

## **ENCOMM – REPORT FROM THE CHAIR FOR THE YEAR TO 30 NOVEMBER 2020**

Greetings to all our members. I do hope everyone has found a safe way through this most challenging of years.

My first comments are directed to my fellow trustees who have managed to get us so far forward this year, putting in a huge effort as volunteers, to nurse our new organisation into being.

In November 2019 we received confirmation from the Office of the Scottish Charities Regulator (OSCR) that our constitution, aims and objectives had been accepted and we became a registered charity – a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO). This means that we have certain legal duties and restrictions, which OSCR administer via an annual report from the Trustees, which we have until August 2021 to submit for our first year.

Following this we had plans to hold a day of engagement to heighten our profile in the community in Spring 2020, then it was going to be summer and then...you know the rest. We concentrated on getting the website up and running and looking good for which my special thanks go to Brian Mountjoy. We wrote and distributed a newsletter to every household in the Community Area in June and I was especially pleased that our two most recent Trustees, Aileen Asher and Oliver Stone came forward to join the Board. Making this happen was down to Martine Scott and Peter Arris – again many thanks to them.

We have slowly built our membership to 55 residents, representing around 10 percent of the population of East Nairnshire.

Early in the year we faced our toughest, most detailed decision when Nanclach Limited, the owners of Tom nan Clach Wind Farm, who themselves are 75% owned within the Greencoat plc Group, approached us with an offer to pay a single lump sum amount in 2020 rather than annual payments for 25 years. A summary of our deliberations can be found as a minute on the website. The unanimous decision of the Board following a negotiated uplift from the original offer was to take this route. The Treasurer's Report will give the financial detail. I remain very firmly of the opinion that we have given ourselves much greater flexibility not simply for the current residents but looking a long way into the future. We have control of a legacy that does not rely on the voluntary agreement of an international plc; their interest in the Scottish energy market and the financial environment of that market going forward.

As a Board of Charitable Trustees we must always act prudently with regard to investment of our Fund and we are working with Foundation Scotland, themselves a charity built to help communities handle such monies, to strike a balance between long term investment for growth and short-term availability for grant giving.

In September we held our first grant application meeting, receiving two applications; one did not qualify for funding the other – a tree-planting project at Ardclach - received our first grant of £1000. In addition we acquired the redundant red telephone box at Ferness from BT for one pound and we hope, when matters ease, that the local Heritage Group will take this on as a project. Quarterly dates are set for the forthcoming year and are on the website. I must emphasise, as confusion seems to remain, that projects need to be community led. The Trustees are just that, standing trust over the administration of the charity and its funds within the Constitution and charity law. While many of us do involve ourselves in other groups and activities we as Trustees simply cannot initiate projects and look at issues as well. This would represent a conflict in our duties never mind absorb all of our free time!

Looking forward to 2021 – our big ambition is to improve our engagement with the whole community and as soon as we are able to meet together we shall arrange a public meeting to welcome, inform, encourage and celebrate our achievements through these worst of times.

Linda Henderson

Chair – January 2021