



THE COMMUNITY Councillor

THE JOURNAL OF THE ASSOCIATION OF SCOTTISH COMMUNITY COUNCILS

SUMMER 2011



*Facing the
final curtain...*

THE ASSCC IS CLOSING DOWN PAGES 3, 4 & 5

TRAINING • SUPPORT • ADVICE • INFO • NETWORK

HELPING COMMUNITIES IN SCOTLAND GO GREEN



Community Energy Scotland is an independent Scottish charity and social enterprise working throughout Scotland to provide practical help for communities on green energy development.

We aim to develop community based renewable energy

projects which result in systems managed by the local community for all users in that community. We also raise awareness of energy consumption among these users addressing issues of fuel poverty.

We have a network of development officers throughout the country who provide support and advice on how to proceed with projects and in some cases, suggest sources of funding. A lot of the communities we work with are associated with or are members of Community Councils.

In the last 3 years over 300 renewable energy installations in community facilities such as village halls have been supported by us. We are also currently working with over 150 groups who are developing projects to generate income from renewable energy.

One of the revenue generating projects we have assisted has just resulted in the erection of mainland Scotland's first wholly community owned wind turbine in Udney, 13 miles north of Aberdeen. The project has been entirely managed by a group of 5 community members. During the lifetime of the turbine, it is anticipated over £3.8m will be generated for the Udney parish. ALL this revenue will go straight back into the community to be spent on projects chosen by them. **Tiree and Westray communities have also recently installed similar turbine projects.**

Community Energy Scotland members have the opportunity to network and learn from each other at various stages of development. We also offer interactive coaching sessions on such topics as finance, legal structure, power purchasing and governance.

Visit us at www.communityenergyscotland.org.uk for more details or to become a member.



Empowering Communities

Community Energy Scotland provides practical help for communities on green energy development.



We:

- Believe communities can become stronger, more self reliant and resilient by generating their own energy and using it efficiently.
- Help communities across Scotland to own and operate renewable energy installations.
- Provide education, finance and practical help.
- Are a voice for communities who want to act now for a more secure and sustainable energy future in Scotland

For more information or to become a member

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ASCC Activities

- Campaigning on National issues
- Support & Advice to Community Councils
- Training
- Networking
- Mediation
- Working with National organisations to develop & strengthen local democracy.
- Working with Community Councils, Local Government, and National Government to improve the quality of life in Scottish Society.
- Member Insurance

Communicating with the ASCC

Our preferred method of communication is by e-mail so that information can be easily forwarded to the appropriate person (our National Officers are located throughout Scotland).

Calls to our 0845 number are directed to a company which provides the ASCC with a telephone message answering service only. If your communication is by telephone, please ensure you leave your CC, name and contact telephone number and you will be contacted in due course. Please be aware that, like many CCLrs, our National Officers are volunteers and often do ASCC business in the evenings.

Insurance is handled by another volunteer, Nick Walker, and the preferred method of communication with him is also by e-mail to insurance@ascc.org.uk

THE ASCC IS CLOSING DOWN

You have probably heard this news. You may also have heard conflicting statements about the cause. Here are the facts:

The ASCC is being forced to close down because the Scottish Government Finance Secretary, Mr John Swinney, has dramatically cut funding and, just a bad, has ring fenced what the money he offered could be spent on.

Let's be clear: Mr Swinney KNEW the closure of the ASCC would be the certain result of his actions. We had provided his staff with a detailed funding BID in February, which laid out the work the ASCC was being asked to do, and what it would cost. Then we shared detailed financial data, which showed the inevitable closure of the ASCC given a grant of the amount he was offering, with the attached strings. So, Mr Swinney knew what would happen, which must mean he wanted it to happen. Interestingly, as a member of the SNP, Mr Swinney is bound by a mandatory party policy which states the SNP will fund the ASCC to a level to enable it to perform its role; so Mr Swinney caused the closure of the ASCC in defiance of his party's policy, and all those SNP members who mandated it.

Another canard needs killed off: it is NOT too late for something to be done. All it requires is for Mr Swinney to change his position. Yes, expecting any politician to do that is akin to expecting turkeys to vote for Christmas; but he cannot claim that it is beyond his power to prevent the closure of this charity – he need only increase the grant to the ASCC (an amount so small it appears several places after the decimal point as a *percentage* of his department's budget). The ASCC is not shutting down because the trustees want it to, but because it is forced to close. A charitable company cannot continue to operate when its trustees know there is not sufficient money, to do so is a criminal offence.

Now, if the Scottish Government has claimed in places – as we are told they have in statements to the press – that they seek to work with the ASCC to prevent this tragedy, here's something else you need to be clear about: they haven't said that to us! The ASCC has not been asked for a meeting or a discussion about its finances by Mr Swinney – in fact he hasn't been in contact at all. His civil servants have recently told us there is no need for any further meetings with them.

This was no accident. There was a warning sign. The Scottish Government, through the current

senior liaison person (we've been through half a dozen of them in four years, not a help with continuity or when hoping to deal with a civil servant who knows what they are talking about), launched a "survey" of ASCC stakeholders late in 2010. If you can, look at the survey questions and structure. If you know someone with expertise in research, analysis, statistics, or the like, show it to them – as the ASCC did with three independent experts. They will likely tell you that it is the most unprofessional, statistically meaningless, improper abuse of the word survey they have seen. The experts we consulted used terms like "hatchet job", "full of leading questions" and, perhaps most tellingly, "what did you do to annoy the folk who came up with this?" But look at it for yourself. If you can, look at it in objective terms. It is an opinion poll on a national charity. A biased, intentionally destructive and manipulative opinion poll. It breaks all the rules for statistical validity. It gets better – we've seen the analysis of the survey responses as drafted by the Scottish Government Analytical Services section. We gave that to independent experts too. Their reactions to this were largely unprintable. The short version: the person(s) who did it either knew none of the conventions for objective statistical analysis, or was purposefully sticking the knife in. If it ever gets published (and we might do this ourselves) you'll see what we mean – if you read it, ask yourself how you'd feel if this was written about your Community Council.

So, why a hatchet job? Well it had been suggested to us that the returns of the survey would influence the Minister in making his grant decision. When we pointed out the fatal errors in the survey structure, process and content, the civil servants pedalled backwards. No, they said, the survey wouldn't affect our grant. That stirred us to ask – then what is the point of the survey? We're still waiting for a clear answer to that one. Did the draft survey analysis affect Mr Swinney? We think it more likely that our latest civil servant liaison painted a picture, using the survey as "proof" and suggested a course of action; a path which Mr Swinney seems happy to go down, so that lessens his culpability but little. We doubt he ever read our original funding bid or anything else other than a two page bullet-point briefing from civil servants – we're sure they never read the funding bid, and that's another point worth noting...

