



Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of Crieff Community Trust
Thursday 15 June 2023, 18.30 held on Zoom

Directors: Ailsa Campbell (AC, Chair), Brian McVey (BM, Vice Chair), Ann Ross (AR), James Anderson (JA), Ian Christie (IC), Claire Sanville (CS), Jane White (JW Secretary and Treasurer)

Full members: Chris McIntosh, John Mauchline, Sally Leger, Mark Grugiel, Kate Gray, Brenda Jack, Susan McLean, Andrew McLean

1. Welcome and introductions

- Ailsa Campbell opened and chaired the meeting.

2. Apologies: Robert Bone, David McCann

3. Approval of 2022 AGM Minutes

- The minutes of 2022 AGM were approved by IC and seconded by BM

4. Report from the Chair – Ailsa Campbell's Chair report was in the form of a presentation, which began with a general overview and then different board members reported on their specific areas of responsibility. Full details can be read in the Annual Report. AC drew attention to the fact that CCT is now 10 years old and commented on the successes and struggles of the trust over those years. She thanked our funders: Scottish Government, PKC, Rural LEADER CLLD in particular and also our pro bono lawyer Sandra Rankine, our website wizard Kona McPhee, our new CEO David McCann and our project worker Stephen Oswald, for all their hard work on the trust's behalf.

5. Paths & Turretbank Wood – Jim Anderson

In the period to 31 March 2023 CCT carried out further maintenance work in the three Meadows that make up Turretbank Wood [TBW].

It was encouraging to note that the crop of Himalayan Balsam [HB] present in the summer of 2022 in Meadows 1 and 2 was again further reduced. This was our 6th year tackling HB and the volume and diversity of local plant species now flourishing in TBW shows the importance of this campaign to eradicate HB. Our thanks go to those who volunteered, for their support and assistance again this year.

Further tree maintenance had been necessary following severe storms last year so CCT decided to commission a further survey to identify whether there were any more trees requiring attention. Following a tender process CCT funded a survey in May 2022 and on receipt of the survey report CCT issued a further tender invitation in June to establish the cost of dealing with the recommendations. Fundraising was again required to secure monies to deal with the 32 trees that had been identified in the survey. Funding was finally secured in November and TD Trees and Land Services Ltd were awarded the contract to carry out the maintenance. In addition CCT secured further funds to fell some ash trees suffering from ash dieback. This pocket of ash trees at the far end of Lady Mary's Walk became quite controversial as different boundary lines became apparent. It was agreed that the logs produced from the felling of the ash trees would be sold locally and 50% of the money raised would be donated to Crieff Connexions and the balance £250 was retained by CCT to help fund CCT's charitable objectives.

Meadows 1 and 2 are separated by the disused Crieff to Comrie railway line. During the year CCT continued working to finalise the transfer of ownership of the disused railway embankment at the Turret Burn and the cutting through to the wooden bridge. Concurrently CCT applied to Paths for All the administrators of the Ian Findlay Path Fund [IFPF] for funding to carry out a project for the design of an active travel path linking the community at Oakbank with MacRosty Park via Turretbank Wood. In March 2023 Paths for All awarded CCT a grant from IFPF for this design and planning project.

Following an upgrade of water and sewerage requirements in and around Turretbank Road Scottish Water advised CCT that their revised calculations concluded that they needed to raise the cover levels of two sewer manholes to upgrade their system in Turretbank Wood. Negotiations have been continuing with their contractor, Caledonia Water, to minimise the visual impact of increasing the height of the manholes adjacent to the existing path in Meadow 1.

The monthly Volunteer Paths Group activities were further disrupted during the period in recognition of the government's objectives to combat the spread of Covid, and only a few sessions were achieved in the period. However we were successful in applying for and receiving a bench from PKC under their Paths Group small grants scheme for tools and materials. This bench has been installed in Meadow 2 overlooking the Turret Burn where the weeping willow was planted by Crieff Sorooptimists last year.

Despite Planning Approval for the upgrading of the Core Path being granted in April 2022, the key to progressing the route between Crieff and Comrie remains securing Path Agreements with all of the landowners in question. This is slow and so far only 25% complete. Further efforts are required to secure progress on this protracted project.

