

## **CULROSS COMMUNITY COUNCIL AGM MONDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2012– CHAIR’S REPORT**

As the recently elected Chair I would firstly wish to extend my gratitude to those who previously filled the Chair in 2012 and thank them for their considerable input and sound leadership in conducting our community affairs. I would also like to warmly thank the collective group of Culross Community Councillors, ex officio member Cllr Willie Ferguson, the members of the village committees, those operating retail enterprises in support of the service industry, employment and tourism; and the residents of our village for their vision, unstinting efforts, cooperation and hard work that has added considerable value during this year to The Royal Burgh of Culross.

I also pay due recognition to Fife Council for services provided to residents and I would especially applaud ‘Environmental Services’ who, despite stringent financial cutbacks, continue to provide us with excellent facilities delivered by highly dedicated employees. We are also most grateful for the generous grants that have been received from Fife Council, Scottish Power and other awarding bodies that have enabled CCC and our residents, to positively engage with innovative projects. The Community Police Team is also congratulated for their efforts in continuing to make Culross a safe community which people wish to live in and visit. Thank you also to ‘Pete the Postie’ (Taff) for his herculean efforts during all kinds of weather and for his unique sense of humour during his daily visitations.

Last, but not least, I wish to thank Colin Smith for his tireless dedication and long hours during the past 9-years or so to make a go of the Village shop/post office. Village shops such as these – and closures are being mirrored across the country - cannot survive on passing trade alone and require continuous financial investment from the local community. Should we be fortunate enough to herald the opening of an alternative retail outlet (*see below – future commitments*) it is sincerely hoped that community buy-in will enable such an enterprise to flourish.

Successes and challenges have been grasped in equal measures and it would be naïve in the extreme were I to espouse that we had pleased all of the people all of the time. That is simply an impossible task. But what has been achieved has been quite considerable and a few examples include:

- **Environment.** A gargantuan effort has been applied to improving the local and rural environment, improving signage, repairing and installing benches notice boards and (ongoing) flagstones, hedge cutting, support to Community Garden (financial and labour), supporting National Spring Clean 2012, planting and maintaining flora and fauna displays and purchase of new flags for Sandhaven.
- **Public Safety.** Pro-active engagement with statutory bodies to enhance eg lighting, traffic flow and speeding, reporting of crime and repair of the rail fences and new level crossing gates/lights.
- **Education.** Continued support to Culross Primary School.
- **Empty Properties.** Continued engagement with NTS (The Cross) and private owners (Dundonald Hotel, Sandhaven etc) to invite them to hasten refurbishment and/or advise future plans. Note: unless FC deem these

properties as a risk to public health/safety – on one occasion they did at the request of CCC and made urgent repairs at a private owner's expense – there is little else than can be achieved via legislation.

- **Public Recognition.** 'Jubilee Awards' to nominated residents who have **contributed** significantly to the village over a period of time.
- **Community Engagement.** New initiatives such as the Hogmanay Torchlight Procession were embraced by the community and fuelled an air of 'bon homie'.
- **Common Good Assets.** **100%** audit conducted to ratify who owns what; especially former Burgh assets.
- **Parking.** A perennial issue given the influx of vehicles: and CCC is committed to representing all factions of the community to resolve, or partially resolve this thorny topic.
- **Funding Initiatives.** I would especially commend the efforts of one of our Cllrs whose innovative, dogged determination and visionary approach to drawing down funding has added immense value to a plethora of projects.
- **Planning.** Always a contentious issue, CCC has fulfilled its remit to inform, consult and invite residents to offer their views on every planning application.
- **Surveys.** Where applicable formal surveys were distributed to the community to seek views on matters that could affect the broader community: success was sometimes limited due to paucity of returns.

**Future commitments** will include, inter alia, some of the following:

- **Entrepreneurial Initiatives.** Where it benefits the wider community and where planning applications are realistic, CCC will endeavour to support and promote such ventures. A present village retailer has expressed a strong desire to introduce a retail shop at the very earliest opportunity should appropriate rented premises be made available by NTS. CCC (and the retailer) has been formally engaged for the past month or so with NTS and it is hoped that sufficient flexibility will be exercised by NTS to support this initiative in the New Year. Similarly, dialogue with Post Office Ltd during the past 6-weeks has resulted in POL confirming (this week) they are prepared to offer a part-time service in the village, "once a visiting Postmaster has been identified and, if appropriate premises can be made identified": CCC is pursuing options.
- **NTS Partnership.** I would wish to see a considerable improvement in the relationship between NTS and CCC (and others in the village) and NTS has recently agreed that a representative will now regularly attend CCC meetings which should promote mutual benefit.
- **Newsletter.** The Editor aspires to continue this most useful community information tool in the near future.
- **Enhancing Democracy.** This is the *raison d'être* of a community council and I shall make every effort, with my fellow cllrs, to ensure that our community is fully informed, consulted and represented. Elected CCC Cllrs do not 'run' the village; they only represent and action the views for the benefit of the community and engagement by the public is absolutely vital to continued success.

I have recently heard a few anecdotal comments to the effect that the Chair of CCC is often a *'figurehead who will merely agree with the wishes of his fellow cllrs - and hence the high turnover of Chair of CCC'*. Allow me to assure you that is certainly not the case where I am concerned. I am 100% committed to Democracy, to representing the resident population and to engaging both vocally and pro-actively, in partnership with elected cllrs and residents, for the good and benefit of the community. And I am my own man. Should I be fortunate enough to be re-elected Chair at the 2012 AGM, and on the assumption that I shall be supported fully at all times by fellow cllrs, I shall continue to chair CCC on that basis.

**Finally**, thank you once again to all have contributed so much during the past year and your Community Council very much look forward to representing you during the next 12-months. We are keen but not infallible; we are visionary but not mind readers; where we perhaps have not got it right please let us know. Equally if you are happy with what we are achieving on your behalf please also inform us. And if possible, come along and voice your opinions at our monthly meetings in the Town House. Many thanks and very best wishes to all of you from CCC.

*George*

**George J Connelly MBE**  
**Chair**  
**Culross Community Council**

**12 November 2012**