

## **CHAIR'S REPORT – LAGGAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL AGM – JUNE 2025**

MEETINGS – The Community Council has met 8 times since the last AGM in June 2024, with thanks to all members of the CC for their efforts in progressing community matters.

Over the last 12 months we have lost one council member, Mhairi Gallagher, who moved out of the area, our thanks go to Mhairi for the work she did for us. This departure leaves us with 7 full members and 1 associate member all of whom continue to review the required statutory items at each meeting. We continue to be supported by the community, our area Highland Councillors and Ward Managers.

LICENCING – In December 24 the CC applied for, and were granted, a small fund lottery licence on behalf of the community to accommodate a community raffle which was held. The law is strict on certain types and formats of raffles or lotteries and we would ask that if you intend to hold such an event that you check with us for appropriate guidance.

PLANNING – The CC continues to be asked to view/comment on planning applications of varying types. We are asked to consider a wide variety of planning applications, the larger applications taking up significant time and effort from the community council and I would like to thank the CC members for giving their time and effort in these often complex matters.

The pumped hydro scheme at Loch an H'Earba was granted permission and as such an application has been made for a substation (Coire Mashie) to be constructed. SSEN-T have hosted a community consultation event at the village hall which was very well attended by residents who posed several very pertinent questions. Our talks, as a community, with SSEN-T are ongoing and the wider community will be continuously kept updated by us.

ROADS/TRANSPORT LINKS – Our roads, A86 and A889, are scheduled for ongoing maintenance works, although they are not deemed to be in need of any upgrade. We will continue to press BEAR and Transport Scotland in this regard as the roads remain wholly unsuitable, especially when considering the likelihood of vastly increased traffic volume with the onset of the proposed works by SSEN-T and the ultimate developer of the Loch an Earba project.

Our updated bus service has been running successfully for a year and after much campaigning to have a bus shelter installed we now have one. Not only will it afford our students a safer and drier place to wait for their school bus but it's the first shelter to be installed in the Highlands with a sedum roof. We will keep up the pressure to have a speed reduction and enhanced safety features to further safeguard the students and other bus users.

COMMUNITY ASSETS – Church – The church, officially closed at the end of 2024, was purchased by a community group with assistance from Ardverikie Estate and an anonymous donor. Although no longer under the remit of the Church of Scotland Diocese, our church, thankfully, remains a church. Rev. Robert Brookes hosted a wonderful carol service and an impromptu nativity involving the carollers young and old. The Rev. still officiates at many services at the church, most recently a local wedding ceremony.

The Public Toilet – Has remained open with the kind assistance from The Highland Council, The church of Newtonmore and Laggan, the Community Council and agreement from SSE Grants.

School – The school at Gergask has now been closed for some time. We have no new information regarding the future of the building or the grounds to offer at this time. We will keep the community updated with any information that we receive.

Picnic Site and Play Park – Work in the park is still carried out by local volunteers from the community and some help has been forthcoming from pupils of Kingussie High School. The village planters have

been refilled and we hope to have a colourful show throughout the summer months. The park itself is currently undergoing a consultation process which may well give it the boost it needs. We look forward to seeing the proposals.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION & COMMUNICATION - We continue to use a Local Community Action Plan, which can be viewed on the [www.laggan.com](http://www.laggan.com) website.

The discontinued Laggan Paths project has been reopened with the assistance of Laggan Forest Trust and the CNPA. Not only will the project be looking at connecting the hamlets of Laggan but will look to refurbish the paths around Balgowan woods and our own playpark area. This is an ongoing project and your opinions will be taken on board.

Laggan Matters our local newsletter continues to be distributed, thanks to everyone involved and thanks to everyone who has submitted articles for inclusion. Keep them coming please.

SSE COMMUNITY INVESTMENT FUND – Last year we told you that we were looking into setting up a Community Development Trust. We have been actively working towards this and are almost at the point where we can take the next huge step forward to achieve this for the community. This will be our vehicle to manage the current SSE windfarm fund and also any other funding we may receive going forward. Currently, however, our fund is still managed by SSE and the sitting panel who would like me to remind you about the student grants that will be available to anyone in higher education. Awards of £500 per student per year will be available. Further information is available from Amanda Gallagher ([secretarylcc@laggan.com](mailto:secretarylcc@laggan.com)). The overall fund stands at £412k and applications for project funding are welcomed.

Last few asides:

- This year the community came together over the proposals from the Spey Catchment Initiative Group and stood as one in opposition. As a result, these proposals were quashed but further talks with individual landowners were continued with a view to assisting in flood mitigation issues.
- Our area has also seen the release of beavers and wildcats, both of which are closely monitored.
- Christmas time brought the community together. There was a Christmas party held for the children in the village hall, many thanks to F Grant for organising this, and we were gifted 2 large trees from Ardverikie. With our new lights and a bevy of smaller trees decorated by the local children a switching on event was hosted by the Coffee Bothy. Our thanks to them for their hospitality.
- An “after dark club” was started for the children which ran between October and March and allowed the children to get together for play and activities after school in the village hall. The intention is to restart the club in October this year and that it will be run by the parents.

In closing I would like to thank our community and the members of the Community Council for their support at our scheduled meetings.

As required by statute I will demit as Chair of the Community Council at the AGM.

Karen Thew. Chair, Laggan Community Council.