



KINGUSSIE COMMUNITY NEWS

Welcome to the second issue of Kingussie Community News. Feedback from the first newsletter has been favourable, so we must be doing something right. It's amazing how quickly the time has flown. Hopefully spring has finally sprung, and the days are drawing out. So what has your Community Council been doing since last Summer?

Updates from your last newsletter

- **Litter Bins.** Highland Council have repainted the remaining litter bins in town. The gold decoration on them will be completed by one of your Community Councillors; but only once the weather gets a bit warmer!
- **Lamp standards.** Regrettably TranServe have let us down, as despite having committed to include the repainting of our High Street's shabby lamp standards in their 2010/11 budget, this has not happened. We'll just have to keep the pressure on and hope that it can be achieved 2011/12, although sooner rather than later would be good.
- **New Town Gateway Signs.** As you will have seen these have now been completed and installed, and the glitch with the miss-spelled Gaelic wording rectified! We are sure that you will agree that they are a definite improvement on the battered, faded old brown signs which they replaced, and we are very grateful to both the Highland Council and the Cairngorms National Park Authority for providing us with the money to make this possible.
- **Allotments.** The push for allotments is moving on apace and we're hoping that Kingussie will be the first to get them, setting a benchmark for the rest of the Strath. The favoured place for them at present is at the Manse Road end of the old Folk Museum site, as it's on the flat and easily accessible. If you still haven't registered for a plot but would like to be included, it's still not too late. Contact Highland Council's Keith Walker on **01463 702247** or email him at: keith.walker@highland.gov.uk. There will be a public meeting about allotments at 7pm on Wednesday 25th May at Kinraig Community Hall. It's an opportunity for you to say what *you* want, so get there if you can.

What else has been happening since your last read? Of course, the real biggie is obviously the question of our community attempting a buy out of the old Folk Museum site, on Duke Street.

Community buy- out of Am Fasgadh and the old Folk Museum site

In the last newsletter, you may remember that there was a list of what you considered to be the eight highest priorities for Kingussie, which came to light as a result of the "Our Community a Way Forward" Survey carried out last year. Number three on the list was a wish for Am Fasgadh, MacRobert house and the old folk Museum site to be brought into community ownership. You may already have read all about it in The Badenoch and Strathspey Herald, or taken part in a questionnaire carried out on the High Street last year by your Community

Council. There was enthusiastic support for the project to go ahead, but it cannot be taken forward without significant further public consultation, as your support is critical. This project is immense, and will take years and a great deal of money, but if we all pull together it *is* achievable.

Given the alarming decline in our High Street businesses recently, we felt that it was imperative for us to try and do something to redress the balance, and if we can acquire the whole of the old Folk Museum site from its current owners the Highland Council, potential for growing new businesses and creating a new quality tourist attraction for Kingussie is immense. It would give a huge boost to our local economy and hopefully help to put Kingussie firmly back onto the tourist map, where it belongs. The provision of units for small businesses (your number two wish on the community survey) could also be easily accommodated within the old Folk Museum site, along with other things. We'll keep you up dated on further developments, and will be holding a public meeting about this soon. Meanwhile, if anyone would like to become actively involved in this important project, please get in touch.

Kingussie Post Office Danger

You may be aware that the Government has embarked on a Post Office restructuring programme in order to cut costs and "improve" the service provided by our Post Offices. Unfortunately this seems to work on the assumption that small Post Offices will be able to increase the amount and type of goods that they sell, or relocate to be part of another existing retail outlet. In the case of our tiny much loved Post Office, neither of these options are workable. Our Sub-Postmaster Charlie Kelly is extremely concerned that he may have to close, as the new rules will effectively make his business unviable. We simply must not let this happen as it would be as disastrous for Kingussie as it would for Charlie, who hopes that he can be of service to Kingussie for many years to come. Our bank already only opens for four day week, the Highland Council Service Point has reduced its opening hours, the Council depot has been sold off to TranServe, and our Court House is no longer in use. If this continues Kingussie will just fade away, and it is up to all of us to make sure that this does not happen.

Our Post Office offers an amazing array of services. Besides posting your letters and parcels did you know that you can: tax your car, buy holiday currency, collect your pension, buy stamps and packaging materials, get cash out (if you have a bank card with a P.I.N number) , pay cash in, pay your rent and council tax (if you're a council tenant) open Post Office savings accounts or investments, top up your mobile 'phone, plus a host of other services too numerous to mention. If we all use at least one of these services every week it will help to ensure that our Post Office remains open, rather than becoming the victim of forced closure.

The solution is in your hands: use it or lose it. And that goes for every other retail outlet and amenity which we are currently lucky enough to have in Kingussie.

National Health Dentists

There still isn't any news as to whether an NHS dentist will be setting up in Kingussie but if you aren't on the NHS list yet, it won't make any difference if they do! The nearest NHS dental practices are still at Aviemore and Grantown on Spey, where the waiting list time is between one and two years. If you don't mind travelling, the waiting list time for Inverness is between six months to one year. Whatever, the sooner you get yourself registered and onto the list the better. The easiest way to do this is by telephoning the Highland Dental Help Line on **0845 6442271**, and if you're under sixteen, pregnant, have had a baby within the last twelve months, over seventy five, or suffering from a complex medical condition (e.g.; cancer) they will fast-track your application.

