

GLENURQUHART RURAL COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

MONDAY 21st JUNE 2021

Annual General Meeting

Present: Susan Clark (SC) Chair, Carolyn Wilson (CW) Secretary, Monique Riddle (Treasurer), Gordon Findlay, Miranda Service, Dot MacKenzie, Jan Bell, Alan Bell, Fraser Mackenzie, Anne Macdonald, Ron Fraser, Pam Lucas, Dianne Fraser, Sandra Bardwell, Christine Hart, Andy Lloyd, Garry Macintosh, Erik Trelfer and Gordon Watson

Susan Clark (SC) welcomed everyone and thanked them for complying with the rules on social distancing, hand sanitizing and mask wearing, thereby allowing the meeting to take place 'live' – the first such meeting since Covid-19 restrictions had been imposed.

1. Previous minutes and matters arising:

The minutes of the AGM held on 14th September 2020 were approved – proposed Gordon Findlay and seconded Anne Macdonald. There were no matters arising.

2. Chair's Report:

SC gave the following report:

“2021 was certainly a year to remember for our Community – the good and the bad. But it was also a year of huge achievement for our community, despite COVID. It has been a year of collaboration and working together and I'm sure that you will sense this through the remainder of my report.

We have also developed new skills over the last year. We switched our meetings to Zoom and also adopted Mailchimp to send out regular membership newsletters, updates and carry out online consultation/voting.

Membership increased over the year, driven in part by the Loch Ness Hub Community Share offer and the vote on Blairbeg Park and now sits at 326 members.

COVID – Community Resilience

Over the past year GURCA has been part of the local Community Resilience team, working with Soirbheas and the Community Councils for Glen Urquhart and Strathglass and the Glen Urquhart Care & Childcare Centre. As many will be aware a Community Helpline was set up and managed by GCP, a huge volunteer network was established and community larders established. GURCA acted as the anchor organisation to distribute funds which were applied for to help the community and over £23k was disbursed by GURCA to various organisations and individuals to help with the COVID crisis. As a result of lessons learned from this we are now in the process of updating the Community Resilience/Emergency plan. And will convene a meeting of all partner organisations soon.

Loch Ness Hub

Who remembers the TIC? I'm sure that we have sent this acronym to the confines of history and now affectionately refer to the building in the car park as the Loch Ness Hub or "Hub". GURCA is the anchor shareholder for the Loch Ness Hub and instrumental in its creation and so it is right that I mention some of the achievements over the past year but in future this will be done at the Loch Ness Hub AGMs and through their newsletters. Shareholders will get this information.

It is right that we also remember the intent behind this, which was to create a social enterprise with profits being passed back to GURCA to invest in community projects. This time last year we were dealt the COVID blow, which threatened our aspirations and delayed progress, but over the past year the following has happened through the hard work of the Loch Ness Hub Team and GURCA, with assistance from Soirbheas:

- Community share offer raised the target £110k in just 4 weeks demonstrating the huge community support this project has – you put your money into it
- The building transferred to GURCA under the Community Asset Transfer process, with funding from the Scottish Land Fund and Soirbheas
- Loch Ness Hub purchased Loch Ness Travel
- Grants from SSE, Local Energy Scotland, Soirbheas and HIE allowed a full refurbishment of the building including new toilets, new windows, new air source heat pumps heating system, solar panels, a motorhome waste disposal point and electric bikes for the community to trial, and later to be hired out to the public
- It's now over to the Loch Ness Hub Board and their Manager (Russell Fraser) to run the business day to day along with the baggage transfer business and the toilets

As anchor shareholder, GURCA has 3 of its current Trustees as Board members of Loch Ness Hub – they are Gordon Findlay, Carolyn Wilson and Neil Barron and my thanks go to them for the dual roles they play and the effort they have put into this project, along with the other Loch Ness Hub Board members and staff. Finally, I must mention Soirbheas who were not only a funder for the project but provided us with a valuable resource to assist with elements of the project, which was most welcome given the voluntary nature of everything we do.

Community Action Plan

A partnership has been formed between Glen Urquhart Community Council, GURCA and Soirbheas and a Steering Group now set up, to deliver both a Community Action Plan and a Place Plan. The Community Action Plan will be a key element of helping us attract funding for the various things you tell us you want to see delivered. Place plans will be an integral part of the next Local Development Plan allowing us, the community, to help shape and inform developments throughout Glen Urquhart as part of the planning process.

