

GURCA AGM MEETING MINUTES

Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association



**Tuesday 21st June (moved from Monday 20th June)
Meeting from 7:00pm**

Glen Urquhart Public Hall

Present: Susan Clark (SC) Chair, Carolyn Wilson (CW) Secretary, Monique Riddle (MR) Treasurer, Dan Light (DL) Community Development Officer, Gordon Findlay (GF), Fiona Urquhart, David Fraser (DF), Dianne Fraser, Dick Beech, David Clark, Christine Hart, Neil McInnes, Jim Molyneux Miranda Service, Barbara Shaw, Mary Tiles, Adrian Varwell, Margaret Varwell

Apologies: Gordon Watson, Fiona Macdonald, Fraser Mackenzie, Jan Bell, Alan Bell, Sandra Bardwell, Ian Talloch, Erik Trefler

Points 1-5 Minutes for the AGM, Points 6-13 Minutes the Open Meeting that followed immediately on from the AGM

1. Welcome

Susan Clark (SC) opened the AGM, exactly a year after the last AGM 21st June 2021. The previous Open Meeting was held on the Monday 14th March. It was noted that despite the impact of the COVID 19 Pandemic GURCA has in many ways been busier than ever.

2. Minutes and Matters Arising

Carolyn Wilson (CW) summarised the minutes from the AGM 21st June 2021. It was noted that these were also available online www.gurca.co.uk. These were proposed by Miranda Service and seconded by Fiona Urquhart.

3. Chair's Report

SC Covered the Key Aspects of the Chair's report which is also available online. The Report is a summary of activities and projects GURCA have been involved with over the last year and is on File with these minutes. It includes the recruitment of a Community Development Officer (CDO), Blairbeg Park Lease, Village Hall improvements, Community Action Plan (CAP), Local Woodlands - Community Right to buy (CRtB), Loch Ness Hub, Litter Picks, Market on the Green, Financial Review including Reserves Policy and Governance. This report will be submitted to OSCR.

4. Treasurer's Report

Monique Riddle (MR) gave an overview of the accounts, the hard copy of this summary was given to attendees and is on file with these minutes. The Summary included two columns one for 2021 Full Year, the other for 2022 Full Year (1st April 2021- 31st March 2022).

Points of interest included:

Unrestricted Funds - Income: *Donations* included a donation from GULUPA (Glen Urquhart Land Use Partnership) which had wound down, and from the Loch Ness ETAPE. *Fundraising* –Market on the Green is included here and not under rents as it can be dependent on weather i.e. last week 11th June it was cancelled due to high winds and also for the Christmas Market (due to poor weather the charge to stall holders was reduced). *Rents* were also now coming in from the Loch Ness Hub and the Hall was recovering with fewer COVID restrictions allowing some use. It is worth noting the difference in *other activities* in 2021 compared to 2022, the process of setting up the Loch Ness Hub is the main factor here.

Unrestricted Funds – Expenditure: *Fundraising* 2021 saw the return of Parties, some investment in lighting for ‘Light Up the Glen’, and Fireworks (which includes the Public Entertainment Licence valid for 3 years). *Other Activities* includes the Hall costs, the Hall is a by its nature an expensive building to run and maintain and allowances have been made, moving into the next year, for rising energy costs and inflation. Grass cutting expenses have ceased for Blairbeg Park. There were also some Professional/ legal fees and match funding for maintenance projects in 2021 A slight but expected loss £3,879 was made in 2022

Restricted Funds

These are treated as discrete ‘pots’ and include *DTAS CDO FUND, HTSI Wellbeing* (see CDO’s update Point 7) *Scottish Land Fund, Cobb Memorial, Hall Refurbishment, Hall Maintenance, CAP* and *AEDS* (which is being run down).

SC thanked MR for her hard and diligent work with this process. Gordon Findlay (GF) raised the importance of the reserves policy. MR has put considerable effort into this, it is needed to protect Assets and budget for Staff costs if needed, should any unexpected costs arise. Moving forward GURCA will continue to monitor and review the Reserves Policy. The accounts are undergoing the auditing process and along with the Reserves Policy will be available on the OSCR website in due course.

5. Election of Trustees

CW stated that the 3 Member Trustees required to stand down were Susan Clark, Dot MacKenzie and Fiona Urquhart. Only Susan Clark stood for re-election. Mary Tiles and Suzanne Irvine had been nominated. Therefore with 4 vacancies available, no voting was necessary. Susan Clark was re-elected, along with Mary Tiles (present) and Suzanne Irvine (absent) both elected.

