon Action Project. The three communities of Gatehouse, Creetown and Dalbeattie have been successful in securing funds for this project. In Gatehouse it covers improvements to the Community Centre, a renewable energy/low carbon communities installation at the Mill on the Fleet, and through the GDI, a community energy survey, working with households in the town. The funding will be officially announced on the 3rd December, and a local press release will follow.

Community Centre. Dawn McIntyre thanked the GDI for obtaining the grant for improvement of the Work Room. The room is a huge improvement and has already resulted in increased bookings. She recently gave a presentation to a meeting of the DGHP, who provided the grant, at the Murray Arms and it is their intention to visit the Centre prior to their meeting in December. Dawn reported that a crisis meeting with the community had taken place to raise the present predicament of the Centre, which has various serious structural issues and a lack of support from within the community - both in terms of use of the Centre and volunteers to help run it. A good turnout had attended the meeting, however all but six present were already regular users and there were few offers to assist with the work needing done. A further meeting has however been arranged to endeavour to take the process forward. The Centre has recently received large grants from CARES and from the Climate Challenge Fund (CCF) as part of the Carbon Action Project in Gatehouse but concerns have been raised as to whether or not there is any point in proceeding with this without community support for the greater use of the premises. A structural survey has been carried out which indicates a range of problems which will need to be addressed, but the view is that the Centre should push ahead with the improvements - insulation, secondary glazing and an air source heating system. The meeting proposed that the Town Hall Fund, which has provided an annual income from

interest, would be better spent on some of the urgent structural work, as the capital value is simply reducing as the years go by. Bringing in outside expertise where possible and developing a committed management team who can work well together are seen as crucial. A visit to CATStrand to talk to the team there might be valuable. Allowing a period for a 'community discussion' to take place might also bring forward some useful new ideas - two suggestions at the meeting were for a snooker club, and a film club - but there will be others. It was felt that with the recent improvements to the Work Room and the successful grant funding received, the Centre was potentially in a much improved position. The GDI will continue to support the Centre in any way they can.

Country Market: The monthly market has now moved to the Kiosk in the Car Park to join the other traders that have been operating from there on a weekly basis. This is an interim arrangement agreed with the Council pending progress with acquiring the Kiosk from Visit Scotland. If the Kiosk is secured for the community it is intended to landscape an area adjacent to the Kiosk to allow for events such as the market to take place without encroaching on the car park. Thanks are recorded to the Murray Arms Hotel which has so generously supported the market since its launch over three years ago.

Economic Development: J Jameson reported that DGHP would be very happy to see further housing development in Gatehouse. The possibility of a development in Memory Lane was mentioned again as a possibility. There is no further information yet on the Garage site.

Garries Park: Nothing to report.

Port Macadam: Nothing to report.

Stellage Wood: Nothing to report.

The Kiosk: Visit Scotland have indicated the sort of price they would wish to secure for the Kiosk, but this is felt to be unrealistically high particularly as the building was transferred by the Council to the Tourist Board for a very small amount in 2000. The current Kiosk project, was part of the outcome of the Business Transformation Project of which Visit Scotland were part, along with the Council and the Gatehouse community and to the outcome of which Visit Scotland were fully committed. The info centre is now in the Mill as a Visit Scotland Partnership Information Centre, and an otherwise redundant building remains open and useful to the community and to visitors. Both these projects rely heavily on volunteers and the community have already invested heavily in making them work. It is felt that it would be a shame if Visit Scotland chose to miss an opportunity to triumph a local solution, preferring to pursue an unrealistic price for the Kiosk, stifling its development while the process drags on, together with the bad press that will no doubt follow - charges of greediness and a failure to work with the community or to contribute anything meaningful to what the community has achieved through their side of the agreement. It has been proposed to the Council that there is an opportunity here to flag up and champion a successful community partnership. We have resolved a difficult situation following Visit Scotland's decision to pull out of Gatehouse, resulting in the Partnership Information Centre which has run now for two seasons and has been a great success. The Info Centre in the Mill in Gatehouse has seen a 50% increase in use over the former TIC as well as benefiting Mill visitor figures similarly. The Mill Info Centre follows Visit Scotland's desire to see more of their Centres incorporated into existing attractions, and certainly in the Gatehouse case this means that as well as information the visitor is provided with a well stocked shop with an emphasis on quality Scottish produce, a café, toilets, and an exhibition introducing the local area, as well as temporary exhibitions galleries. Quite a step up from the car park. And they can flag up the success of the Kiosk project in the car park which they supported through the Business Transformation Project, utilising their old building to continue to promote local produce - arts, crafts and artisan foods, again in partnership with the local community. It is hoped to put a proposal to Visit Scotland to seek to persuade them of the positive outcome that is there for the taking if they so wish.

Walks: Jo Mercer of the Council has reported that she has received one objection to the Gatehouse core paths proposals. This relates to the access path from Planetree Park to the hillside behind which runs along the edge of a garden. The meeting feels strongly that this is an important access to the hillside - a popular Gatehouse walk utilising an access arrangement which has existed for many years - and that it is important that it remains. It is felt that a meeting may help to resolve the issue as the Core Paths label is not thought to confer any extra privileges or powers which would in any way change the rights of the owner of the ground.

Website: Nothing to report.

Wind Turbine: The turbine is once again turning, a fault having been found and rectified. The Finlays were unable to attend the meeting but nevertheless conveyed a cheque for £2000 for electricity generated which was warmly received.

6. Any other business

Newsletter: Willie McKie reported that work has begun on establishing a regular community newsletter. The first edition will be out in the spring. All costs will be met through advertising. The Newsletter will be added to the project list.

7. Date of next meeting

27 January 2010, 7.30pm, Community Centre.