We are awaiting confirmation of funding which will allow us to appoint an independent consultant to carry out the community consultation we need to create this vitally important piece of work. Your views are crucial in this and we urge you to tell us what you think the vision for Glen Urquhart should be over the next 20 years. This can include what leisure and recreational facilities you would like to see, what activities, clubs and groups you would like to see run, how we can improve mental health and well being in our community, what areas we should protect from development, where you would like to see path networks etc. Please, please, please get involved in helping us shape our Community's future when we announce the consultation events later in the year.

Glenurquhart Public Hall

We have not forgotten about the hall refurbishment project. Last year was a particularly challenging time for funders with many funds being diverted to COVID and recovery. However, we have used that time to have another look at the Business Plan and operating model for the Hall and at time of writing are about to start approaching funders. The hall has followed a traditional village hall model until now, with individuals and clubs booking the hall for use, but we have not actively sought to utilise the spare capacity the hall has to run activities that people tell us they would like. So, we have a 4 point focus to the business plan, as follows:

Well being – utilising the hall to run activities for different groups within our community to help mental health and well being and tackle loneliness and isolation

Economic development – working with local businesses to use the hall much more effectively for functions, meetings etc and creating partnerships for this

Heritage – telling the story of the hall, and linking this to the development of Glen Urquhart, as well as protecting the historic features of the building.

Infrastructure – the actual refurbishment of the hall.

Blairbeg Park

Many people may not realise that GURCA owns Blairbeg Park and the Village Green along with the Hall and the Hub. Glen Urquhart Shinty Club approached GURCA last year with a view to entering into a long term lease of Blairbeg Park. This will allow them to access funding by having secure tenure which at present is not available to them. GURCA members were consulted over this proposal and voted overwhelmingly in favour of pursuing the lease. Our members were concerned that access to Blairbeg Park should still be available for other community groups and the Glen Urquhart Highland Games - provision for this is being made in the lease documents. These documents are currently being drafted and we hope that this new arrangement will be in place by midsummer.

Market on the Green

This has been a huge success and now appears to be as much a fixture as the fireworks and parties. Thank you to all who help to organise this and the traders.

This has come back with a bang in 2021 and is now running twice a month due to demand from Traders.

Other Projects & Activities

It has not been possible over the past year to run the children's parties and Fireworks events – decisions on these will be made as COVID rules relax. We are delighted at the initiative taken at Christmas time by a group of volunteers with the Light up the Glen Parade. GURCA agreed to hold the funds for this and we know that they are intending to run a similar event this year.

We are increasingly receiving requests for help with other projects and ideas that members of the community have. GURCA cannot pursue them all and this is why a Community Action Plan is so important – it will help us prioritise what we can work on. However, we are always willing to try and support individuals and other groups who have ideas – please get in touch and we will see what advice and guidance we can help you with.

Trustees

We were delighted to gain two new Trustees this year. Monique Riddle from Bunloit offered to take up the role of Treasurer for us after Neil Barron transferred all his effort to Treasurer for Loch Ness Hub, and Dot MacKenzie joined as a Board member following our last AGM.

Community Development Officer

During April we were presented with the opportunity to apply for funding which would enable us to employ a member of staff (Community Development Officer) to help build the capacity of GURCA and deliver some of the projects on our plate. This would take a huge amount of pressure off the Trustees who work tremendously hard in a voluntary capacity. We should hear at the end of the month if we have been successful in this application which would fund a 3 year post.

Volunteers & Diversity

All of these things only happen because of the hard work of a large number of unpaid volunteers. If you are interested in getting involved in something in the community, please do get in touch, even just to see what you might be able to help with. You don't need to become a Trustee but volunteering your help with something is a great way to get involved in a small way.

3. Financial report:

Monique Riddle talked through the accounts. A summary of the accounts is attached as Appendix A. The accounts are due to be audited within the next month, and if there are any issues arising from this process, this will be advised to members.

