

Gatehouse Development Initiative

AGM

The AGM proper was preceded by a special meeting to hear a statement by Delia Holland, Area Manager for Visit Scotland, to explain their decision to close the Gatehouse TIC. This part of the meeting was attended by some 50 members of the community. The statement was followed by a lively discussion and Ms Holland was left in little doubt about the strength of feeling in the community. Key points raised were the complete lack of consultation with the community; the inappropriate criteria by which Gatehouse had been selected; the potential damage to the town's tourism industry; the impracticalities surrounding the proposed alternative provision.

Present: D Steel (Chair); J Russell; W McKie; W Finlay; D Finlay; A Vaux; A Johnson; R Forster; P Addison; J Davidson; M Carruthers; R Dean; J Morton; J Jameson; D McIntyre; K Smyth; R McPherson

2. Register of Members. A register of members is a requirement of the Company's constitution. There were no changes made.

3. Accounts. W McKie presented the accounts for 2006 which were accepted.

4. Activities.

Cally Management Plan. The development of a plan was undertaken to bring a more holistic approach to the future management of this important designed landscape. £8000 of funding from SNH allowed the GDI to seek tenders from a number of consultants and commission the successful consultants, Solway Heritage, to produce the plan. This was presented at a meeting of stakeholders on 15th March 2007. The research has both pulled together useful resources and turned up interesting new material. A Vaux suggested that a copy should be lodged in the library.

Country Market. This was piloted in October, November and December using stalls borrowed from Wigtown. The market has been well received by both producers and public and will continue as a regular event on the first Saturday of each month throughout the year. The increase in visitors to Gatehouse has had a positive knock-on effect to other businesses within the town and other events are now being arranged to co-incide with the market day. Stalls and tables have been purchased and in due course, the market should generate a modest income for the community.

Economic Development. The organisation CADISPA have been commissioned to carry out a wide ranging community study. It is hoped, funding permitting, that this will start around May, with some initial results and indications back towards the end of the summer. Affordable housing and jobs are regarded as key issues for the project.

Garries Park. No progress to report re play equipment. The Sensory Garden is progressing well and rubble is being used to create a crossing to the Wildflower Meadow. The Meadow is in its fourth year and is developing well. It takes about ten years to become fully established. Last year was the first time it was cut properly at the beginning and end of the season. To date over 50 species of flowers and grasses have been identified. The Council have provided three more seats for the park. What's on notices are continuing to be produced weekly, but more information from groups would be welcome.

New Town Hall. Nothing to report.

Port Macadam. The first phase of this project, the new footpath, is complete. Phase two, the restoration of the quayside, is under way and discussions are ongoing with the Council.

Renewable Energy. All elements of the Rainton wind turbine are ready and waiting for the final part of construction and lifting into position, hopefully within the next week or so, weather permitting.

Walks. P Addison is undertaking a survey of the current paths network. M Carruthers is keen to try and get a safe path along the A75 to complete the loop round by Anwoth. P Addison has spoken to Amey who are keen to help - particularly for cycleways, to provide safe cycling to the caravan parks for instance. The advice is though that it may take some time for a project to reach the front of the queue. P Addison has also written to the Forestry Commission to suggest the paths appear on their new panels.

Website. This continues to receive a lot of hits. A news section has been added to pick up on some of the key stories and events within the community.

Election of Directors. T Burnie has written to the Chairman to resign as a director. In his letter he thanks all the volunteers who have helped with his projects. The Chairman expressed the gratitude of the GDI for his contribution. All other directors are happy to continue. No new directors proposed.

The current office bearers were re-elected: Chairman - D Steel; Vice-chairman - P Addison; Secretary - K Smyth; Treasurer - W McKie.

6. AOB. Some final discussions re the TIC. D Steel will write to the Council and to the Chief Executive of Visit Scotland.

7. Date of future meetings. 30 May; 25 July; 26 September