

ARDENTINNY COMMUNITY TRUST LTD (Registered Company No. 245169) (Registered Charity No. (SCO034235))

Draft Minutes of the Extraordinary General Meeting held at 14.30 hrs, 25 July, 2010 in Glenfinart Hall, Ardentinny.

Present:

Outgoing Directors. M Norris (Secretary)
E Connell (Chair & Treasurer))
V Sandall

Continuing Director M Ferguson

Incoming Directors D Gower (Convenor)
J Gordon
C Emmett
M Emmett
V Fairley

Members and others

W Williamson
A Williamson
I Share
I Lilley
M Gray
P Gordon
D McDowall
T Forsyth
J McLundie
R Reilly
M Greenhalgh
J Kidson
E Greenhalgh

J Hendry
M Hendry
G Ritchie
G Elder
J Ulliott
B Tweddle
S Tweddle
J Murray

Apologies M Robinson, L Dempster, J Reilly, S Primrose, J Primrose, P Marshall, B Marshall

Opening remarks

M Norris opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending and announced that the proceedings were being recorded.

Reason for EGM

M. Norris explained the reason for the EGM and outlined the events following the last Trust AGM in December 2008 when it was decided to fold the Trust due to the lack of volunteer Directors. Companies House had advised the Trust to wait until the end of the Financial Year and in March 2009 they completed the documentation which was accepted. However, in January of this year M Norris received a letter requesting the Trust's annual return and it was then it was discovered that Companies House had not closed the Trust. As The Walled Garden has been offered for sale to the community, in the first instance, and as the community has voted in favour of that purchase, volunteer directors have come forward to take over the existing Trust and M Norris announced the retirement of the existing directors and handed over to the incoming Board, and wished them every success.

Introduction of new Trust Directors

D. Gower (Convenor) thanked the outgoing directors for all their hard work in the past and hoped for their support in the future. He also thanked the Working Group which had been set up by the Community Council in April and, in particular, Eileen Connell and Teresa Forsyth who had been on the working group but who had decided not to volunteer as Trust directors. He then introduced the now

current directors as Merle Ferguson (continuing), Jimmy Gordon, Chris and Margaret Emmett and Vicky Fairley.

Future plans

D. Gower outlined the future plans for the Walled Garden, stressing that they came from the overwhelming response to the village survey regarding the community purchase of the garden which took place in May of this year. The two main requests for the garden's future use were for its return to a garden or gardens and for use as allotments. He went on to say that the survey also highlighted a lot of other ideas and he hoped that a great many of these could also be incorporated into the garden.

The present situation

D. Gower explained that, apart from the Directors, the previous membership of the Trust had lapsed as it was thought that the Trust had been dissolved and so he called for new members, of which there were already more than twenty, to join the Trust and help take the project forward. He said that through the website and door to door leafleting, the working group had tried to keep everyone informed and that the current position was that an application to buy had been lodged with the Forestry Commission and that the now Trust Directors were still working on providing the Commission with all the additional information it has asked for. This will result in a public consultation. The application to buy will appear on the Forestry Commission website from a date in August and there will be 28 days during which the public at large will be asked to respond. Following that, it will go to an independent Evaluation Panel who will decide on our application. Beyond that, there will be further periods during which the most important thing will be raising funds and keeping the residents' ideas alive. Dennis reiterated his invitation to those present to consider becoming members of the Trust and promised that the Directors would keep everyone informed of progress. He then invited questions.

Questions

S Twedde asked how the Board had become Directors.

M. Norris asked to respond. She explained that the new Directors were not voted on to the Board but appointed by the existing directors who had met with the then walled garden working group and agreed its taking over the work of the

Trust directors who wished to resign. D. Gower added that it also had to go through Companies House for their approval and change of records.

S Tweddle asked if the Trust would be applying for grant funding to fund the restoration of the garden.

M. Emmett responded by saying that there was already an application to the Highlands and Islands Development Board for help with the purchase of the garden. She explained that grant funding for the purchase was more difficult to access than for the restoration, despite the sum for the former being the lesser of the two. She went on to say that the Trust had taken steps to apply to the Heritage Lottery Commission for funding of the re-building of the wall. This could take up to a year and is dependent on the village already owning the land. She reminded the meeting that this particular walled garden is one of only two of its kind in the UK. For that reason she felt that funding for the restoration would be less of a problem than funding for the purchase.

I Lilley asked why the garden is so unique.