Treasurer's Report

- GURCA Finances running from 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021
 - Includes Blairbeg Hall finances

- This year significantly influenced by COVID, with the first Lockdown a feature of the first quarter, followed by a summer of restrictions, and then lockdowns 2 and 3 the feature of the rest of the financial year
- This situation influenced our usual fundraising activities, as we were unable to hold events like the Games stall, Markets on the Green, Fireworks, Children's Parties etc. The Hall was used only for a limited period, which affected rental income.
- As a result the finances this year took a very different turn to previous years due to COVID and another event I will come to later. In terms of COVID;
 - GURCA oversaw the administration of the HIE Supporting Communities Grant. This is mentioned in the financial report in both our income and expenditure as the Community COVID Fund. During the period of mid-March to end of September this fund covered a myriad of costs such as the support and provision of meals, fuel and general support to the vulnerable, provision of PPE and sanitisers, laptops etc. At the closure point at the end September, the residual funds were handed back to Highland Council, hence the exact income and expenditure balancing amounts.
 - The Hall rental income was affected by lack of use, however was enhanced by a COVID small business grant as well as a grant from Soirbheas. Hence the healthy fundraising income despite COVID.
 - The second significant feature of this Financial Year saw GURCA launch the Loch Ness Hub and the Community Share Offer. This, along with grant income, provided the requisite income to enable the community to purchase the Tourist Information Centre and meet the set up costs for the newly launched Loch Ness Hub business. Loch Ness Hub has subsequently been set-up as a separate enterprise with its own Board, and accounts. As a result these GURCA accounts reflect everything associated with the creation of the LNH as transient finances with the share-offer and associated grant income shown together with the exact balance moving across to the LNH as expenditure. The detail of this figure will be presented as part of the Loch Ness Hub accounts to their members, as well as to OSCR.
 - The purchase of the Tourist Information Centre was made possible by grants from Scottish Land Fund, and Soirbheas, and as this building will be owned by GURCA, and is listed as part of our assets in the OSCR return. This income and expenditure is listed here as part of GURCA's accounts. GURCA also holds the Anchor Share in the LNH business.
- The remainder of the accounts reflect the usual activities that did take place:
 - The Bulletin was published as usual (thanks as always to Fraser Mackenzie) and provided fundraising income.
 - This year also saw activities take place during the lead up to Christmas with Light Up the Glen. Dot MacKenzie led fundraising under this banner and we now have some funds to spend to enhance the village lighting during Christmas this coming year.

- On the expenditure front, the Hall heating, lighting and cleaning bills had to be paid, and the grass-cutting costs associated with Blairbeg Park during the summer were incurred.
- The final part of the financial summary reflects our restricted funds;
 - The Cobb Memorial where we administer the funds and activities associated with the maintenance of the Memorial. Once again due to poor interest rates, we spend more on its annual maintenance than we get on interest of the £5000 invested for this purpose.
 - There is the aspiration to develop Blairbeg Hall, and grant income was obtained to progress this activity, together with expenditure associated with legal fees. These activities will gather momentum during the coming year.
 - There are funds available for Community Action Planning (CAP) as well as funds associated with the community owned defibrillators (AED) as part of our restricted funds.
- Finally, you will see the land and building assets owned by GURCA on behalf of the community.

This year, your Trustees have shown themselves to be particularly resourceful when it comes to obtaining grant funding, and their sights are set in continuing this trend which will be explored later during the Open Meeting.

4. Election of Trustees:

In accordance with the Association's constitution, three of the current Trustees were required to stand down, although they were eligible to be re-elected. The three standing down were Carolyn Wilson, Gordon Watson and Anne Macdonald. Carolyn and Gordon had indicated willingness to be re-elected, but Anne Macdonald had confirmed her intent to stand down. In addition, another Trustee, Neil Barron, had advised the Board that he wished to stand down at the AGM.

This left a total of four Trustee vacancies. In addition to Carolyn and Gordon, nominations for two new Trustees had been received:

Carolyn Wilson had nominated Natalie Smith and Dot MacKenzie had nominated Fiona Macdonald. Both had indicated their agreement to standing for nomination.

The meeting unanimously returned the four above named as Trustees.

The full list of Trustees, along with the other bodies they represent, for the coming year is:

Susan Clark (Games Committee)

Carolyn Wilson (Hall, Loch Ness Hub, Community First Responders)

Monique Riddle

Fraser Mackenzie (Shinty Club)

Gordon Watson (Hall)

Fiona Urquhart (Community Council)

Gordon Findlay (Loch Ness Hub)

Dot MacKenzie

Natalie Smith

Fiona Macdonald

Co-opted Trustees are Councillor Margaret Davidson and Councillor David Fraser

5. Any other business:

Dot MacKenzie raised the issue of affordable housing and suggested a meeting should be arranged to discuss this. SC suggested that initially Dot should speak with herself and Dianne Fraser, Chair of Glenurquhart Community Council.