



CHAIR'S REPORT TO ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING – 30 NOVEMBER 2016

The purpose of the Chair's Report is to quickly review the past year of the Trust. I hope you feel you've been kept informed from our published minutes, regular bulletins and have been reading the Stratherrick & Foyers News. On top of all that throughout the year we've kept the website filled with as much information as possible and I hope you visit it often.

It's been a busy year for the Trust. Membership remains steady and of course we always encourage more residents to join. The more members we have, the better informed our whole community will be.

With the larger payments from our funders starting to come in, we hope we've already started to make a difference to the community. Our accounts have been available to read on our website but Frank will go through the salient points shortly and you can ask him questions later.

We began the year by awarding the largest grant the Trust has ever given. We awarded Boleskine Community Care £60,000 to give them the security they needed to begin their negotiations to lease their property in Foyers. The grant also permits them to pay for the services of their Care Manager, Julie, and she has clearly become a great asset to them.

In February, following financial advice, the Board made its first long-term investments. Frank will be able to answer any questions you might have as part of his financial review but suffice to say, these investments are the Trust's pension pot for this community's future. Investments will ensure the community has assets available to it long after the wind farm and hydro scheme payments have ended.

You will recall in March that we held a community consultation day at the Village Hall with exhibits on various proposals. Those exhibitions included ideas for improvements to the Foyers Bay area and ideas for the land adjacent to Riverside in Foyers. We also invited several other local groups to exhibit and overall it was a very successful day.

Also in March months of negotiations finally reached a successful conclusion when the Trust completed the purchase of the Riverside field in Foyers. I'll come back to the field again later but in March we simply celebrated the acquisition. An invitation for groups to come forward with ideas was subsequently published in the Stratherrick & Foyers News.

It seems quite a while ago but, also in March, we released Issue 1 of the Stratherrick & Foyers News. Issue 2 followed in June and Issue 3 in September. In the next few weeks our Comms Team will be publishing Issue 4. You might recall that I said last year we'd just try this as a pilot for a year, but we've had nothing but positive responses from the community so I hope you agree that we should continue with the publication. We're beginning to get more and more articles from individuals and groups. I hope you'll bear with us however as Issue 4 might look slightly less, shall we say "professional" than previous issues but there is a reason for that which I'll come onto later.

In early summer we started up the Lightbulb Scheme. Hopefully you all benefitted from the free lightbulbs provided in conjunction with City Electricals in Inverness. Each household was eligible for a maximum of 20 low energy lightbulbs. We originally set the deadline for applications as the end of August but the Scheme was so popular we actually extended it twice before finally closing the scheme for the last time on

31 October 2016. By that time 164 households had benefitted from the Scheme, not only helping them to reduce their carbon emissions but saving themselves a few pounds into the bargain!

This year we've started looking at 3 large projects organised by the Trust itself. We started looking at options for broadband. In the summer we distributed a questionnaire around every household asking for information on current levels of broadband service. We received an excellent response and the information gathered is helping the Trust to look at various options for improving broadband in our area. Over the year you may also have seen several national and regional announcements about broadband and 4G, so the options available to the Trust have changed throughout the year, but we are still working to find the best solution for everyone and we hope to make some progress soon.

We then have our proposals for Foyers Bay. A team of directors and community volunteers have been meeting regularly to work together to draw up plans for improvements to the Bay area. If you've been down to the Lochside recently you'll see that the disused fish farm has finally been cleared and it is intended that the site will form part of the Trust's scheme. Discussions are continuing with SSE about acquiring the land. As with every project, while there's been a few hiccups along the way, the project is beginning to come together and take shape. I'd like to thank those directors and volunteers for their continuing assistance to bring the project about.

We also have plans for the Riverside field. In October the Trust met with representatives of community groups to find out what they wanted to see happen on the land. Ideas were discussed and since that meeting an Initial Briefing has been submitted to local architects for quotations. We are proposing to submit an application to the Big Lottery's Investing in Ideas Fund to help with those initial professional costs. As soon as we have some plans available, they will be distributed to groups and made available for public consultation.

If all that wasn't enough, throughout the year directors have been kept busy assessing grant applications for our grant meetings. The last grant meeting for this year is next week on 7 December when the Trust will be considering 11 grant applications and the number of applications is increasing! I am very pleased to say that this year we've awarded grants totalling around £100,000! A few examples of what we've helped fund:

- Foyers Primary School with a scheme to hire a minibus for several weeks so they could attend more extra-curricular school activities. The minibus was available to both Foyers and Stratherrick primary schools.
- Foyers Fire Crews for the Community Fireworks Display, which was hugely successful again this year. Thanks to the Fire Crew for their time and effort putting on this excellent event and to Donald & Lynne Forbes for hosting the event.
- Community Council to buy 3 defibrillators for our area. I and several others recently attended a very interesting training session on Resuscitation and how to use the defibrillators. I believe the Community Council will be arranging more sessions in the near future and I encourage everyone to book yourself onto a session. It was very enlightening ... and I promise the defibrillators aren't as scary or as difficult to use as you might think!
- BCC, Rainbows Brownies & Guides, and Seniors Lunch Club to name but a few.

We also award student grants, sporting grants and energy saving grants.

So that's what we've done this year!

Now we look forward to 2017 ... We will continue to work on our projects ... we'll work on resolving the broadband issues, hopefully get the Riverside field development started and the Bay project up and running ... and of course we'll still consider grants applications, publish the Stratherrick & Foyers News and keep members and the community fully informed on anything of community interest.

You may have seen a few months ago the announcement that the Scottish Government had been successful in its legal challenge on the Stronelairg Windfarm. It won't be long therefore before this will start to bring about life-changing sums to this community and the Trust and the Community Council are in contact with SSE about this. As soon as we know more, further information will be published on our website or passed on in the News.

As always, the Trust is here for you and we do what we can, but I leave you with my usual reminder that directors are all unpaid volunteers. Most of us also work full or part time as well as giving our time to the Trust. We do our best but we can't do everything instantly. Things take time but we thank you for your patience and understanding.

That just leaves me to say a few "thank-yous".

Firstly to the existing Board for all their hard work this year. I ask a lot of them all and they bear it with good grace and a smile. I would specifically like to mention Graeme Ambrose. Although he's not here this evening, Graeme has given years of service to the Trust and the community. Graeme is stepping down as a director this evening so I thank him for his service. All the directors give their time, knowledge and expertise free of charge and as Chair, I thank them for everything they've done throughout the year.

I would also like to thank Laura, our Trust Administrator. Laura started with us in May and has settled well into the role keeping us in line administratively-wise, organising our meetings, looking after the website, administering the grants system and lots more.

Next I say a special thank you to Steven Watson, our Project Co-ordinator. Steven isn't able to be here this evening but he works tirelessly for our community and we are very lucky that he chose to come and work with us. You may not know but Steven is unwell at the moment. He was taken ill a week or so ago and is currently receiving hospital care. Steven had produced the previous issues of the News, but our Comms Team, who aren't quite so well-versed in computer programmes are now working to finalise Issue 4 for release shortly (and that's why Issue 4 may not look quite so "professional"!)

We all however send Steven our thanks and best wishes and look forward to his return to work very soon.

Finally, thank you to you the members. Thank you for coming along this evening and for supporting the Trust. If you are here and not a member, we would be delighted to welcome you to the Trust and there are membership forms available.

Zoe Iliffe
Chair