Their number is also well worth making a note of because if you aren't registered with the NHS but suddenly find yourself with a dental emergency, you can ring them first thing in the morning for an emergency NHS

appointment. And finally: if you want **FREE** dental treatment, did you know that this is available at the Inverness Dental Centre Student Clinic, based at Raigmore Hospital? Although it is students who do the dentistry they are supervised by a tutor, and will have undertaken other training before being let loose on the unsuspecting public! For further information you can contact them on **01463 255230**.

Badenoch & Strathspey Community Transport

For anyone unable to access public transport (and we all know what *that's* like here) this community run registered charity is a life line for many people. If you would like the use of a community car to enable you to get out and about, you will need to register to become a car scheme client. The number you need to ring is **01479 810004** (press "option 2"). The minimum charge per journey is £3 but if the driver has to wait over the hour, the minimum is £5. The maximum charged for a health related journey is also £5. For more ambitious outings, there is the wheelchair accessible "Where 2 Today?" six-seater mini-bus, which is available for group outings or individuals needing transportation with a wheelchair. Just telephone the above number to check for availability and then plan the jolly!

We know that the community car scheme is in desperate need of drivers in our area so if you own a car, have some free time on your hands, and really like the idea of making a serious difference to someone else's life, B & S Community Transport would love to hear from you. Expenses are paid, so you shouldn't be out of pocket.

"Stage Coach" Consultation

Having mentioned public transport, we're sure that many of you will be aware that the "Stage Coach" bus company held a public consultation session at the Duke of Gordon Hotel on the 14th February. Most of those attending made it quite clear that they found the existing service to be both infrequent and unreliable. We believe that the bus company genuinely want to improve their service but in the meantime, should you be standing at the bus stop waiting for a bus which is either seriously late or just doesn't come, you may find the following telephone numbers useful: **01479 811566** (Aviemore Depot Controller, available 6am - 4pm Monday to Friday) or **01463 239292** (Inverness; Andy Chapman). Although these numbers only relate to Stage Coach services, their controllers might still be able to help with information about late City Link buses.

Kingussie Development Company Micro Hydro Scheme

You may have read in the "Strathy" that Donnie Grant and his team at KCDC applied for and received £65,386 from the Peoples Post Code Lottery. Added to "Leader" and other funding which Donnie worked so hard to get, this substantial award means that there is now enough money for this fantastic community project to go ahead. The Cairngorms National Park Authority have at last granted planning permission, so sometime this month it should be all systems go on the River Gynack. For anyone still unaware of this project, it entails the construction of a lade, to channel the water to an Archimedes Screw turbine (like a large metal worm) and a turbine house which like a Hobbit House, will be tucked away under the ground. Over- looking this will be a viewing platform so that you can watch the turbine revolving and producing electricity. The good news for Kingussie is that the electricity it generates will make £15,000 per year. This means that after monies have been put on one side to pay for routine maintenance/repairs, a substantial amount will be left to spend on Kingussie. If you want to know more about this project and see the short presentation film made by the Peoples Post Code Lottery for their presentation evening in Edinburgh, log on to: <http://www.spanglefish.com/KingussieCommunityDevelopmentCompany> and click onto "Our projects and Renewable Energy".

Kingussie is very lucky to have hard working people such as Donnie and his team, who care enough about their town to want to try and do something truly inspiring.

Bulb Planting

Last October the Rotary Club generously donated a large quantity of crocus bulbs. We passed some of these on to the Primary School for the pupils to plant, and decided to plant the rest ourselves in the planters outside the Courthouse. We set to one freezing October morning, adding winter bedding plants in an attempt to provide a welcome splash of colour to the town. It has to be said that this was not one of our better ideas because a combination of the birds digging about in the compost plus the winter weather, meant that most of the bulbs failed to germinate. The winter bedding plants didn't fare much better either and ended up giving a rather lack lustre display. Well at least we tried.

Community Council Restructuring

All Community Councils are currently undergoing major restructuring. In the case of Kingussie this means that instead of being allowed to have up to twelve councillors, we will only be allowed to have up to nine. As we are currently operating with only seven councillors, this should not pose too much of a problem. Our election was due to be held this April, but due to the restructuring this would have meant us having to hold a further election in November. As it patently does not make sense to hold two elections in such a short space of time, we have decided to wait until November and hold just the one election. **If you care about Kingussie as much as we do, have a bit of spare time and are willing to get involved, why don't you consider standing for election to the Community Council? The more people who are willing to play their part in representing the interests of Kingussie, the more effective our Community Council can be.**



MacRobert House, Duke Street



Am Fagadh, Duke Street

We want to hear your ideas!! Get in touch by either telephoning your Community Council Secretary Val Emmett on 07510 256978 or email her at calypsoart@btinternet.com

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