6. Can Do Crieff – Ailsa Campbell

Can Do Crieff, the co-working space operated and managed by Crieff Community Trust, required a specific refocusing due to the effects of the working limitations put in place during the pandemic restrictions in the preceding two years. The membership has restabilised to previous levels and now the aforementioned focus is on growing that membership to ensure that the income generated surpasses the rental and creates a surplus, and therefore reserves. After three challenging years we are now operating at a profit, paying £900 a month to our landlords Strathearn Arts and generating over £1000 over the year for CCT funds.

Aware of the now established acceptance and recognition of hybrid working as both a positive benefit to the individual and to companies and a boost to local economies, the Board has placed emphasis on raising awareness amongst companies in the Perthshire area of the offer available at the Can Do Crieff Coworking space, as well as marketing the availability and benefits to locals, particularly those who have recently moved to the area and may continue to commute to work. It is perhaps worthwhile to note these benefits both to the individual and more broadly:

- i) Increased collaboration and shared knowledge
- ii) Professional and personal development
- iii) Development of personal and professional links with the local community.
- iv) Reduction of Carbon footprint, personally and professionally.
- v) Creates a better family/work life balance.
- vi) Enhances mental health wellbeing.
- vii) Aids town centre economic growth by keeping spend local.

These are the highlight benefits. There are many more. The Board will continue to grow the membership and to enhance the shared office environment and the overall offer available at the co-working space for the benefits of the users, the Trust and the wider community.

7. Drummond Arms – Ian Christie

Over the last 12 months the CCT subsidiary DARL has been continuing to carry out the internal strip out of the inside of the building and trying to stabilise the building from the inside by inserting steels in the wall and ring beam where floors have collapsed. Our project worker has made a sterling effort to secure funding including some from PKC. Being VAT registered allows us to reclaim VAT and use this money as required

Artwork of Crieff 'well-kent' faces were installed on the outside front face and these were lit up at Christmas and New Year.

The building has now been on the market for 3 years.

This week the scaffolding is back up. It is there to provide enhanced safety protection to the building. As a result of the internal state of the building, the scaffolding also provides external access to the roof and will allow us to make decisions about what we should do next.

8. Uniting Crieff – Jane White

The Uniting Crieff forum was born out of one of the main findings from the 2021 Crieff Community Action Plan (CAP), which was that Crieff has so many wonderful voluntary organisations and groups but no way for them to liaise and work together. The 'Cash for Crieff' project, which CCT organised in 2018, had already been very successful in bringing groups closer together and making them more aware of what each of them were doing. Evaluation after the event showed that it increased the bonds and bridging between groups, the 'glue', otherwise known as social capital. So CCT agreed to take responsibility for delivering this action from the CAP and has begun to hold forum meetings to which all community groups, local councillors and businesses are invited. We are in the process of working out how the forum wants to collaborate - would it be possible to have some paid part-time support, what do we all want to get out of the forum, how can we best use and promote the website etc.

There are definitely benefits for members in working together and we have had our first successful funding application approved. Big funders, PKC and the Scottish Government are now also all looking much more holistically at projects and want to see a plan to address capital projects and resources.

We are also creating a small Uniting Crieff 'Town Team' of interested groups with capital projects in the town to coordinate the town's strategy and future plans. We kicked off with an event in March where we brainstormed what we as a group can do to achieve the best outcomes for Crieff. The process was open and encouraged shared understanding and putting what is in the town's best interest before any individual group's objectives. These open processes all help to build social capital, which is proven to maximise the impact of resources and funding.

9. James Square/Murray Fountain/ wee former RBS shop - Jane White

Improving the look of the town centre is also a major theme of the 2021 CAP. This is the responsibility of a number of parties acting together including PKC, Crieff Community Council, Crieff in Leaf, Crieff Museum Groups and Crieff at Christmas. Since CCT is pursuing the regeneration of the Drummond Arms, we play a big part in this multi-agency partnership approach. One project which the groups are currently working towards together is the restoration of James Square and the historic Murray Fountain which sits in the centre. The Trust has taken the lead in funding applications and holding funds for this project.