CONTINUED OVERLEAF...

The first offer of funding for this year we got from the Government (weeks later than we usually do) was for £30,000. The offer specified what it had to be spent on, and included assumptions about what those things cost the ASCC. The numbers were wrong; not a little wrong, a lot. The funding bid we sent them set out in detail our costs; the only way they would not know their numbers were wrong is if they did not read our application. What does that suggest? When they realised they had been rumbled, there was a quick confab with the Minister, and we were told he had approved a “small increase in grant.” This covered the direct costs of the things he wanted us to do but, crucially, not the ancillary costs of doing it, or of simply being in existence.

The money, then. The ASCC grant from the Scottish Government, and its predecessors, has NEVER been ring fenced. Always an amount was given, and agreement reached on some outcomes, but how we spent the money was never mandated, so long as we delivered. This grant offer was totally ring-fenced, to be spent on only three costs, one of which was the hiring of outside consultants to tell us how we could get money from other funders, more of that later.

The ASCC needs a minimum of £70,000 per year to provide the level of service we until now have to CCs, and a paltry service it is compared to what we want and CCs need. When your grant for a year equates to less than £30 per CC, you don't get very far. For comparison, there are national and local charities currently government funded who receive grants in the hundreds of thousands, many of which have fewer than one hundred service users and cover only part of Scotland. (The 32 CVSs covering each local authority alone have £8.25 million to spend). A comparison closer to home? Glasgow City Council spends middle six figures and has a staff of five people just to support the 70-odd CCs in the city! There are 1155 Community Councils in Scotland and they are, by definition, in all the airts and pairs. To provide the sort of service we should be providing would (even if we compare minimally to other similar charities) a staff of at least ten and a budget of £350,000+. We asked Mr Swinney for around £90,000, hoping to get £75,000 or so. Does this look big compared to your CC budget? Of course it does, but does your CC have responsibility for the whole of Scotland, and the cost that entails, and do you need to provide a service to thousands of Community Councillors, or just the handful on your CC? The ASCC is not a CC, and the comparison robs thought of sense.

Community Councils have been historically and invariably underfunded throughout their existence, proportionately the same is true for the ASCC. We well know the true reason for the underfunding of CCs is to limit the effectiveness of a potentially powerful structure, should it be a wonder that the same is true of the “CoSLA of Community Councils”. Interestingly, it might be worth your while to find out how much money the Scottish Government gives to CoSLA to represent all of thirty-two Councils, as it might for you to discover that august body's entire annual budget. (And if you do, remember that they pay no expenses for Councillors working within CoSLA, as these are expected to be covered by the local authority of the

particular Councillor – so would your CC like to start paying for our travel? (All donations from your measly budgets welcome.)

Which leads nicely onto: Why can't CCs pay for the cost of the ASCC? Good news, you can. That'll be £80 per CC per annum please – assuming all 1150 pay up. If you know CCs like we know CCs...well there's a song about that. So a more likely figure is £100 per CC. That ok? Remember this only gets you the pretty minimal service we've been able to supply over the last three years thanks to extra income, now gone. If you actually want a decent service, say something like training for your CC or, if you're really demanding, help with a particular local problem, we can do that; a steal at somewhere between £250 and £500 per visit, depending on your location, number of Councillors and the time of the meeting. If we have to come more than once, it's a good idea if you're not spending any of your budgets on other things, like stamps. All sound a bit whiney? You're probably right, but imagine how it feels to be a trustee of a national charity that you have to shut down; it's not a good feeling.

But we could get money from other sources surely? Well, we used existing relationships with all the big grant funders to have conversations about our prospects of success. The responses were unanimous. The ASCC will not secure grant funding from charitable trusts because its objective is support and promotion of a part of the statutory sector – Community Councils. Irony doesn't quite cover it, eh? And, once again, Mr Swinney and his staff were made aware of this months ago, in fact have been told this consistently for years; he knew the ASCC's only source of core funding was him. We assume he either didn't believe that or didn't care; but you'd have to ask him.

Now there was a time when CCs existed before the ASCC did, and they will continue to, at least in the theoretical sense. Although there are those politicians who dearly want to see the law creating them repealed, the gravest immediate threat to Community Councils is simpler – our members are dying and are not replaced. The average age of a Councillor a few years ago was in the mid fifties, it's now the mid to late sixties. Within the decade most of the Community Councils in Scotland will not have enough members to survive, unless they are replaced by younger people. That will not happen without a significant and sustained piece of work to promote and develop CCs. Will your local authority do that? Will the Scottish Government? How about any of the multitudes of charities promoting alternatives to CCs as vehicles for community representation and development? Then, who will? If someone were looking for a way to begin the final push towards the extinction of CCs, they'd be smart to begin by killing off the one organisation dedicated to their support, promotion and defence. A thought to leave with you.

Goodbye.

FAQ FOR PE

Come on now, don't be shy. The C made that up, but defamation is a

So you might have some questions on your mind about the ASCC closure. If you're typical, these questions will be about process rather than substance, about minutiae rather than the important, and will suggest a preconceived judgement on your part. Yes, we have met your kind before. We've been trying, in the nicest way, to have you dragged from our Council chambers, as you represent all that's worst in Community Councils, but it turns out you are a hardy variety – and the ASCC is not. We know, you're schadenfreude levels are spiking. Enjoy.

Anyway, you have some questions. And the answers are required, nay demanded. Here you go...

Q. Why isn't the dissolution of the unincorporated part of the ASCC being put to a ballot of member CCs as set out in the constitution?

A. Good question. We knew that one would be the first shot fired. The constitution allows that as a mechanism for dissolution, but does not prescribe it as the only one. Refer please to section 2a and 2b of the constitution for the basis on which the Executive Council triggered the closure. That not good enough? Ok; the other reason is simpler – the Executive Council members are personally, jointly, severally, wholly and unlimitedly liable for the operation of the unincorporated arm of the ASCC. If we do anything liable, we pay for it – literally and metaphorically. The unincorporated arm has no money to undertake a ballot of member Councils (no grant money for that). If the Executive Council members incur debt the organisation can't cover, we pay for it. We have an absolute legal right not to take a decision that damages us as individuals. Still not good enough? You could do better? Excellent! We would be delighted to co-opt you and resign ourselves. We assume you have no problem with your personal liability, as you seem to be comfy with ours. When can you start?

