

# **Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association**

## **GURCA OPEN MEETING MINUTES**



**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> September 2023 7:00pm**

### **Glenurquhart Public Hall**

**Present:** Susan Griffin (SG) Chair, Carolyn Wilson (CW) Secretary, Monique Riddle (MR) Treasurer, Anne Clark Community Development Officer, Gordon Watson, Mary Tiles, Gordon Findlay, Dick Beach, David Clark, Barbara Shaw, Margaret and Adrian Varwell, Jan Bell, Martina Preece, Lorraine Young, Graham Fraser, Morag Fraser, Frances Lawrence, Isobel Crozier, Andy Griffin, Mike Birkby, John Marshall, Miranda Service, Neville Rigby, Jane Frere and Craig Turner

**Apologies:** Fraser Mackenzie and Peter Bellew.

#### **1. Welcome**

Susan Griffin (SG) opened the AGM by welcoming all those present, and introducing those Trustees who were present. She introduced Anne Clark, who is the newly appointed Community Development Officer for GURCA.

#### **2. Minutes and Matters Arising**

Carolyn Wilson (CW) summarised the minutes from the meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2023. It was noted that these would be made available online [www.gurca.co.uk](http://www.gurca.co.uk). These were proposed by Martina Preece and seconded by Gordon Watson. There were no matters arising not covered by the agenda.

#### **3. Community Action Plan (CAP)**

SG advised the meeting that many of the priority issues for GURCA from the CAP would be covered by the meeting agenda. The next Joint Liaison Meeting (GURCA / Loch Ness Hub / Soirbheas and Glenurquhart Community Council) to review progress against actions would be held in November. An update of progress would therefore be provided at the next Open meeting.

#### **4. Blairbeg Community Woodland**

The purchase of the woodland was finally concluded by August. Gordon Watson said the next steps would be to consult and agree on what we want to do with the woodland. He is putting together a draft plan. Craigmony Woodland Association has

agreed to support us with the maintenance and upkeep of the woodland and is working with him on the draft plan. Disc golf has been trialled for several months now in one of the parcels of woodland, and Patrick Kipfilmer will provide an assessment of the level of use this has seen. However, the main aim is to maintain the woodland, improve the pathways through it, and perhaps provide a few seating areas and interpretation boards. SG expressed her thanks to Gordon and Dan Light for the work that had gone into concluding this purchase.

## **5. Other Community Land updates**

### **5.1 Abriachan Forest Trust**

An information and consultation session had been held immediately prior to this meeting, to explain the details of a potential partnership between GURCA and the Abriachan Forest Trust (AFT). There is the opportunity to purchase 3 parcels of land close to the existing AFT boundary.

Assuming the consultation process confirms community support for this, the aim is to submit a bid to the Scottish Land Fund by May 2024

### **5.2 Glenurquhart Men's Shed**

Community Consultation regarding the proposed move to the former forestry buildings at Balnain has concluded, and we are about to submit a Stage 1 application to Scottish Land Fund. At the same time, the Community Asset Transfer request will be made to Forest and Land Scotland. David Ferguson, of the Mens Shed, has been co-opted as a GURCA Trustee to lead this project.

Martina Preece asked how long the process might take. SG said that assuming the submissions were made by the end of September, it would then take the team up to 6 months to do the necessary work to be able to make a Stage 2 submission to the Land Fund. Forest and land Scotland would have up to 6 months to consider our Asset Transfer request, and all the supporting documentation, and respond.

Dick Beach advised the meeting that Mens Shed are still actively seeking new members, who would be made most welcome.

5.3 Old Shop Site, Blairbeg Park – SG confirmed that GURCA continues to work with the Shinty Club on the potential purchase of this site. We have made a referral to the Scottish Land Fund for Stage 1 funding.

## **6. Wellbeing and mental health initiatives**

Monique Riddle (MR) advised the meeting that GURCA is looking to expand / enhance the activities targeting mental health and wellbeing that it currently funds. Existing activities include Bite n Blether and Hall of Games. With Anne, our new CDO, now in place, we hope to explore the development of an app to allow people easily to find out about all the activities and events that are happening in our community.

