



Glenkens & District Trust (SC042489)

Report from meeting – November 2023

We met on 14 November for a Trustee meeting. The key business was to make decisions on the applications received in September.

New Trustee

We were delighted to appoint Stephen Connelly as an independent Trustee. Stephen has recently moved to Dalry and the breadth of things going on in this area was a key attraction to him and his wife making their home here. He is a retired academic who specialised in sustainable development, stakeholder engagement and democratic governance. He is experienced in working with voluntary organisations to evaluate the impact of their work therefore brings a set of additional skills to our trustee group. We still have one vacancy for an independent Trustee. We are particularly keen to find an individual with financial skills and experience. Information can be found on our website.

Funding Round

We are delighted to report that the agreement with Carsphairn Renewable Energy Fund Ltd has now been signed and we have received the monies. We thank them for their work on this and look forward to working with them.

Seven applications were received by the September closing date. One was deemed ineligible and one was withdrawn leaving us with five applications to consider at the meeting.

As always, we were ably supported by Foundation Scotland which administers the application and awards process.

Following careful consideration four awards were made totalling £61,681.31. Applicants were informed by email of the decision and feedback offered.

The provision of childcare is recognised as critical in rural communities and GDT has funded a number of projects/studies to support this important area. In particular it has already

awarded funds of over £30,000 to contribute towards the costs of Moniaive Play Care opening 'Cooie Doon', an important addition to its existing facility. In this round we awarded further monies towards capital costs, (£5,000) and also provided funds to enable them to reintroduce an afterschool service. We have awarded £5,000 per annum for three years (£15,000) to give the volunteer group who run this facility some longer term certainty on funding.

Group activities are important to bring different people together and we are lucky in this area to have many diverse interests. In this round we awarded £8,505.31 to Dragon Boats on Loch Ken. This will provide them with support to fund running costs over the next three years to enable them to focus on carrying out their activities and attracting new members. We also awarded monies to Cairn Chorus, based in Moniaive but with participants from across the area. They will receive £8,176 to contribute to their project Galloway Sang Streams. – Songs to link life, land and legacy.

Finally, we awarded £25,000 to Glenkens Community & Arts Trust Ltd to contribute towards their core costs. This key anchor organisation plays an important role across our area and runs/facilitates a range of community activities which are valued in our community. In the current difficult times GCAT, like lots of different groups, is finding it increasingly challenging to fund these essential core costs as a number of funders prefer to support specific projects rather than the costs of running the organisation, such as energy costs, IT costs, support staff etc. Without this core funding the projects will not be able to continue and given the anchor nature of the organisation, we felt that this was important for the Trust to support.

Education and Training Fund

As reported from our last meeting this fund has proven to be very popular and we have had to look at how we can ensure the benefits are spread across as many beneficiaries as possible within the context of a limited budget. We considered how much of the fund it was sensible to allocate to this in each funding year. We concluded that we would allocate £40,000 per fund year (1 June to 31 May) to this fund and it would be awarded annually on a first come first served basis. We absolutely recognise the important costs this fund supports but we needed to balance this with the other demands and concluded that this was a fair allocation. We also decided that we would no longer make multi year awards and would retain the annual cap per individual at £1,000. We are also reviewing how we promote this fund to ensure that it is used to cover as wide a range of individuals as possible. Uptake varies by Community Council area. If you are sharing information about the Education and Training Fund locally, we can provide a poster and more information on request. The fund will support a range of course types and is not just aimed at school leavers.

Wider issues

As previously reported, as the scale of pipeline becomes apparent, there is considerable focus from regional and national bodies on how community benefit arrangements can be optimised. We would highlight: -

- The recent Onshore Wind Sector Deal published by the Scottish Government which, inter alia, sets out an action list on what the wind farm sector and government will work on to support collaboration with local communities
- The Biggar Economics report recently commissioned and published by South of Scotland Enterprise. We welcome the clear statement from SOSE Chair Russel Griggs in their Press Release that. 'It is important to emphasise to everyone that community benefits from wind farms belong to local communities and will stay that way.' He recently met Fiona Smith, Chair of GDT, and reinforced this position statement. It was also nice to see specific reference to GDT being an example of best practice in this Report.
- Research recently commissioned by Foundation Scotland being carried out by the University of Strathclyde into this topic.
- The engagement we have with developers in our area where we have encouraged them to work more closely together on how they engage and work with community groups.
- An increasing interest from different groups in sharing information on what works well and not so well and more publications giving information on what different groups are doing in relation to community benefit, in particular the recent Highland and Islands Enterprise publication. Community Benefits: a Bridge to Community Empowerment which included case studies on both GDT and Carsphairn Community Woodland.

We will continue to monitor developments and to input as appropriate and as resources allow into this debate. We have concern that a lot of discussion is taking place on these topics without a proper 'community voice' in the room. For example, the Onshore Wind Sector deal appears to have little or any community representation in its development to date and we want to work with other groups to remedy this going forward. We plan to increase our contact with other groups to share information and to promote the interesting work that community groups, often voluntary, are doing to use community benefits to enhance their communities over the longer term. We are fortunate to have access to the expertise and experience within Foundation Scotland and plan to have a follow up session with them in January to take stock on where we are and next steps.

Decisions made outwith the Board meeting cycle:

None

Areas of focus over the next quarter

We will continue our work to ensure we evolve as an organisation to meet the challenges we face and to engage with other groups and regional and national bodies as appropriate.

We will continue to liaise with developers.

It is Annual Report time again and this will be finalised over the next month or so. The plan is to hold the AGM in March.