

CHAIR'S REPORT – LAGGAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL AGM – JUNE 2022

MEETINGS

The Community Council has “met” 9 times since the last AGM in June 2021 with the first 3 meetings held via ZOOM and the last 6 held in person. Unfortunately the council was not able to undertake “hybrid” meetings technically and this will be explored further for the upcoming winter months of 2022/23. Thanks are due to all members of the CC for their efforts over the past year to ensure that Community wide issues are progressed in an open and transparent manner. During the past year, we have been equally grateful for the support and views of the community, our area Highland Councillors and Ward Management. We wish Ward Manager, Liz Cowie, best wishes for her retirement and welcome a new Highland Councillor – Russell Jones – following recent Highland Council Elections. The Community Council routinely reviews a number of statutory items as noted below:

PLANNING/LICENSING Applications: The CC exercises its statutory right to review, and where appropriate, respond to all planning & licensing applications. In the past year, there were a number of residential planning applications – all of which were broadly supportable. During the year, the community council passed a resolution on how it should treat any retrospective planning applications submitted – agreeing to object to any such retrospective proposals to ensure time for effective community engagement and appropriate discussions with HC Area Planning representatives if the application was particularly sensitive. The CC also agreed in principle that the vast majority of planning applications should be capable of being determined by HC planning officials. During the year, one of the outstanding wind-farm planning applications within our boundary – the Glenshero Wind Farm had planning permission refused by the Scottish Government. One for Cloiche (SSE) remains outstanding as does a potential application by SSE Networks to extend the existing Melgarve Substation footprint. We also await information from Jahama Highland Estates (JHE) – owners of the Glenshero Estate - for their Forestry Management Plans in the coming years.

ROADS/TRANSPORT LINKS - This continues to be the topic, which exercises and frustrates members of the community most during the year – with speed, road safety, road surfaces and “local connections” areas of most frustration. We continue to be in contact with BEAR and Transport Scotland on maintenance and trunk road improvement matters in our area. A series of road repairs and closures along the length of the A86 in our area has been undertaken throughout the past year and is expected in the summer months of 2022. Highland Council roads through Balgowan and Glentruim have had some significant resurfacing improvements in the past 12 months and we await discussions with HC on pavement improvements in Laggan Village itself. In the coming months we intend to lobby our new group of Highland Councillors for public transport connecting Laggan to the rest of Badenoch and Strathspey and further afield – something which is long overdue.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION & COMMUNICATION

There has been little progress in the 6 priority projects with COVID restrictions playing their part. The CC has now been encouraged by SSE – a provider of a significant source of Community Benefit funds (see below) – to undertake a new Consultation which would both update on existing projects but also potentially create new priorities and re-prioritise existing projects. The CC has agreed that this should be undertaken, if feasible, in September 2022.

Another question arising earlier this year (2022) from Highland Council was one of a **Community Emergency Resilience Plan** for Laggan. Since its formation in 2018, the community council has not been in a position to create such a response plan, however events of the winter months of 2021-22 with significant power outages throughout our area, means that such a plan should be established. A number of our community groups will be needed to establish such a plan

The “Connecting Laggan” paths project proposing possible routes to connect all the hamlets of Laggan safely, by taking walkers and cyclists off the main trunk roads through our area, should report in the summer of 2022. Laggan Community Housing Ltd is undertaking a feasibility study to provide additional affordable properties in Laggan Village in the present picnic site area.

The publication of Laggan Matters continued during the year and we are enormously grateful to our current editors Jill Warner and Amanda Gallagher for their time and effort in this task. Thanks also to Robyn Woolston who stepped aside owing to work pressures, for her original creative skills in the initial design and publication. This newsletter is for the community and articles, large and small, are always welcomed by the editors. We have much appreciated all the contributions from the community to create such newsworthy editions. All the editions can be seen on the www.laggan.com website.

SSE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND – The Laggan Community continues to be a beneficiary of funds from the SSE Stronelairg Community Investment fund. This fund became operational in early 2019 (year 1) for a period of 25 years, and a local advisory panel was established to operate the fund under SSEs guidance for a period of 3 years (to April 2022). Because of COVID restrictions, it has been agreed that the present panel arrangements will continue until June 2023 when new guidelines for managing the fund for the next 22 years are to be agreed in the community with SSE. Discussions on how to utilise the fund from mid 2023 onwards will be held across all our community groups later in 2022. 4 members of the community continue to volunteer to administer the local Micro Grant process (for grants <£500), and participate in a Large Grants panel process for grants up to £10,000. A separate report on recipients of all grants, since inception, is available at www.laggan.com however the most significant recent grant award was to Laggans Helping Hands to acquire and install 4 new Automatic Emergency Defibrillators at certain facilities throughout the Laggan Community.

COVID 19 – It would also be appropriate to record thanks to the many local volunteers who have supported members of the community in need of assistance during the COVID 19 restrictions.

FINALLY – our thanks to everyone in the community who have supported the Community Council at its meetings as well as helping to progress a number of community projects.

COLIN S. MORGAN

CHAIR, LAGGAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL.

For Adoption by Community Council at its AGM on 20th JUNE 2022.