

“HELP”

Give Dalry a Voice

Notes of Public Meeting attended by 50 members of the community

Held on Tuesday 6th May 2014

from 7pm - 9pm

in Dalry Primary School



Should a Community Hub for the Parish of Dalry be established to help make our town a better place?

Notes of meeting

Introduction by James McCosh

James opened the meeting by stating that the purpose of calling this gathering was to form a group of like-minded residents to address various issues and obtain funding for the improvement of Dalry. He stated that the steering group believed that there are substantial sums which may be available but, to date, those funds have not been tapped. James also highlighted that there are other towns near at hand who have done so successfully, such as Beith, Fairlie, Largs and West Kilbride.

James highlighted the importance of forming an organisation to represent this campaign, and hoped that the core of this group could be selected this evening to prepare a constitution for approval along with a plan of campaign.

Having already identified a number of the most urgent repairs/renewals, and what appears to be a significant shortfall in available funding, the steering group felt that the community should be made aware of those problems with a view to immediately addressing the most urgent concerns. The intention throughout is to harness the strength of the community in an organisation which will campaign for the benefit of the Parish of Dalry.

Presentation by Alastair Adamson on background, purpose, idea of hub, set-up options, possible funds.

Alastair gave a presentation which initially highlighted the uncertainties about current community boundaries and the impact this could have on Dalry.

He expressed his concerns that, over the past couple of decades, the “Dalry Community” may have suffered from a lack of co-ordinated community involvement in many aspects of our community life and the upkeep of our community assets and facilities.

The presentation listed a number of community asset and funding issues not currently being addressed by any other Dalry group or organisation, and suggested that the only way Dalry is going to reap the maximum benefit from the many available funding sources is by the community working together. The proposal tabled by the steering group is to form a 'hub' to present a strong voice for the community.

If the steering group is given a mandate by the community to work towards forming a constituted and elected hub, it is proposed that the following actions will be addressed on behalf of the Dalry community during the setting up period.

- Establish a Community Development Hub for the Parish of Dalry
- Brighten up Dalry Town Centre
- Resolve current issues regarding ownership and the ongoing repair and maintenance of the Lynn Glen walk and other walks in Dalry
- Meet with Community Wind Power Ltd and attempt to resolve the current impasse regarding Millour Hill community benefits and the perceived limitations imposed by the current method of managing and allocating the community benefits derived from the Dalry Community Wind Farm (Wardlaw Wood).
- Brighten up Dalry Railway Station with plants/flowers
- Lobby NAC to ensure that Community Council Boundaries of Dalry reflect the Parish/Post Code Boundaries
- Work with NAC to identify possible funding opportunities and support for local assets.

Questions taken by Caroline Borwick

1. The football pitches in Dalry Public Park are often waterlogged. Merksworth Park, where Dalry Thistle play, would also benefit from significant improvements.

Audrey Hillis responded to this question, stating that the Dalry Community Sports Club are currently working on a Dalry Public Park initiative, focusing especially on issues like lighting, drainage and community engagement.

The Sports Club have the support of NAC but need to develop their application for funding further.

2. Lynn Glen should be a priority for the Hub.

Alastair Adamson responded to this question, stating that the steering group had already been in contact with the NAC access officer (Louise Kirk), and that urgent repairs to the dangerous bridge over the Caff at Peden's Point had already been undertaken by NAC as an initial one off gesture.

As there was strong support from the community to restore the Lynn Glen walk to its former glory, it was agreed that the steering group would help facilitate further engagement with NAC and the many community volunteers willing to start work on this project.

3. Duncan Cameron suggested that the Hub steering Group could secure a grant to hire a student during summer recess to carry out research into funding and potential community income generating initiatives for Dalry.

4. We should surely establish an elected committee and constitution for the hub first, before attempting to do anything else.

James McCosh pointed out the difficulties and time frames involved in developing an appropriate constitution and subsequently electing the committee/officers.

The steering group was best placed to engage with the community and other established groups to work towards this end.

5. Craig Allison suggested that the set-up could also be based on a fifth option:- Co-operative principles with one member one vote based on the company limited by guarantee model.

The steering group confirmed that this option would also be considered with the other 4 options currently being investigated.

6. Is this hub to be for attracting/getting funds which we as a community are entitled to, or is it to generate its own revenue?

The steering group confirmed that the immediate focus of the group would be to attract/get funds to which Dalry as a community could be entitled.

Concern was raised about a community group implementing revenue generating initiatives which may be seen as competition to established Dalry businesses. It was agreed that if any community initiatives to generate revenue without impacting

on Dalry businesses were identified, after the Hub is formally constituted, every effort would be made to pursue this further.

7. Question regarding key priorities as set out in the Dalry Action Plan by Ayrshire Leader:

When a show of hands was requested for the support of the following initiatives identified in the Dalry Action Plan, it was clear the proposed improvement initiatives would all be supported by the community, these being:

- *Healthy Dalry Project*
- *Daytime and evening classes for residents*
- *More support for job seekers in Dalry*
- *Practical support for the development of civic events in Dalry*
- *Full size indoor bowling*
- *The largest show of hands was for the Outreach/drop-in project for young people.*

8. Dalry Bowling Club previously attempted to develop an indoor bowling facility but this failed.

Pam Crosthwaite and Audrey Hillis stated that a successful application for grants needs to be developed in a manner that meets the funding criteria.

Help and direction could be offered by NAC to explore if any further effort to secure this facility should be undertaken.

9. Elizabeth Gairns enquired about the current arrangements for community involvement when wind farm community benefits are being negotiated and agreed.

Alastair Adamson confirmed that Dalry's engagement with the developers had, to date, been very disappointing. Other North Ayrshire communities have managed to secure significant funds and long term guarantees for the provision of index linked community benefits for the lifetime of the wind farm developments. He did however point out that community benefit is a voluntary contribution made by the developer unless alternative contractual agreements are negotiated by the host community. Alastair also stated that there is currently around £150k per annum that doesn't come to Dalry, and securing this for the benefit of Dalry would be a very good start.

10. Jim Hair was concerned that community “had gone” in Dalry. Finance alone will not solve this without community involvement.

In response, Audrey Hillis spoke of the many organisations which existed in the

town and was happy to report that a Gala Day has been organised for June 2014 and that the reformed Dalry Action Group were currently arranging the Christmas lights and torchlight and tinsel parade for this year. A fairground will come to the Park later in May 2014.

It was also pointed out that there is a lot of energy available which people could put into doing practical things for the benefit of the community.

11. John Shedden asked the question “who are the Committee and what is the structure?”

The steering group were asked to stand to make themselves known to all. It was suggested that it would take time for the most appropriate structure to be decided on, but as a community we need to do something now.

12. Myra Sim proposed that the current steering group be given the authority of those assembled at the meeting to continue and report back in the Autumn.

Agreement on this was unanimous.

Mary Gemmell gave a vote of thanks to all who attended and those who organised the event.

The meeting closed at around 8.35pm. A follow-up meeting will be arranged and publicised. In the short term, it is planned to focus on the “adoption” of the railway station, arrange a meeting with representatives of Community Wind Power Ltd. to discuss community benefits, the lobbying of NAC to ensure that the Community Council Boundaries of Dalry reflect the Parish/Post Code Boundaries and possibly organise a walk to Lynn Glen in order to involve people in some practical “hands-on” actions.