The board would like to take this opportunity to thank Fiona and Dot for and their contributions and hard work during their time as Trustees.

GURCA OPEN MEETING MINUTES (Following on from AGM)

6. Community Action Plan (CAP) Update

DL reminded those present that the last Open Meeting had taken place after an Action Plan Pop Up 14th March at the Hall, a further Pop up had taken place on the 9th April at Market on the Green. The Online Survey closed at the end of April and paper copies sent for analysis. The consultant Duncan Bryden (Bryden Associates) had been pleased with engagement and the number of completed surveys compared with other areas. The steering group had continued to meet at least once a month with Duncan and Helen Smith (Rowan Tree Consulting). A draft version of the plan had been produced. The steering group are meeting again in a week's time (28th June) to review the progress.

MR explained Duncan had also met with a number of local people from local businesses, groups and organisations in a series of 1:1s and Focus Groups all of which adds detail and insight beyond the surveys. MR was concerned that the initial draft was a little brief, and that more detail is required; this has been communicated by the steering group who await the next draft. It is also important that the plan adheres to the Brief agreed by the steering group. SC reiterated that one of the successes of the process had been the partnership between GURCA, Soirbheas and GUCC; and that the CAP would provide a wish list for the community going forward. There is also an opportunity to define and communicate better the roles and responsibilities of these 3 groups to the community. Diane Fraser (GUCC) described how this aspect of the CAP and information coming forward would also help with the Statutory processes e.g. the development of a Place Plan.

David Fraser (DF) asked if a summary of the plan would be provided alongside the detailed version to make it accessible and if the plan was on budget – both of these are correct at the time of the meeting.

7. Community Development Officer Update

DL updated on the following:

Website

Earlier in the year Brad Garrison, a GURCA volunteer, worked to secure the website domain and move content across from the old website to the wordpress platform. DL has taken a basic wordpress UDEMY course and has added content, improved the visuals and is updating the site with regular posts. A soft launch of the site took place at the start of April. DL stated that although this was a considerable improvement on what was available previously, there was still work that could be done and thus feedback would be welcome.

DTAS

Funds available as a result of underspend in relation to the CDO appointment had been used to purchase various Items for GURCA, some of which were being used by the Hall. This includes IT such as a projector, Screen and Speakers, this also had helped buy Storage Boxes, kitchen equipment including Pots and Pans and Microwave. These items benefit the hall and

the Projector etc has helped secure bookings from Edinburgh University. DL has also invested in Stationary an Office Printer/Scanner, and Clothing for GURCA including Aprons and Hi-Vis Tabards.

GURCA has been selected by DTAS as a Case study and a 15min film was being made for the DTAS Conference at the beginning of September. A local filmmaker Chris Dell is assisting with this (Chris has worked on Loch Ness Hub films and the Cnocan Burraidh project with Soirbheas). Alice Duthuille (DTAS) and Katie Little (DTAS/Community Shares Scotland) had visited on the 14th and 15th June to take part in filming.

HTSI (Highland Third Sector Interface): Mental Health and Wellbeing Funding

Bite and Blether DL updated that progress was being made with the Lunches and that they were enjoyed by those that attend. The community had heard about these from Posters, Social Media and Word of Mouth. DL had also received phone calls from interested residents outside the GU area. It's still hard to gauge numbers for example it may go from 12 one week, to 2 or 3 the next, however there are a core group of attendees and volunteers. As a result of attendance, storage challenges and the kitchen facilities the majority of these has been soup, however there has been themed events such as Ju-Brew-Lee lunch and 'Solstice Sausage Sizzle up' which have been enjoyed. Spare bread and suitable ingredients have been given to the Food Larder (near Café 82), or passed on to those at the Walking group that follows on a Tuesday afternoon or Laddies night. As a result there is very little waste. Prudent spending means much of this fund remains and DL is looking at other opportunities to engage the community with this, and other events moving forward.

Laddies Night This is proving to be more challenging to set up with attendance low. The feedback is that it is a good idea however getting men to come along is the difficulty. Numbers range between 5 (max) and 0, with 1 or 2 most weeks. Those that come have enjoyed the sessions and in the main are people that have moved here recently. DL has been in discussion with Matt Wallace from the local charity Clarity Walks about the difficulties faced setting up a men's project in this area and low male engagement, and also future collaborative opportunities. DL will attend one of Matt's Men only walks.