PEDANTIC COMMUNITY COUNCILLORS

Community Council world has more pedants per head of population than the Pedants Society. Yes, we have a real concern here, we live in an increasingly litigious society – just ask some Community Councils.

Q. Will Community Councils get to decide how the assets of the charity (the incorporated arm) are distributed during the winding up? And will these assets be given to CCs – after all it's our money?!

A. If the police and OSCR promise not to prosecute us for that particular criminal offence, it's dandy by us. Sure, as a Community Councillor you have perhaps been used to living in what you thought was a consequence free environment, where you could do or say anything you like in the CC and there would be no repercussions. Ask the several of your colleagues who have been sued or resigned to prevent being sued in recent years if that's how it goes. Charity and company law sets out how whatever assets are left must be distributed. CCs will definitely get zilch. Well, if you stop shouting we'll explain why... because the law requires charity assets to be given for a charitable purpose; CCs are not charities and their legal purpose is not charitable, so if the trustees gave so much as £1 to a CC we'd be in the pokey. And let's be honest here – the call to the cops would be made by a CCllr, and he'd be rubbing his hands with glee while he dialled. That's who too many of us are.

Thanks for the bit about the ASCC's assets being your money. Really? Seriously? If your CC is a member it pays, at most, £15 per year to the ASCC. More likely, your local authority pays for you. It's been among the most disheartening of experiences dealing with rampant CCllrs who have a bee in their bonnet about ASCC money but a gap in their thinking where logic should be. Your £15 would not pay for the four magazines we send out to members each year – and that's just the magazines and the postage, we're not even talking about the cost of keeping a database of addresses here. So, please, if you truly think your £15 is the rock on which ASCC finances depended, do something else, you're too ignorant to be a CCllr; if you know it isn't and just enjoy a quarrel, you are what gives credibility to the criticism of those who revile CCs; go now, go quietly.

Q. Will the ASCC share its database of CC contact details so some kind of networking can still go on?

A. Not unless we want prosecuted for criminal breaches of the Data Protection Act. A "data controller" is not allowed to pass on to a third party any personal data it holds on any "data subject". Our database has over 1500 data subjects; passing on the details would trigger over 1,500 offences under the legislation. We'd rather avoid that. Hope you understand.

Q. What does the Governance of the ASCC cost, and why?

A. In direct costs alone, £15,000 per year. A more realistic cost, when you include the infrastructure needed to make it possible, is over £20,000 pa. Why? Because the constitution of the unincorporated association puts several demands on the elected reps, and each of these has a significant cost. Some examples:

Must Do:	Typical Annual Cost:
Conference.....	£5000
Regional Meetings x 4	£4000
Annual National Ballot	£1500
Three other mailings	£3000

Although you may have been told otherwise, the ASCC has been far more democratic in the last few years than ever before, and the elected reps far more mandated by required actions. Democracy comes at a price. The structure of the unincorporated association was as approved overwhelmingly by members CCs in a national ballot in 2008. So, basically, it's your fault. And there were a small number of folk last year who wanted to add more to this cost by creating another level of governance; though they weren't suggesting their CCs pay for it you understand. A big part of the outlay for this used to come from the Scottish Government grant, until this year when they refused all money for governance costs. That's why the unincorporated association part of the ASCC has to shut down immediately.

Q. What exactly did National Officers do – is that where all the money goes?

A. Thanks. That makes them all feel great. National Officers have existed as long as there's been an ASCC, just like the officers in your CC. Their job is supposed to be leadership and some operational support. The reality is they all work the hours of a part time job for the ASCC, and get paid nothing. Their expenses don't cover the real costs of being a National Officer, so each of them is in fact out of pocket. Their main job often seems to be as targets for people with agendas or just prejudices. Being the National Whatever of the ASCC is no picnic. We've sometimes heard it said that these posts are about self-aggrandisement; they find that funny, not funny ha-ha you understand, the sort that comes when you hit your funny bone off a hard edge.

Q. So, how will my CC network with others now? How will we share support and experiences independently of our local authorities?

A. At your own expense, by your own efforts and in your own time. Sorry.

Q. What about CCLOs? Where do they go for knowledgeable advice, confidential support?

A. We'd like to be able to say the Scottish Government, but they got their advice from us! Short answer – there isn't anywhere. What will probably happen (as is common across local government) is the person in the job in one place will ask her/his neighbours how they do something, and then copy it. This might sound like a good idea, but what if their neighbour is doing it badly?

Q. Who will be representing Community Councils now on national bodies, Government working groups, in relations with CoSLA and all that important stuff?

A. Two possible results here:
1. Nobody. Which the special interest groups who abhor CCs will love. Nice one!
2. Hand-picked nodding heads or hapless worthies chosen for their "partnership working" style.

No, not what you'd want. The same will be true for dealing with issues nationally that affect CCs everywhere – like Data Protection legislation, whether the current Scottish Government will keep its promises to CCs from its 2011 Manifesto any more than it kept the ones in the 2007 Manifesto; unimportant stuff like that. Might slip through the cracks.

Q. So my CC has a problem. Whom do we go to now?

A. Hmm. Maybe your local authority – unless it's the problem! It often is. You could try the Scottish Government, except they don't have the staff for that. They usually refer enquirers to the ASCC, who knows what they'll do after April? There are bodies out there who will happily give you advice, and some of it will help. Advice and support designed for CCs, and with their unique structure understood, accurate advice, with no agenda? – not so much.

Q. So what exactly did we get for the £15. Put another way, will we miss you?

A. More than we'll miss a few of you! Worth repeating – we're always the first to say our service is nowhere near as good as it needs to be; and that's all down to money. We could rehearse the whole litany of things the ASCC has done and does for CCs – and remind you that most of these are never seen at the level of your own CC. Many of them are things we do that help or things we prevent, before you even knew you had a problem. We're confident in the value of our modest service for your £15. We're just knackered, dispirited and jaded. So, rather than reciting the litany, we'll direct you to two documents: "What is the ASCC and What Can It Do For Our CC?" and "What Have You Done For Us Lately" (2nd Ed.) Hope that helps.

These were all the questions we could think of. We're sure there will be others.



MYTH OR REALITY? -YOU DECIDE!

The Funding offer of £40, 000 from the Scottish Government seems a lot of money and it is. Reality? Adequate funds to deliver the quality services and genuine outcomes for Community Councillors and Community Councils which you deserve - Myth? Read on...and you decide. .

The funding offer made three conditions:

1. Must fund all employment costs of a National Development Officer.
2. The job she has to undertake is 'Training and Capacity Building of Community Councillors, and Community Councils'.
3. Engage an external Consultant to review and advise on financial sustainability and a business plan for the Association of Scottish Community Councils.