Our longer term strategic aim will be to work with all the relevant groups to gain a better understanding of requirements for Glen Urquhart, and work together to try and deliver solutions. Meanwhile, if members have any suggestions of activities or events that might be developed as part of this initiative, please pass these on to any of the Trustees

## **7. Glenurquhart Public Hall**

SG gave an update on funding applications. We have an Expression of Interest submitted (again!) to Highland Council for the Regeneration Fund, and we expect to hear within the next few weeks whether our application will proceed to the next stage.

One of the CDO's key tasks will be to identify and explore other funding streams to support our aspiration to remodel and renovate the hall.

Gordon Watson gave an update on general hall issues, and said that hall usage was buoyant, with rentals back to pre Covid levels. Most of the jobs that could be tackled by volunteers have now been done,

## **8. Post Office**

SG confirmed that further to the community consultation led by GURCA last year about options for Post Office services, various local retailers had been asked whether they would have an interest in taking on this service.

The pharmacy has been in discussion with The Post office and have now applied to take over the service. The Post Office ran a consultation on this (advised to GURCA members by email).

There were a number of concerns raised by attendees about the potential move. Isobel Crozier was concerned about confidentiality issues, and Neville Rigby felt that the existing pharmacy had insufficient space and staffing to be able to deliver this service efficiently.

SG reminded the meeting that the final decision on this was nothing to do with GURCA. GURCA had simply followed up on the outcome of the community consultation by making other retailers aware of the impending cessation of Post Office services in Drumnadrochit, unless an alternative outlet could be found.

## **9. Upcoming events**

- The next litter pick will be Friday September 22<sup>nd</sup>, meet 4 pm at the Balmacaan playpark car park.
- GURCA will again support Children's Halloween and Christmas parties this year

- Arrangements are in place for the community bonfire on November 4<sup>th</sup> (Saturday). If anybody is willing to help collect donations from the crowd on the night, please contact Miranda Service [mirandaservice@gmail.com](mailto:mirandaservice@gmail.com). Miranda asked whether any competent first aiders / FRU members might be available on the night. CW agreed to follow up with the FRU team
- Light up the Glen – GURCA will again support this event
- Christmas Trees – SG advised the meeting that we were awaiting confirmation that a local supplier had agreed to donate trees this year for Drumnadrochit green and Balnain.
- Ceilidh 7<sup>th</sup> October – the Mad Ferret Band will be playing at Glenurquhart Public Hall and it was hoped that there would be another good audience for this event. Posters will be circulated as soon as available.

## 10. AOB

- **Car park, and toilet donations** – Dick Beach asked whether the donations to the toilets had fallen as feared, following introduction of ‘invitation to pay’ charges at the car park. CW said Loch Ness Hub continue to monitor this. Donations have fallen, but not catastrophically, since the car park charges began. However, it is not known how much donations would have actually risen (they did in the early part of the season) without the parking charges.
- **Community Woodland Association** – Gordon Watson said the CWA was always looking for new volunteers, to undertake a range of jobs (some less demanding than others). The group meets on the first Saturday of the month. For more information contact Gordon [goandmo@btinternet.com](mailto:goandmo@btinternet.com)
- **Historic Environment Scotland Urquhart Castle** – Gordon Findlay advised that the Liaison Group including HES, GURCA and Loch Ness Hub, continues to meet. HES are starting to prepare for developing the Monument Improvement Plan for the castle, and it is likely that accessibility issues will feature strongly in this.
- **Riverwoods consultation** – On behalf of GURCA, Gordon Watson is assisting a local consultancy – Deciding Matters – who are trying to gather information to facilitate the organisation of community nature projects. He asked members to help, if possible, by completing a questionnaire (or even, part completing it!) that will be sent out this week by GURCA’s secretary, CW.

Next Open Meeting is scheduled for Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024, 7pm at Glen Urquhart Public Hall.