C. Emmett explained that this was due to its actual lay-out and design. The eastern wall is curved which, according to Scottish Heritage, is a unique feature. Also on the south west wall there is a curved corner, as opposed to a square corner. He said that there are a large number of walled gardens in the UK but to have the curved wall and the curved corner is quite unique.

R Reilly declared his interest in acquiring the Walled Garden. He then went on to ask what the Trust intended to do with the Walled Garden, who is going to do it and how will the Trust fund the maintenance going forward.

D. Gower responded by saying that it was intended to restore the garden and furnish allotments. How it is managed will also initially be funded by grant funding for employing some staff. He did not envisage the raising of the £10,000 to be a problem as the Trust already has some promises of donations and the balance is achievable.

R Reilly went on to ask how we generate a revenue stream to maintain the garden thereafter.

M Emmett responded by giving her personal view of how the garden and its business would evolve.

C Emmett interjected by reminding the audience that the results of the community survey strongly supported a community/nursery garden plus allotments.

V Fairley said that that also concurs with both Scottish Heritage and National Park Planning department's preferred use of the space.

G Elder asked if there were any other interested parties in purchasing the walled garden

J McLundie also declared her interest in acquiring the Walled Garden.

G Elder then raised the issue of access and how traffic along the river road had already increased with the public going to the picnic area. He said the whole question of parking and access needed to be seriously considered.

D Gower responded by saying that there had already been consultation with the National Park on this and other issues in the Local Plan and that we should also go on consulting with the Forestry Commission as it is partly their land under discussion and the Trust shall be taking all of these issues into consideration.

M Norris said that there is an issue as to whether the Forestry Commission will ask the community to pay for maintenance of part of the road. She reported that they had had very varied answers over the years from a) the Forestry would maintain the road to b) the land owner having to pay.

J Hendry pointed out that he had in his title deeds the responsibility of paying part of the maintenance of the road access to his property which the Forestry Commission currently pays for. He also pointed out that when the Bowling Club was considering purchasing their club, one of the conditions was that they would have to pay towards maintenance of the road.

D Gower agreed that it was an issue they would have to take up with the Forestry Commission.

J Gordon also pointed out that the popularity of the beach is increasing year by year. He went on to say that the Community Council had raised the issue with the Forestry Commission and recently, through the local councillor, they had agreed and undertaken a patch repair and said they would look at a more sustainable repair in the future.

A Williamson said that when the Forestry Commission created the picnic area at the end of the road they surely have to be responsible for creating the traffic and therefore, in her view, the Commission is responsible for the road's maintenance.

D Gower said that it really was a matter for the community council and he felt sure the Trust could work in harmony with the CC and cooperate on issues like this and it is one that is certainly on the table.

J Hendry raised his concerns regarding the water supply to the walled garden. He said they had been given grants for new, smaller tanks for the houses but there had been no allowance made to supply water to the walled garden.

D Gower responded saying that it was an issue that had been raised with the Forestry Commission and they have said that the garden has rights to the water supply and said the issue of the new, smaller tanks etc. is something that has to be taken up with them.

M Hendry stressed that the new supply was for domestic use only and not for business use and that toilets etc. in the garden etc. could not be catered for using this supply.

M Emmett explained that the Trust was looking at creating an eco-friendly garden with compost toilets, reed-bed water supply etc. as being used in projects in other gardens around the country which may or may not work here. The intention is that it would be cost-effective and environmentally friendly and that there wouldn't be the waste and it shouldn't affect people's water supplies.

M Ferguson cited the Earthship in Fife, which has been going for ten or more years where one can see these things in operation and is a very good example which already exists.

M Emmett stressed that the finer details are years down the line and that the Trust would want to see these being decided by the residents of Ardentinnny whose walled garden it is.

J McLundie asked if it was planned to staff the garden with volunteers or paid employment. She went on to say that she would imagine it would take a lot to pay people to garden 1.5 acres as it is very labour intensive.

D Gower responded that the answer was both and pointed out that there is grant funding available to create employment.

S Tweddle said that the garden project on Islay had to find £30,000 a year to pay staff to work the garden.

M Ferguson answered by saying again that the website for the Centre of Stewardship for Fife demonstrates that there are a great many community gardens in Scotland and they are all different kinds so there is no one kind of community garden. It covers a very wide spectrum of different gardens to meet the needs of different communities.