What does this mean for you as a Community Councillor?

We are all familiar with the classic development cliché of Confucius 'Give a man a fish and we feed him for a day- teach a man to fish and we feed him for life'. This is a commendable act but it becomes inexcusable if we promote the principles but deny people equitable access to resources.

The funding conditions direct the role of a National Development Officer to undertake the 'training and capacity building of Community Councillors and Community Councils. . The concept of Capacity Building recognises that there is no situation in which capacity does not exist. The question is whether the existing capacities are being recognised and whether those capacities enable individuals and organisations to perform well in what they want to achieve.

The modern definition:

Capacity is the ability of people, organisations and society as a whole to manage their affairs successfully. Capacity Building is the process whereby people, organisations and society as a whole unleash, strengthen, create, adapt and maintain capacity over time.

Capacity Building is effectively about change – making things better, adding value, developing new assets skills or talents, development of new Capabilities (Collective skills) new Competencies (individual skills and energies). The concept of Change is not new and we all have experienced it at some point – but how we implement the change is what requires support and resources, along with willing partners.

Therefore reflecting back to the Scottish Government's Funding offer and its conditions, the Directors had to decide whether in practical terms the requirements were achievable on a National Forum, considering available resources Whilst still maintaining and improving core services.

Can we deliver successful outcome on £35000 (remembering that £5000 of the total has to

be spent on a Consultant not engaging with service delivery) for Training and Capacity Building of Community Councillors and Community Councils?

Questions the Directors asked:

- Can one member of staff provide Capacity Building support and service Nationally.?
- Where is the core funding for equipment, telephones, IT, Stationery, stamps and so on?
- Taking into account salary and ancillary employment costs this leaves £6000 to provide a deliverable and achievable service. This amounts to £0.42 per Community Councillor or equivalent to £ 5.21 per Community Council. Is this acceptable?
- The ASCC has no core facilities or core staff. It relies on the Voluntary efforts of National Officers. Can we seriously deliver adequate support on existing resources?

Reflecting on these questions and the cliché of Confucius, consider the Funding offer again. The conditions of the funding offer cannot be financially, practically and morally achieved.

The Rejected Funding Bid

It is the concept of modern Capacity Building which formed the base of our funding bid to the Scottish Government – a base on which you as Community Councillors could resource your own development and build the capacity and capabilities of your Community Council to deliver a service to the benefit of your Community.

The Directors have listened to you – your needs and requirements directed a bid which would afford you the resources you ask for in support of your aims. It clearly set out:

- Aim 1** To continue to improve & develop current service provision.
- Aim 2** To engage with Community Councils the purpose for which they exist under statutory guidelines.

Aim 3 To support the existing skill base of Community Councils to act as a representative voice of the community.

Aim 4 Work with and support National Organisations to use CCs as a conduit for Consultation & Partnership working.

Aim 5 Respecting the diversity and values of Communities throughout Scotland, and in tangent with the distinct working requirements of Scottish Local Authorities, the ASCC shall work effectively and in partnership with Local Authority Community Council Liaison Officers and COSLA officials to promote ‘best practice’ and support.

Aim 6 ASCC shall promote to Community Councils the value of engaging with younger members of their communities, and where possible advise on techniques encouraging Community Councils to share best practice.

Aim 7 Employ two part time Information Assistants to ensure continued update of relevant information & support and is provided on a regular basis to Community Councillors,

Aim 8 To secure an office base for ASCC operations.

In Comparison

If we take the Bid into context – this is not an excessive amount to run a National Organisation supporting 14000 individuals or 1150 Communities.

To quote the Government’s Budget for Finance and Sustainable Growth, statement for 2011-2012 (which has a specific portfolio for Third sector investment & growth):

‘In particular, we will invest £27 million to support the important role that the third sector has to play in public service delivery and redesign through a range of measures, including from spring 2011 taking a more strategic approach to our

investment in the third sector to increase its resilience and support to increase organisational capacity and capability.’

Consider Voluntary Action Groups (there is one in every Local Authority area - also registered Charities) claiming to represent you. The 32 groups shared £ 8.25 million pounds of Government money. That equates with an average of £250,000 per organisation to support the training and capacity building of local interest groups in your Local Authority area. Another example is the The Government award to the Association of Scottish Neighbourhood Watches for 2011-2012 - £75,000, yet again another Voluntary organisation with no statutory responsibilities.

Now compare that to the Government’s investment in your role in public service delivery and redesign. A total of £35000 to support 1150 Community Councils. Are you feeling valued for your commitment and contribution, not only to your community but

to the commitment of Scottish Society?

This isn’t just about funding the ASCC – this is about the value the Government puts on your contribution to society.

The ASCC believe your contributions to your Community demands equal consideration to that of third sector organisations. You have the rights to access adequate resources to support your development and that of your Community.

If you don’t believe in your own worth or that of your Community – do nothing. Silence speaks volumes! One MSP commented: ‘as no one has contacted me to complain, it is obviously unimportant to Community Councillors.’

Do you believe in your own worth, and the rights of your community? Complain in the strongest terms to your MSP and ask why Community Councils are being marginalised in favour of the voluntary sector.

Saving domestic energy and ending fuel poverty ...

There are many reasons for wanting to save energy in the home - to save money, keep warm and healthy and avoid being in fuel poverty as well as to reduce carbon, stop climate change and to help the environment.

Almost 1 in 3 Scottish households are in fuel poverty and so cannot afford to heat their homes properly. But there are solutions available and charity Energy Action Scotland is campaigning for more to be done.

Visit our website for news of policy developments in domestic energy efficiency or to use our Advisors Toolkit which provides frontline advisors with a practical guide to home energy and renewables. We also need members to help support our work.

... let’s find a solution together

**Energy Action Scotland (EAS), Suite 4a, Ingram House, 227 Ingram Street, Glasgow G1 1DA
Tel: 0141 226 3064 Email: eas@eas.org.uk
Website: www.eas.org.uk
Registered Charity No. SCO 09280**



ASCC Launch New Services

On Line Learning, Accredited Courses, and Legal Advice Service.

ASCC is pleased to announce new opportunities to support Community Councillors commitment to their skills development and their communities. These services have not 'appeared overnight' but through listening to Community Councillors we have developed these services around you.

On - Line Learning

Recognising the demands on Community Councillor time the On- Line Training will permit CCLRs to access training and information at their leisure. The site holds basic information and training modules which will be of interest to new Community Councillors and more experience Community Councillor who wish to 'test' their own Knowledge. Member Community Councillors can register to access more advanced topics which develops Community Leadership Skills and Knowledge.

