

Present: P Addison (Chair); R Forster; A Johnson; W McKie; M McPherson; J Morton; K Smyth; B Vaux; A Vaux.

1. **Apologies:** F Bruno; I Burnie; D Finlay; J Jameson; R McPherson; D Steel; P Murray Usher;.

2. **Minutes 24 September.** Accepted.

3. **Matters arising:**

- John Morton enquired whether there had been any further news on the proposed racetrack. D Steel has talked with the developer on the telephone who has indicated he would be happy to attend a public meeting.

4. **Finance**

- Cash balance stands at £11,173

- Major movement in funds has been due to VAT recovered on the purchase of the wind-turbine (£23,118), which has now been remitted in full to J Finlay & Son. There remains a further balance due to J Finlay & Son in respect of parts of unpaid invoices; this has yet to be worked out but should be approximately £5000 and will be financed from future electricity sales. A formula has been prepared to compute running costs and electricity generated to provide the income figure for the GDI. A formal agreement is still to be completed. The meeting thanked the Finlays for their significant financial support of the project while VAT issues were resolved.

- Grants have been received to support the Kiosk (running costs and possible further development expenditure) and the available sum now stands at £2500.

- A grant of £1000 from DGHP has been provided to fund the proposed refurbishment of the Work Room in the Community Centre.

- Considerable progress has been made in levying charges from property advertising on the Gatehouse web-site. Amounts so far generated within the last month exceed £700 and more is anticipated. There has been some resistance to the proposed charges from Hotels and Caravan sites.

5. **CADISPA**

Progress is being made on a number of the priorities in the plan and other matters contained in the recommendations have been acted upon. Follow-up to the Area Committee presentation has resulted, for instance in improvement to the signage at the car park and replacement of tourist information signs at the town entries. Contact has been made with the IT centre in Castle Douglas about the possibility of some training in Gatehouse. The Community Council has been working with Jamie Dent of the Dumfries and Galloway Small Communities Housing Trust on the provision of low cost housing in Gatehouse. (He will be reporting to the next Community Council meeting).

6. **Current Projects**

Cally Designed Landscape. Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed to fund the Cally Boundaries Project but action awaits agreement on match funding from Leader. The architect at Solway Heritage has visited the old school and agrees that the plan put forward by Ron Forster on behalf of the GDI is appropriate. The next move is a short report indicating the cost of this project and Solway Heritage will prepare this.

Community Centre Work Room

Funding has been received from DGHP and a small sum from the local Lions. The Community Centre are getting a team together to refurbish the room. The Community Centre AGM fully discussed the project and the committee are currently investigating further funding for the rest of the Centre.

Country Market. This has been moved inside for the winter and will be held in the Community Centre. Apart from two occasions when weather conditions forced the market indoors, the market has been held in the courtyard of the Murray Arms Hotel. Grateful thanks were extended to the Murray Arms for their generous support of the project.

Economic Development. No report.

Garries Park.

- The *Meadow* has been cut and raked.

- The *Sensory Garden* is well established and is due for pruning back.

Port Macadam. Nothing to report.

Stellage Wood. This project is now in progress with the Fleet Valley volunteers preparing places to plant and protect trees, which are ready to go in.

The Kiosk. A meeting was held with Visit Scotland and the Regeneration Team from Dumfries and Galloway Council.

Council officials were very supportive of the GDI. It was agreed to write to Visit Scotland expressing our desire to purchase the building and Visit Scotland promised to prepare an occupancy agreement for the use of the building in the meantime. The letter was sent on 25 October but no reply has yet been received and we have not yet received a draft agreement.

Walks. Peter Addison attended a Core Paths meeting at Barstobrick. There seems to be an emphasis on paths close to settlements and with a clearly defined beginning and end. It seems likely that the published timescale for the process and public consultations will slip. Some concerns were expressed over the flexibility of access and the paths programme in relation to seasonal activities such as lambing. Concerns were also expressed over the selection of paths and a possible lack of logic in some selections. It was suggested that a public meeting should be organised in Gatehouse with the Access Officer to look at maps. Ron Forster indicated that the Community Council would be happy to arrange this. An unfortunate situation regarding access to Disdow Wood through an existing entry between the houses on the main road out of the town was raised. This is an access to the woods which is close to the town and avoids problems with livestock further up the hill. Use of the access is being disputed by a single resident and it was felt that this should be investigated further.

Website. Running smoothly. Letters have been sent now to all providers listed on the Accommodation page explaining the decision to extend a small annual fee for listing to all providers. As mentioned above there has been some resistance but generally the move seems to be accepted as fair to all. Beverly Vaux in complementing the website indicated that as an accommodation provider she is very happy with the website service and feels it works well in generating business.

Wind Turbine. Running smoothly, and on target in terms of expected power generation.

7. Any other business

- Anna Johnson tabled her new Viewpoint leaflets which have been produced for the two viewpoints. She also reported on a project taking place with the Primary School (P4 & 5) with an art/cultural theme focusing on the landscape and particularly dry stone walls. The children will produce poems and some work will be sandblasted onto stones and incorporated in the dyke bounding Burgher Park. It is the 40th anniversary of the Dry Stone Wallers Association and their AGM was held in the Murray Arms on the 19th November.

- Beverley Vaux as Access Officer for the British Horse Society thanked the volunteers for the work they had carried out in clearing paths of debris after last winter's tree thinning. She however raised concerns about the very poor state of the horse trail which has become dangerous in places. She was particularly concerned as public funding had been provided for the provision of this trail and also for a park for horse trailers which Forestry had never actually provided despite receiving the funding for it. Anna Johnson advised that the issue of the slow progress of reinstatement work had been brought up at the recent Cally Designed Landscape Group meeting and the issue would continue to be pursued by that group. The tree thinning process is part of a positive process of improving the wood for the future but the damage caused by the machinery is undermining enjoyment of the wood and clearly needs to be addressed urgently.

A further discussion about the future of the Cally Woods raised a number of points. Beverley wondered if it might be possible for the wood to transfer to some kind of community ownership. Ron Forster felt this would be too large a project for this size of community. It was noted that arrangements at Dalbeattie Forest require a team of very committed volunteers. However the Cally Woods are an important part of Gatehouse's 'tourism portfolio' and it may be useful to look at other models of ownership/involvement between communities and woodland managers, and successful examples elsewhere. Improved community involvement with the Cally Woods has already been established with the Cally Designed Landscape Group and a range of actions to improve the area are already underway. Further suggestions were the development of a sculpture trail within the woods, and emphasizing the interesting features of the woods and the range of activities there to better market the woods as a tourism destination.

8. Date of next meeting

28 January, 7.30pm, Community Centre.