M Norris also cited an example of a garden that does work, i.e., Parklea outside Greenock on the road to Glasgow. It is run to support people with mental illness by a mixture of volunteers and paid staff and has been going for about 25 years. She suggested we all visit it to see what can be done. M Norris did voice her concern though about the age of the majority of Ardentinnny residents and their ability to keep the project going and asked what would happen to the garden if the project fell through.

J Gordon responded by saying that it was important not to look too far ahead too quickly. He suggested breaking down the project into parts, looking at the educational side, the schooling side. He couldn't foresee the need for £30,000 a year to maintain it. He said, once it is bought and restored, we want to create a garden, not a garden centre.

M Norris said it would be necessary to have a plan before asking for funding.

M Emmett said that members of Argyll and Bute Council would be attending a future Trust meeting to explain how they might help with labour.

J Murray also pointed out that surely allotment tenants would be doing their own gardening, which was agreed.

D Gower pointed out that there are so many examples of good enterprise in walled gardens all over the country that we should not be put off at this stage by some of the potential problems that may arise.

M Hendry suggested it was important to have a plan before you go for funding.

D Gower confirmed that that is what the Trust is now in the process of putting together as that is what is needed to put in the formal applications for funding. He went on to say that so far the group has been researching the appropriate sources of funding and whether or not they are willing and able to potentially fund such a project and that the business plan is being prepared now that there is a re-established community trust. He also confirmed that, should the project fail, the walled garden would automatically go back to the Forestry Commission at the going rate.

B Laporte raised the point that insuring a listed property can be very expensive and he failed to see how the revenue would cover it.

C Emmett confirmed that the structure was listed. He also pointed out that its listing can also attract additional grant funding.

E Connell asked if the Trust had any idea of projected income.

M Emmett outlined some ball park figures that she personally had in mind together with how she envisaged the final garden layout.

D Gower said that we are talking about the reconstruction of what was once a beautiful garden, not building up a business, albeit run along business lines. It would be run for the benefit of this community, not as a profit-making enterprise.

R Reilly stated that he was impressed by the enthusiasm of the new Board but he could not accept that it did not yet have a plan on how it would raise the required funds to sustain the garden. He also wanted to know how many people in Ardentinny wanted an allotment and who would work on it.

M Emmett replied that there was already a waiting list.

J Ulliot suggested that there was nothing to stop the other two interested parties at the meeting going to the Forestry Commission and offering it £10,000 to buy the walled garden

R. Reilly replied that it would not be offered to anyone else until such times as the Community turns it down.

D Gower confirmed that the first option to buy had to be given to the community and the price is a price agreed for a community purchase. If that failed for any reason, it would go on the open market but the price would not be £10,000.

J Ulliot cautioned that insurance of a listed building can be very expensive.

C Emmett said he had a ball park quote of £99 p.a. for the space. He went on to outline what had been achieved in the short time the Working Group had to research and confirm a community wish to purchase and to take that decision forward according to the Forestry Commission timetable. He stressed that if the community did not buy it and repair the wall, it would eventually collapse.

M Hendry asked how long the garden has sat in its current state and wondered why the Forestry Commission had not cultivated it as a garden, if it was thought to be viable.

C Emmett replied that that was not within the Forestry Commission's remit. That they had used it at one time as a tree nursery for a while.

B Williamson said that Ardentinny has a first class bowling green which was built up from scratch and he asked that that be taken as a role model. He said he felt sure that there must have been the same objections but the bowling club is a success.

M Norris said it wasn't bought.

B Williamson went on to say that it doesn't matter whether it is bought or rented or leased, it's a success which started from nothing and that he thought the walled garden could be a success.

D Gower thanked B Williamson and said that the group had done what it had done thus far with the wholehearted support from the community in Ardentinny and that it was ready to continue working on all that was necessary and the group needed the community's continued support. He reiterated the need for new members which would allow them to have a say in the future management of the walled garden and future activity of the trust for a fee of £2.00 per annum.

A Williamson thanked the new Board for doing all the work it had already achieved.

M Emmett invited all members to attend the Trust meetings and work with the Board on future decision-making.

D Gower made it clear that the Trust meetings would be open.

V. Fairley said that membership fees would go in to the existing Trust bank account but that there would be a separate account opened for walled garden funds. Therefore, if members were against the walled garden, their membership fee would not be going towards the walled garden.

The meeting closed at 15.40hrs.

After the General Meeting the new Board of Directors appointed the Board's office Bearers, i.e.,

Dennis Gower – Convenor
Jimmy Gordon – Vice Convenor
Chris Emmett – Treasurer
Vicky Fairley - Secretary