Vital Skills Programme

This programme concentrates on the very basics of Community Council undertakings which anyone can review and use.

Good to Great Leadership Programme will be introduced shortly and will be available to member Community Councils. This programme of leadership skills will compliment the skills of experienced Community Councillors, and new Community Councillors who wish to improve their practice and knowledge.

Look out for information on how to register to access the Good to Great Leadership Programme shortly. The site also hosts a range of information tool kits - Log on to www.ascc-learning.org.uk

Accredited Courses

The Association of Scottish Community Councils are proud to be able to present training courses which are accredited by the Institute of Commercial Management. This accreditation provides assurance that our courses meet a professional standard.

Candidates will undertake private pre-course study, attend a facilitated session, and complete course work for internal and external verification. On successful completion the candidate will be awarded certification endorsed from ASCC and ICM. For more information ACCREDITED Courses download an information brochure from our web site www.ascc.org.uk

In partnership with Law Wise Law Clinic.



The ASCC is pleased to work in partnership with Law Wise Law

Clinic, the law clinic of University of the West of Scotland and supported by Renfrewshire Law Centre, to provide a first stage legal advice service which will aim to provide basic legal FAQs on Community Council related issues.

Community Councillors shall be able to submit questions online and student advisors will give an answer your question, with referrals for further advice where necessary.

Please note that this service is only able to facilitate issues affecting a Community Council which are submitted through the ASCC website. This service will not provide personal / private service to individuals directly.

Meet the Advisors:

Amanda Ferguson

I have recently graduated from UWS with a 2:1 BA Law (Hons) degree I look forward to



being involved in the work of the Association of Scottish Community Councils, and trust that the advice I can give will answer many queries which Community Councils are faced with.

Amanda O'Connor

I am currently studying Law in my final year at UWS. I have had challenges presented to me which required investigation and research into specific areas of law. I have a keen interest in Public Law and. I hope to assist the Association of Scottish Community Councils when giving advice and support to Community Councils, and look forward to doing so.

To submit a question complete the form on the members page - Law Clinic of the ASCC website: www.ascc.org.uk

ASCC insurance

The management and provision of insurance will continue to be fully supported until the end of the current period – 30th april 2012. The directors shall endeavour to support community councils and local authorities to explore alternative options – a process which we have already started.

PAC IT IN!

If there is one subject that focuses the minds of community councillors, and one that has been known to trigger a severe allergic reaction in many, it is that of "Planning". In particular, it is the feeling that planning officials and local councillors alike consistently ignore local opinion with regard to planning applications.

Another regular complaint in this regard is the tedious tendency for 'planning' to send out applications to CCs between meetings and seeking a response before the CC next meets. Ejits! Don't they realise the CC only meets once a month? Do they really expect community councillors to have to communicate with each other between meetings?

The problem is that in the 21st century – and for those who have not as yet twigged to it, that's the one we are in - "planning" is a major and very complex part of our lives and is a dynamic process which is constantly being reviewed, adjusted and improved and which very much requires us to utilise every tool that 21st century technology has put at our disposal in order to keep pace with it. Community councils on the other hand, have changed little in attitude or process since 1975 – and it shows! In many CCs even the personnel have not changed in those three and a half decades and their interest in planning is limited to ensuring that nothing else changes either!

One of the major improvements to the planning process, introduced in 2009, is known as PAC (I know! Governments are fixated on acronyms, this stands for Pre-Application Consultation). The idea, and one endorsed by the ASCC and in which we have already facilitated contact between developers and communities on a number of occasions, is to greatly speed up the process from planning application to planning decision. How does it work? In truth it is as simple a concept as the safety pin, and one which will prove to be every bit as useful. A concept that is so simple that it is difficult to understand why it was never introduced before – even in 1975!

PAC ensures that in 'major' developments – that is any development involving in excess of 2.0 hectares and/or 50 houses – the developer will consult with the local community affected prior to a Planning Application even being submitted. For very obvious reasons

community councils – statutory consultees – feature largely in this process, not least because it is in their remit to obtain and express the opinion of their constituents. It is intended that this process should facilitate developer and community arriving at an accord (and has proven to do so on many occasions already to the benefit of all concerned) but, should no accord be achieved and the application is submitted in any event, the CC or A. N. Other may raise an objection as normal at that time. One of the great side effects of this process is that by encouraging dialogue and collaboration between Developer and Community directly, the existing friction and enmity which – sadly often develops between CCs and LA councillors and planning officials might be greatly reduced, except in all but the most rigidly righteous of community councillors!

Now, I'm not normally driven to be overly sympathetic to local authority councillors or planning officials. After all, they are handsomely paid for the right to be harassed by their constituents. Community councillors on the other hand, can be harassed at no cost to the community, which to my mind makes community councillors much better value for

"The trouble with public opinion is that it can sometimes be hard to find two members of the public with the same opinion"

the money! But many community councillors have a simple and very basic understanding of the role of the Planning Department, i.e. "They're supposed tae dae whit they're tel!" If a community councillor objects to a planning application – and for too many that is the default mode – it should immediately be scrapped, torn up and binned! Perhaps even jail or exile the applicant for having the temerity to upset the serenity of the neighbourhood!

Local Authority Councillors, they will claim, are voted in to represent the views of the people who elected them. "They are supposed to listen to the electorate", they will declare, "And that's the views they should express, not their own!" Sounds like a fairly simple democratic concept doesn't it? (And one which could be said to apply to community councillors too!). Sounds a fair deal to have absolute control of your LA councillor's opinions and all for the costs of putting your X in a wee square in the

ballot box. So what do they do with all of the electorate who voted for the other guy? Tell them to bog off? And what happens when, having been democratically elected by, shall we say 3,000 voters, they then listen intently to the views of 3,000 folk and are presented with 3,000 different opinions? (OK! Wee poetic licence there!). Suppose its just 10 different opinions, that means that, whatever one the elected member agrees with there will be 90% feeling aggrieved and screaming, "They're supposed to listen to us!" Suppose it's just the two, fairly equally divided opinions? What half of the electorate do they listen to and what half do they tell to get knotted?

The trouble with public opinion is that it can sometimes be hard to find two members of the public with the same opinion! PAC is designed to ensure that the appropriate developer will consult on his (or her, I'm no misogynist!) potential development and will listen to and consider any concerns and/or suggestions proffered in an effort to reach an accommodation with all of the community prior to submitting his or her application, which, if an accommodation has been reached, will then be dealt with speedily.

If on such occasions no agreement or accommodation can be reached, the application can be submitted as usual – and objected to as usual – but of course, in such an event, the detailed record of the PAC Process and all concerns and queries raised by the community therein will be reviewed by the planning department and taken into consideration.