There are attendees for both events that have reported loneliness and isolation to have been a significant problem that these events are helping to overcome.

EVENTS

27th May a thank you was held for **Margaret Davidson** on behalf of GURCA and GUCC. DL would like to thank Fraser Campbell and Cobbs for the very generous donation of Cakes for this event. The event was well attended by members from groups and businesses and David Fraser, Susan Clark, Dianne Fraser and Adrian Varwell all spoke.

3rd June 11:30-12:30 Jubilee/Bank Holiday/Community Picnic. DL would like to thank Garry Mackintosh and Andy Lloyd for the work, help and the approach taken – it was agreed that this should be an inclusive event so the BBQ provided by Highland Hog Roasts was free of charge and covered by donations. DL would also like to thank Fiona Macleod and Billy Macleod for their help on the day with opening and maintaining the club room facilities and

toilets, and grounds. Fraser Campbell and Cobbs once again donated a huge variety of over 250 portions of cake. These were enjoyed on the day with left-overs consumed at the Shinty Double header on Saturday 4th June – the community are very grateful to Fraser Campbell and the Cobbs team for their generosity and support. DL estimates that between 12:30 and 14:30 at any one time there were c100 people on the field and over 200 people turned up and enjoyed the fine weather. It is a good example of local groups coming together and we hope this will be the springboard for further events.

Imagining New Futures/ Tourism in Rural Communities Project.

DL applied successfully on behalf of GURCA and the Loch Ness Hub, this is a project funded by the National Lottery and working with the Social Enterprise Academy Scotland. It will provide networking opportunities within our community, the Inverness area and nationally across both Scotland and Wales (where this project is being conducted). This is a free opportunity and DL will be working with the Loch Ness Hub on this.

Grants

Applications had recently been put in for the Hall including an expression of interest (EOI) for the Scottish Government Project with Tier 3 Match funding from Soirbheas.

Applications – Lets do Net Zero Community Buildings (Local Energy Scotland), Garfield Weston and other funds including Gordon and Ena Baxter Foundation will also be submitted.

SC hopes GURCA will be successful for the Regeneration Capital Grant Fund as feedback from the previous two rounds submissions had been positive.

8. Hall Repairs

Aspects of this were covered at the beginning in the Chair's Report. The Large Windows had been replaced with funds from HIE Greening Community Assets Fund, matched with Soirbheas. The Roof was funded by Place Based Funding distributed by Highland Council matched by Soirbheas. GURCA have also provided £5000 match funding.

SC described how the new Windows have made an improvement with regards to the warmth and comfort of the main hall and that installation had gone well under local contractor MC Builders Highland. The Roof project was entering its final phase. Both of these projects are non-abortive and will not need any additional work/adaptation should the wider refurbishment go ahead. This work follows the **Infrastructure** improvement strand of the Business Plan.

The **Economic Growth** strand would see the development of partnerships with local businesses to provide catering/photography/flowers/entertainment etc for weddings. The hall was also picking up bookings for Parties and again these include opportunities for collaboration with local business. Repeat bookings were coming in from groups from outside the area including Trees for life and a research group from Edinburgh University.

The **Wellbeing** strand includes projects GURCA have been developing as well as new bookings coming in for activities such as Yoga, Sound Healing and Pilates. DL thanked

Miranda Service and the Hall team for the positive approach with the Hall Team and noticeboard buddies which was vital to secure these bookings.

Highland Slaters had found a Wedding Photograph and Community Song Book in the rafters near to a Skylight, these had generated a great deal of interest from various groups online including the heritage group and we believe the photo to be of Grace Mackenzie and Billy Harrison's Wedding. It is also an example of the *Heritage* strand aspect and its role in engaging the community here.

There is a need to connect residents with the hall and DL is working with the Hall Committee with a to do list where a 'DIY SOS' approach could help for some of the smaller jobs and take advantage of the momentum post COVID.

Margret Varwell asked about preserving the Hall's Heritage and DL described how a time capsule would be an imaginative project to connect the hall with local children should the wider development go ahead.

CW noted that she is in possession of the Stained Glass from the windows and it is hoped this will be incorporated into the refurbishment as part of the Hall's heritage.

