

Royal Burgh of Wigtown & District Community Council

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CONVENOR'S REPORT - AGM 13.6.2016

This has been my first year as Convenor of the Community Council, stepping into the considerable shoes of past Convenors and endeavouring to continue the excellent steps made by my predecessor, Nicholas Walker, in creating an environment that focusses the council on the issues and opportunities for the Royal Burgh of Wigtown.

It has been an interesting year, with a mix of progress on some issues, confusion on others and developments that continue to impact the community, tourism and businesses. It has been a year separated by an election for Community Councillors resulting in the required adoption of a revised constitution – which Jak Kane steered us past the pit falls that befell other Councils – and the introduction of some new Councillors as well as the departure of some others.

We welcomed Ann Gray as a newly elected Councillor and Joe McKeown and Kerr Inger as Co-opted Councillors. Departures during the year were Carl Davies and Brian Vogan and I take this opportunity to thank them for their time and efforts as Councillors.

Amongst the highlights of the year were the re-establishment of the Riding of the Marches for Wigtown and the Council would like to thank Andrew Wilson and his team for all their efforts in making the first riding such a success. Hundreds of people came to the Burgh to watch the Ridings and spectators and riders alike thoroughly enjoyed the event.

Wigtown Week and the Christmas Tree lighting and Kist were again largely successful. A number of new activities were incorporated into Wigtown Week and some were well attended, others less so. Next year's Wigtown Week will coincide with the Riding of the Marches to further enhance both events.

Changes and improvements to Wigtown were also of mixed success. The long awaited refurbishment of the public toilets has been completed, with all three toilets now uni-sex and disabled accessible. However the changes to the Bus stop in town proved more controversial with representations from local residents and businesses as well as Community Councillors over the size, positioning and routing of buses. A meeting between the Council and those affected on site has resolved most of the concerns, however parking around the Merkat Cross continues to be an issue that will need to be addressed.

Renewable energy continued to be an item high on the agenda with the California Wind Farm application being sent to appeal after D&G's failure to issue a planning decision within timescales.

We made further representation in objection to the scheme and await the final decision at the end of June 2016.

The issue of derelict properties in the Burgh has been on every meeting agenda this year, with work halted on the property on North Main Street and no visible progress on other properties. The Councillors and I remain frustrated at the lack of enforcement by D&G Council, which has allowed the situation to drag on for over 3 years. A clear resolution and policy will be a focus for the next Community Council year to ensure that should the situation arise elsewhere, a quicker and more structured resolution process is in place for the benefit of all involved and affected.

Wigtown Fair Trade Committee was re-established this year, with efforts to retain the Town's Fairtrade status being implemented, however support amongst the community businesses and organisations remains patchy.

The Waste Recycling pilot across Wigtownshire ran into difficulties during the year with a significant budget overspend despite reassurances that the pilot would benefit from the experiences of all those who had gone before. A revised pilot is now in operation, but not within our region. Concerns remain amongst the community about the system for collections and their benefit/cost to the community.

The final success of this report goes to Nicholas Walker's continued drive to cement the wider Machars Federation of Community Councils. The federation provides a regional platform to lobby for change and involvement in decision making at local government. Whilst Wigtown's communications with D&G Council have been largely effective, sometimes we can be dismissed as a small voice on a big playing field.

To conclude my report, I would like to thank my fellow Councillors for their support throughout the year. I was also like to thank Councillors Alistair Geddes, Jim McColm and Graham Nicol for contributing to all of our meetings and their efforts on our behalf within the D&G Council. Many thanks also go to Jak Kane for his efforts in dealing with the multitude of Consultation documents presented to the Council and for taking on the mantle of minutes Secretary; to our treasurer, David Moran for keeping an eye on the finances and Willie McCartney for his role as Vice-convenor. I will end with a thanks to my predecessor for wading through the monthly planning applications and providing reports that make the task of consideration that much more straightforward for us all.

I wish all of the Community Councillors well for the next twelve months of debate and deliberation.

Let Wigtown Flourish.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M Kitson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Matt Kitson, Convenor, June 2016