In either event, whether the community council is wholly supportive of the development and the benefits it might bring to their community or not, the relationship between the CC and its LA ex-officio members and the local planning officials should be considerably less fractious – and that really would be of benefit to all concerned!

For any help advice or guidance with regard to the PAC Process, please drop us a wee note on the ASCC website.

Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services - Published 29th June 2011

Role of Community Councils - Will it Change?

The report believes that Scotland's Public Services are in need of urgent and sustained reform to meet unprecedented challenges. The pressure on budgets is intense and public spending is not expected to return to 2010 levels in real terms for 16 years. It warns that unless Scotland embraces a new collaborative culture throughout Public Services, both budget and provision will buckle under the strain.

Ten priorities were identified -

- Recognising that effective services must be designed with and for people and communities – not delivered ‘top down’ for administrative purposes.
- Maximising scarce resources, by utilising all available resources from the Public, Private, and Third sector, individuals groups and Communities.
- Working closely with individuals and Communities to understand their needs, maximise their talents and resources, support self reliance and build reliance.
- Concentrating the efforts of all services on delivering integrated services that deliver results.
- Prioritising preventative measures to reduce demand and lessen inequalities.
- Identifying and targeting the underlying causes of intergenerational deprivation and low aspirations.
- Tightening oversight and accountability of public services, introducing consistent data – gathering and performance comparators, to improve services
- Driving continual reform across all Public Services based on outcomes, improved performance and cost reduction.
- Implementing better and long-term strategic planning, including better transparency around major budget decisions like universal entitlements.

The report highlighted that despite increased Scottish Government initiatives and a significant growth in public spending on most key measures, social and economic inequalities remained unchanged or became more pronounced.

The report recommends :

- Introducing a new set of statutory powers and duties, common to all public service bodies, focussed on improving outcomes. These new duties should include a presumption in favour of preventative action and tackling inequalities.
- Making provision in the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill to embed community participation in the design and delivery of service.
- Forging a new concordat between the Scottish Government and Local Government to develop joined- up services, backed by funding arrangements requiring integrated provision.
- Implementing new inter-agency training to reduce silo mentalities, drive forward service integration and build a common public service ethos.
- Devolving competence for job search and support to the Scottish Parliament to achieve the integration of service provision in the area of employability.
- Giving Audit Scotland a stronger remit to improve performance and save money across all public service organisations and merging the functions of the Auditor General and the Accounts Commission.
- Applying commissioning and procurement standards consistently and transparently to achieve neutrality between suppliers of public services.
- Reviewing specific public services in the terms of the difference they make to people's lives.

The Commission suggests that tackling these fundamental inequalities and focusing

resources on preventative measures, rather than intervention methods must be the key objectives of Public sector reform.

The current system can be ‘top down’ and unresponsive to the needs of individuals and communities, and promotes short term approaches which hinders preventative methods. In order to focus on these systematic effects the report recommends a fundamental overhaul of the relationships within and between institutions, agencies – public, third sector and private – responsible for designing and delivering public services.

This report won't come as a surprise to many Community Councils.

Community Councils across Scotland will have experienced the frustrations of organisational constraints imposed by a ‘top down’ framework.

We know that Public services do not determine Scottish Society – Public services should reflect the wishes and needs of individual communities and respect the ‘ethical foundations of society in supporting the community's development’. The report proclaims that services need to be designed and delivered to suit people rather than trying to ‘fit’ people into services. The importance of which it states ‘ We ignore this at our peril- reform which does not embrace this ethos could result in the erosion of the collective nature of social responsibility which has long been a defining characteristic of our country’.

The key goal of reform suggested by this report is to harness and utilise the resources and energies of Communities, to deliver positive approaches which are grounded in people's lives and that of the Community.

The fundamental role of Community Councils is to ascertain the opinions of Communities and reflect this back to Public bodies, to help the design and delivery of services to our

Communities. The importance of Community Councils cannot be overlooked - Community Councils are the only form of local Community Engagement and Community Participation which has been given a mandate to represent by the Community through democratic elections.

So do we need to 'reform' ourselves, to meet the needs of our Communities and if so how?

Considering the ten recommendations, Community Councils input will be vital to achieving success but three in particular will require direct participation from Community Councils.

- Making provision in the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill to embed community participation in the design and delivery of service.
- Implementing new inter-agency training to reduce silo mentalities, drive forward service integration and build a common public service ethos.
- Reviewing specific public services in the terms of the difference they make to people's lives.

The Government is embracing an 'Equality and Inclusion' strategy to ensure all aspect of society benefit from public services.

Community Councils play a major role in achieving continual and equal representation and participation in the design and delivery of Public Services to our Communities.

- We should be ensuring that the values of the proposed Community Empowerment and Renewal Bill recognise Community Councils as a focus of participative representation of Communities.
- Community Councils should embrace inter-agency training and in doing so aim to support agencies in understanding the remit of Community Councils and promote Community Councils as an effective conduit of community participation We should review our own practices ensuring our Community Councils are meeting the needs of our communities, reflecting accurately the wishes of the people, in terms of the difference we make to people's lives through evidence, evaluation, and monitoring our work to promote Community Council achievements in obtaining positive outcomes for communities.
- Community Councils should actively engage in ensuring equality, inclusion and equal representation within the Community.

The Scottish Government promises to 'give more relevance to Community Councils'

(SNP Manifesto 2011) and has stated that they are committed to the importance of role Community Councils within Communities. What this means and how it will manifest is still very unclear at the moment but what is clear is that Local Authority services to Communities will change and Communities will have to take a greater role in the design and delivery of those services.

This will have a direct impact on Community Councils. As much as Community Councils are experience and knowledgeable about their own communities.

- Will there be a greater demand on their skills?
- If so will there be adequate support and resources to help meet the requirements of Community Council undertakings in this 'greater relevance' agenda?

How the Government's agenda for Community Councils will unfold is unclear but what is certain is that Community Councils will be require to take a greater role in 'ascertaining the views and opinions' of their community to ensure agencies charged with delivering the services effectively meet the needs of the Community.

Read the full Report - Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/About/publicservicescommission>

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CO-PRODUCTION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?



'Co-production means the delivering of public services in an equal and reciprocal relationship between professionals and, people using the services, their families and their neighbours. Where activities are co produced in this way, both services and neighbours become far more effective agents of change'

The central idea of Co- Production focuses on the strengths and skills of those using services, and that no service which ignores these hidden talents is ever efficient.

Service users are the vital ingredient which allows public service professionals to be effective. People and communities are the building blocks of our missing neighbourhoods –families and communities underpin economic activity and the social development of society.