James Square is the central point in the town of Crieff. It is the place where members of the community still gather to meet, have markets, events and celebrations. It is also the place where the many visitors to the town head to assess their place and bearings. Great work has already been undertaken this year to improve the flower beds, trees, paving and painting of the railings. At the heart of the Square sits the Murray Fountain, a focal point for all who come there. The project will see the full restoration of the fountain to its former glory with lighting and spouting water providing a monumental beauty in the heart of the town and a sense of community pride.

The structure is in need of repair to its stoneworks, electrical, undercroft and for the reintroduction of water. There are varying options for restoration works, with full restoration, including lighting and the reintroduction of water, being currently budgeted at over £100,000. £85,000 has already been secured in funding and the Trust has funding applications for the shortfall currently submitted.

A range of funding, including the Arnold Clark Fund, CLLD funding and PKC's Open for Business fund, enabled us to replace the shop window in the former RBS building and put in place boards to promote the trust's work and Uniting Crieff.

10. Project CCT - Ailsa Campbell

We are a very small board working hard across many projects and need to recruit more board members to support our work and ensure our existence. We have worked hard this year to establish our strategy for the next five years and how we wish to develop the trust. This will see CCT focussing on four key areas, with these current projects:

- Crieff's environment (Turretbank Wood, Lady Mary's Walk and the Crieff Comrie Path)
- Crieff town centre (Drummond Arms, James Square and Can do Crieff)
- Crieff community anchor (Crieff Action Plan, Uniting Crieff forum and Town Team)
- CCT organisation (governance, strategy, finance, fundraising, marketing and PR)

AC presented a summary of this current strategy process and a final integrated statement of strategic intent. One of the main outcomes of the strategy work was the need to recruit a part-time CEO for the trust and, after various funding applications were successful, we were able to recruit David McCann, who is both helping CCT implement its plans and supporting the Uniting Crieff forum and the Town Team vision group. More information will be found in our Annual Report and on our website.

11. Treasurer's Report – Jane White

The grant income and expenditure was explained (details can be found in the Annual Report).

It was noted that the financial year April '22 to March '23 saw the Trust begin to improve its own financial base after the difficulties faced during the Covid years. Unrestricted reserves increased from around £1,000 in the previous year to nearly £6,000 in this financial year. The policy of the trust is to hold the cost of a full year's charitable activities in unrestricted reserves. We are yet back to this level but we are making good progress towards this and the board is happy that CCT is on a firm financial footing for the coming year.

We also secured and spent nearly twice as much funding this past year vs the previous year for projects to support changes and improvements in our local community. (See above).

Questions/ Comments arising-

Why is it not possible to buy the whole of the old railway from Crieff to Comrie for the path?

The former railtrack along Lady Mary's Walk and on to Comrie has lots of different owner, mainly local landowners, whose farms abut the railtrack. We are of course allowed to walk along the railtrack using the Right to Roam but upgrading the path to and all ability path requires the landowners' permission.

What are the timescales for decisions on the Drummond Arms?

Very hard to specify a timeplan. We are taking it step by step as we can get more funding and progress our understanding of the building's condition and then make relevant decisions. Once the enhanced safety scaffolding is in place and we can access the roof we will be clearer about our options. At the moment every option is still on the table.

All work undertaken so far has been to strip out 5,000 tonnes of contaminated material. If we do have to demolish the building this will now produce 45,000 tonnes of general building waste, rather than 50,000 tonnes of contaminated waste - which would be very expensive and difficult to dispose of. So every penny spent so far has been necessary, whatever the final route taken.

Why is the ambition not to bring drinkable water back to the Murray Fountain?

Whilst it will be lovely to see water flowing through the fountain again, the cost of ensuring that the water is up to current drinking standards (including frequent testing for e coli and legionaire's disease and maintaining the drinking bowl) is beyond the funds of any organisation at the moment.

10. Election of Directors*

Claire Sanville is retiring - seeking re-election, proposed by AC, seconded by IC
Jane White is retiring - seeking re-election, proposed by JA, seconded by BM

11. Any other competent business - none

Our annual report will be available online and sent to members once the accounts are finalised.

There being no further business the meeting closed at