

Chairperson's Report 2013

Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust has been established to receive and to manage annual income and capital payment paid by way of community benefit grants and donations to the Trust, for the benefit of residents within the Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council area. The Community Trust has a mandate from the Community Council to act as the Negotiator for community benefits monies from various green energy schemes within the community. The geographical area that is administered by Stratherrick and Foyers Community Council could be said to host more Green Energy Developments per square mile than any other location within The British Isles.

It is now 8 years since The Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust was established. The Trust was set up as a Company Limited by Guarantee, with the principal shareholder being the Community Council. Much experience has been accumulated during this time. Directors, some have been voted on through the Community Council and some have applied directly to the Trust. It has been a steep learning curve however we as Directors have grown in experience and expertise and we are constantly striving to widen our membership through a democratic process. To this end we will shortly be interviewing potential new Directors and would welcome applicants with Experience in Governance, Engineering, Finance and Investment, Environmental Matters and a Youth Representative to reflect younger opinions. The Trust acknowledges the need to move with the times and to equip itself to meet future challenges. Among these are the ability to convert annual income into long term investments, appoint new directors and the employment of staff. To meet these challenges of the future, there is a need to bring the Constitution up to date and this has taken place with professional advice over a number of months dating back over the last year. The updated Constitution has been submitted to The Community Council and approved by democratically selected Community Councillor's.

At the commencement of The Trust we held a community survey to determine how money should be spent, one of the community's aspirations was to have some provision for affordable housing. The Trust entered into negotiations to bring affordable housing to the area and in 2011, I reported that we were looking into the Errogie Smiddy Project. A project of this nature required research and preparation before a final commitment could be made. At the beginning of this project it was felt by Trust Directors that this was affordable, sadly cost escalated and however we looked at keeping costs down they continued to rise to the point it no longer was affordable. Many hours have been spent around the table debating this project and it was very much the opinion of the Trust that this opportunity needed to be explored. On a positive note by pushing this project on it looks as if we will get the notorious Errogie Corner straightened by Highland Council and there is a very good chance that the community will be handed a housing development site when the road is completed.

Energy Efficiency still remains at the heart of the Trusts business and I am pleased to report that over the last year £32,017 has been awarded to 14 individuals. I would like to make it quite clear that money can be awarded up to the value of 50% of the cost not exceeding £3000 in total. These energy efficiencies for Green Technology improvements such as Solar Thermal; Photo Voltaic Panels, replacing single to double glazing and Biomass heating. We do not pay retrospective grants, so please make an application to the Trust first. Trust Directors will be happy to assist any resident to complete their application. Much debate has arisen from applications from residents who have second homes within the Trusts area and that are occupied by family members. It has been decided not to look at these as holiday or commercial premises but to recognise the fact that some are occupied by families with young children and so it was agreed that the rate of grant be reduced to 25% and if the property was to be sold within 7 years the grant would be subject to repayment.

Over the last year 15 organisations have applied to the Trust and £23,527 in grants has been paid. Some of these successful organisations are, Senior Lunch Club, Lochness Luvies, St John's Cemetery Volunteer Group, Community Council Web Site, 3 Young People awarded Grants, Stratherrick and Foyers Primary schools, Parent and Toddler Group, Jubilee Party, Olympic Events, Rainbow, and Brownies & Guides Pack and a Contribution towards a Community Defibrillator. All these organisations are supported by our wider community. We have just received a lump sum of £100, 000 from RES as a first payment in respect of Dunmaglass Wind Farm. When future Annual payments commence in approximately 2 years' time the Trust under the terms of the agreement will not be allowed to accumulate more than three times the annual amount, under threat of suspension of further payments. You as a community will be under pressure to keep new ideas and projects coming forward so that this money can be spent within our community.

Finally having served on the community Trust for 8 years I am standing down both as Chairperson and Director, I would like to thank present Directors and wish future Directors all the best, it is not always an easy job but one I feel worthwhile and leaves this community with a legacy. I would like to thank the Trusts Treasurer Janet Hobson and to welcome Fiona Ambrose as Trusts Secretary.

Helen Grainger

Chairperson Stratherrick & Foyers Community Trust – 27 February 2013