Co- Production suggests we can redesign services to support Communities to flourish. Co Production shifts the balance of power, responsibility and resources from professionals towards individuals and communities, by involving them in the delivery of their own services.

This was the insight of the Human Rights Lawyer Edgar Cahn, who developed the idea of Co Production into a practical proposition for public services. Cahn uses the analogy of a computer which runs powerful specialist programmes, all of

which rely on a basic operating system without which they both cannot function.

It has been said that this principle is the same for our public services – Police, Health, and Education depend on the operating system which consists of family, neighbourhood, community and civil society. Neva Goodwin the Economist referred to this 'operating system' as the 'core economy'. The breakdown of an active system recognising the value of and supporting the core economy is evident; social isolation, time poverty, low levels of trust, insecurity, lack of community cohesion, lack of resilience, low level of social engagement and social infrastructure within our communities.

As suggested by the Report 'Commission on the Reform of Public Services' – June 2011 - models of Public service reform which fail to recognise the value of the Core Economy and help it to flourish, relying on price and legal contracts on service delivery are part of the problem, rather than

the solution.

Co- Production is central to a flourishing Core Economy – it goes beyond Community Consultations, or Engagement to foster the principle of equal partnership. It suggests a transformation of the dynamics between the public and public sector workers, ending the 'them and us' barriers. It places an emphasis on the need to 'pool' different skills and knowledge based on lived experience and professionalism. It recognises theory doesn't always agree with practice – people are not theories.

There is currently no definition of Co- Production; much of the discussion around Co Production only shows a partial awareness of understanding, where it comes from, or how it works. Co- Design and other forms of asking advice of users may help to facilitate Co Production but can lack any continuing involvement in delivery.

Similarly when communities or user groups organise their own provision with no involvement from Public sector professionals, whilst very valuable intervention; it is not Co Production.

- **Co- Production is Not Consultation**

Co production depends on a fundamental shift of the balance of Power between public service professionals and users. This is the important 'cog' in the wheel which makes Co- Production work.

- **Co -Production is Not Volunteering**

It is about activity and giving time It emphasises mutual support and networks of relationships rather than a clearly define demarcation between provider and

service user. It requires a new generation of mutual exchange for everyone – more than just volunteers ministering to passive users while professionals hover in the background.

- **Co- Production is Not Individual Budgets**

Such budgets are vital but on their own they are not the realisation of co-production, especially when they ignore the need for social networks.

We know well that Government will have a task to return the nation to a balanced economy. Co-Production has a vital role to play in making our Public Services more effective. There is considerable evidence to suggest Co Production helps prevent illness, increases wellbeing and involves those who are seldom heard in our society. Co- Production is designed to prevent needs arising in the first place by maintaining and improving people's lives, and extending the opportunities and capabilities of individuals and Communities to become more resilient. These non-monetary resources are often ignored in the current model of illusory efficiency because there is no price tag attached. (Interestingly we have a culture within the voluntary sector of putting a value on Volunteers time – using the same calculation, Community Councils' time is worth £18 million to the economy!)

Co- Production will effectively demand major reforms to the structure of our services. It will also demand a different way of working within our communities. Communities will have to respond by becoming more responsive and participative to embrace this concept and support their communities to achieve the desired outcomes.

COMMUNITY COUNCILS & GREEN DEAL CAN RISING ENERGY COSTS ENCOURAGE EFFICIENCY?

Recently the ASCC in partnership with Imputus Consulting and Eaga Trust facilitated a research workshop to look at ways Community Councils can take the lead in supporting their communities to access the forthcoming UK wide Green Deal Scheme. The event was attended by a wide range of stakeholders, Community Councils across Scotland, various energy agencies and local authorities.

Around 800,000 households – almost 1 in 3 – in Scotland are estimated to be in fuel poverty, which means they are unable to afford adequate warmth in the home. In turn, it is now estimated that there are some 5 million fuel poor households in the UK. The usual definition of fuel poverty is the need to spend 10% or more of income to pay for fuel bills. The causes are a combination of poor energy efficiency of the dwelling, low disposable household income and the high price of domestic fuel.

Living in a cold, damp environment can also exacerbate health problems such as asthma and heart conditions. Often people struggling to pay their bills ration their use of energy, perhaps just

heating one room or making the choice between cooking a hot meal and turning on a heater. Using appliances such as washing machines and heating water for baths or showers can be a worry too.

Community Councils are uniquely placed to work on energy action at a very local level with their communities. Eaga Charitable Trust is funding the project, being carried out by Impetus Consulting Ltd and Dr Joanne Wade in partnership with the Association of Scottish Community Councils and the National Association of Local Councils (England) that will provide information to councils interested in working in this area. The project aims to encourage and enable Community Councils to engage in local energy action that helps to cut fuel poverty, and also to explore the extent to which such action can help potentially excluded local communities to benefit from the Green Deal. Linked to this, the project will explore what more is needed to enable Community Councils to play a full role in the equitable implementation of Government sustainable energy policy.

Under the Green Deal, bill payers will be able to get energy efficiency improvements without

having to front up the cash. Instead, businesses will provide the capital, getting their money back via the energy bill. At the heart of the offer is a simple rule: estimated savings on bills will always equal or exceed the cost of the work. It's a flexible framework, one that gives businesses and consumers the opportunity to make the energy efficiency improvements that best suit their situation.

Owner-occupiers and tenants will both be able to reap the rewards of better energy efficiency through Green Deal. There will be extra help for those most in need, such as the vulnerable, those on low incomes and those with homes that are expensive to treat.

To read a full report on the discussion and findings log on to: www.ascc.org.uk

Useful Links:

Energy Action Scotland
<http://www.eas.org.uk/default.php>
Department of Energy and Climate Change
- The Green Deal- A summary of the Government's Proposals
http://www.decc.gov.uk/en/content/cms/tackling/green_deal/green_deal.aspx



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SEPA consults on managing flood risk

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) has undertaken a National Flood Risk Assessment which will improve our understanding of the causes and impacts of all sources of flooding.

This summer, SEPA publishes *Flooding in Scotland: A consultation on Potentially Vulnerable Areas and Local Plan Districts*. This provides you with an opportunity to comment on how the National Flood Risk Assessment identifies areas at the greatest risk of the impacts of flooding and will help us to establish the planning framework for flood risk management in the future.

Responses to the consultation will help Scotland better plan and co-ordinate actions to reduce the impact on our communities, the economy and the environment, making us more resilient to the impacts of flooding.