9. Community Land

Woodlands

SC had earlier explained the CRtB Process last Autumn and GURCA's disappointment that the application could not be submitted due to the sale of the land, particularly after the huge amount of work put in to the application. GURCA are in talks with the new owner of the various pockets of woodland regarding options for the Community., Further details of this will be made public if and when appropriate.

Old Shop Site, Blairbeg Park.

SC and Garry Macintosh (Glen Urquhart Shinty Club President) met last week with Gail Matheson Chief Executive Highland Housing Alliance about the potential of this site after plans had been refused for 15 housing units. GUSC are working with GURCA to look into how the site might be used to improve the Club's facilities and enhance Blairbeg Park for other sports and recreational uses.

East Lewiston

The land between Loch Ness Park and East Lewiston. There had been delays in using a *pro bono* solicitor. A new solicitor has been instructed and is reviewing the opportunity for GURCA to take on board a long term lease without any maintenance liabilities.

Drumnadrochit Car Park

SC suggested that it is likely at some point Highland Council (HC) will introduce parking charges and thus this meeting was an opportunity to gauge feedback for potential Community Asset Transfer (CAT). This has been partially investigated as part of CAT process for the Hub. A CAT would give the community control over the parking charges, options for free parking for residents and the opportunity for any profits after maintenance/management to be

used on community projects. DF explained that most residents are more than happy with the *status quo* with no charges and HC maintaining the carpark, but explained the situation in Fort Augustus where charges have been introduced. One of the concerns with HC implementing charges is that any profits would benefit a wider area including Inverness City, hence little or no benefit to Glen Urquhart. GF explained the option could be the community leasing the Cark from HC. It is anticipated that the CAP will raise the issue of parking, in particular free parking.

There were no objections in the meeting for GURCA to approach HC and gauge its plans and intentions for the car park. It is important that the good relationship between GURCA and HC is maintained. Dependent on the outcome of this, the next step would be community consultation to understand its wishes, and to be transparent about the benefits and issues relating to: 1.) HC continued ownership and management, 2.) CAT or 3.) a lease. The approach taken with the CRtB consultation with the woodlands would be a model that could be followed, it is crucial that the community is well informed and supportive of any actions .

10. Playparks

Gordon Watson and his team of Volunteers have done an excellent job with redecorating the East Lewiston playpark in the colours of Glen Urquhart Shinty Club and the feedback for this has been overwhelmingly positive.

The pushchair/wheelchair friendly access Path has gone in at Druimlon and volunteers there have been busy stripping paint, tidying the area and preparing planters (old tyres painted colourfully) and raised beds. It is important to give this park a niche as a quieter option away from the busier one well equipped one at Balmacaan Road/Blairbeg Park. An application will be put into the council, this has been discussed in principal with Soirbheas who are open to some match funding (Tier 1) should the requested equipment (slide and seat suitable for a disabled child on the swing set) cost more than expected. It is crucial that any play equipment is installed by the Council as they are then responsible for Health and Safety with this equipment and any liability.

11. Cnocan Burraidh

DF suggested that £2000 residual funds should be available to help the maintenance process for the Mausoleum (transferred from GUCC to GURCA). GURCA will fund maintenance as it does for the John Cobb memorial. DF is very grateful to all those that have supported this project along the way.

12. GURCA/Hall Stall and the Highland Games.

A joint GURCA/Hall Stand at the Games would help both information sharing and with fundraising – Volunteers will be sought to help with this. DL will confirm with Mike Cameron at the Highland Games.

13. AOB

Minutes for the Open Meeting on 14th March were proposed by Carolyn Wilson and Seconded by Miranda Service – these are available on the GURCA website.

GURCA Constitution – Carolyn explained that at the last GURCA Trustee’s meeting it was agreed that a proposal be put to members to amend the constitution to increase the maximum number of Co-opted trustees from 2 to 5.

This flexibility would allow for Trustees with specific skills and experience to be co-opted by the Board (e.g. for future projects such as the halls redevelopment). The proposal had been put to all members in advance of the meeting, and 7 responses in favour received. A further vote was held in the meeting and the proposal was unanimously approved.

Noticeboards – Christine Hart raised the condition of some of these. DL mentioned the intention to collaborate where possible with the Men’s shed on this as they are begin to meet again. Russell Fraser is looking at options for the board in the Village car park.

Adrian Varwell thanked all those involved with GURCA for the work they do in the Community.

Next Open Meeting is scheduled for Monday 12th September at Glen Urquhart Public Hall.