View the consultation online at
www.sepa.org.uk/flooding/flood_risk/consultations.aspx
or if you'd like to get in touch with someone about this,
email: floodactconsultation@sepa.org.uk
or call 0131 273 7262.

The consultation closes on Monday 15 August.

It's an ill wind...!



.....

We've all heard the old proverb, probably while sitting comfortably at the knee of a wise old oracle and mentor called "Gran or Grandpa". But did any of us as children really think it through? I first heard it at my granny's knee when I arrived home with a sack-load of windfall apples looted from a neighbour's garden and sort of assumed granny (No! Not Granny Smith!) meant that we had benefited from our neighbour's misfortune, and I suppose that was true enough at the time. It was to be much, much later before another wise old oracle and mentor, who shall remain nameless on account of how he is still heading up the ASCC, explained to me that this was a metaphor. One day, when I become a wise old oracle and mentor myself, I'll figure out what a metaphor is!

.....

But the irony is that right now, in 21st century Scotland, this old proverb can prove to be literally true for many – indeed any – of our community councils! In Scotland, in global geographical terms, we apparently get much more than our fair share of bunnet removing and umbrella wrecking winds. Scotland is – and it doesn't come as much of a surprise to the natives – one of the most consistently windy places on the face of the earth! And dear readers, we are not talking about the wind generated in Holyrood here, nor about any of our wind generating local authorities! We are referring to those persistent and tedious winds that are constantly whipping across Scotland; the wind that causes the more solidly built Glaswegian to promenade along Argyle Street into the wind at an angle of 45 degrees and

blows the non-obese screaming at 40mph in the opposite direction; those winds that rattle our windows and remove our tiles; the same winds that clear the streets that the ordinary street sweepers can't reach!

That wind - our wind – is with us most of the time. If you need to put it to the test, try climbing a Munro with a wig on! It is latent power – energy - so why not put it to work for your community? And community councillors in our heavily populated urban areas please note, I did say FOR your community, not IN your community. Urban areas can benefit from the current drive for renewable wind energy sources every bit as much as rural areas. Now before any of the erudite and sophisticated community councillors from

those areas respond to say their respective local authorities would never allow a wind farm to be built in, say, Glasgow's Queen's Park or Edinburgh's Meadows, let me state in words of one syllable – that is not what I am saying (OK, two syllables)! Any CC in any area can benefit from involvement in a wind generation scheme in any area, all that is required is for the area in which the turbines are located to be suited to the purpose!

Of course I am not referring to the mighty and prolific wind turbine forests that already cover most of what was once the Ettrick Forest and which now has more turbines than Scotch Pines. Community benefits arising from these vast "farms", if there are any such, are intended for nearby local communities.

Numerous companies in Scotland are now intent in facilitating the development of much smaller complexes consisting of only four or five turbines at most. Not so much a wind farm as a wind croft perhaps? These companies seek suitable sites in the first instance and then suitable 'partners' thereafter. Their 'partners' in these cases are financial partners rather than necessarily 'local' partners. There have been occasions I understand, when it has worked happily in reverse and the 'partners' have initiated contact with the development facilitator and suggested suitable sites.

Two such schemes have come to the attention of my own CC in recent months with, initially, similar project outlines. The basic project outline in both was to establish a suitable wind 'croft' (would that be a 'smallholding' south of the highland line?) on which would be sited up to a maximum of five turbines. Thereafter, the schemes differed somewhat. The first scheme sought an investment "share" (in £20K 'blocks') from individuals and/or the community council, local development company or other organisation. On offer was an ROI of £2K over 10 years. The accountants among you will assess these figures for themselves but I confess that they were not sufficiently attractive to interest my local CC.

The second scheme did appear to have much more merit and is currently being pursued.

This required the five turbines to be "owned" by five different individuals or community groups. The farmer on whose land the turbines would be sited would own one (and charge a 'ground rent' on the rest) and, in our case, the community council would own another, with other community organisations owning the balance. Each turbine would be purchased and installed by the manufacturer at a cost of just under £0.8M, with additional costs; feasibility study; wind monitoring; grid study etc adding a further £17.5K. Mortgages are available to the organisation concerned via a well-established and respectable bank (and not one currently in hock to the government). Power generated by the turbine would be sold on to the national grid at a pre-determined and guaranteed rate and would be used to repay the mortgage and/or provide the organisation with a revenue stream. Annual running costs and insurance were calculated at £11,500 and estimated annual income from power generated at £274,900. Based on these figures, if no revenue stream was initially taken and all proceeds were used to repay the mortgage, the mortgage would be fully paid in 3.1 years. If that revenue stream were used to both pay the mortgage and as a source of income for the organisation it is estimated that it would take ten years to repay the mortgage, at which point the turbine – with a life span of 25 years - would be wholly owned.

For those delighted to hear that there is a bank

out there prepared to offer loans and mortgages and who have now decided to Google them and apply for a sizeable loan for a new hybrid car or a mortgage for a new allotment, please note that this scheme is substantially subsidised by the powers that be. Although that's not to say that an organic hybrid car or an allotment dedicated to the production of very green produce would not appeal as well (but not Brussell sprouts, even Belgians hate Brussell sprouts!).

Urban CCs of course, once again have a distinct advantage over their rural colleagues, with regard to this scheme. They can, if they so choose, invest on such a scheme in the knowledge that their turbine would be installed in someone else's backyard! The opportunities are endless and limited only by the lack of imagination! Picture, for example, a consortium of Glasgow; Edinburgh, Aberdeen (OK! I admit that takes a fair bit of imagination!); Dundee and Paisley CC collectives combining to install a wee wind croft in Tarbrax! (Bit like Brigadoon but you will probably find it on Google if you're patient!).

Interested? Drop a note of your interest on the ASCC web site and we'll send you more information.

Orkney Sustainable Energy www.orkneywind.co.uk

Orkney Sustainable Energy is based in Stromness in the Orkney Islands. OSE has been responsible for most of the locally-owned wind energy projects in the isles, and is a long established company with a reputation for innovative project design, supporting community scale renewable energy.

Our clients are farmers, landowners, development trusts and community groups located throughout Scotland, who are looking to develop their own renewable energy projects, providing significant benefits to the local economy.

Have a look over our website www.orkneywind.co.uk for case studies and examples of our projects. We have also provided information on a wide range of topics related to local renewable energy.

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That there is a potential demand for our specialist services north of the border is evident from the volume of work that we currently undertake in another of our niche markets, namely churches, with many Church of Scotland parishes having turned to us to meet their signage requirements. Our commitment to serving the Scottish local authorities market is illustrated by the appointment last year of Edinburgh-based Bill Alexander of Colinton Arts as

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