

AGM of the Tarland Development Group 24 August 2010

Chairman's Report

Introduction

Since the last AGM held on 25 August 2009, the group has held eight meetings. Several projects initiated previously are now working well and excellent progress has been made with new projects. Group members have been actively involved in liaising with and supporting other local groups and organizations during the past year. Several new members have been welcomed to the group and are already active in a number of projects and generally helping to share the group's workload more equitably.

TDG Projects

Unlike all other local community development groups, the Tarland Development Group has so far depended entirely on the voluntary effort of local community members to implement most of its projects. However, we have also continued to receive invaluable support for a number of specific projects from the MacRobert Trust, from the Cairngorm Outdoor Access Trust and from the Marr Area Partnership.

Normally, we try to achieve our aims by identifying particular needs and then setting up projects and recruiting project leaders to carry them forward. Over the years, we have completed a number of projects. Currently, we have a number of ongoing projects, and as several on our 'wish-list' that we would like to pursue when funding and people to run them are identified.

Completed Projects:

The following can be added to the lists included in previous reports:

- establishing a local composting scheme; garden waste is now collected on a fortnightly basis from around seventy homes in Tarland by a team of volunteers; working in partnership with the MacRobert Trust, a composting site has been established and those who contributed waste will be the first to be offered processed compost at the end of the season
- the quest to achieve charitable status has finally been achieved and the group is now able to apply for grants and support from previously inaccessible funding sources
- local Christmas cards were created by the group and again proved popular

Current Projects:

The following projects are those that are currently being actively pursued:

- significant progress has been made in a joint initiative with COAT to establish the Tarland to Aboyne cycle route and funding has been secured to enable at least half of the works to be completed by next March; details of the exact route have finally been agreed with several landowners after various time-consuming but unavoidable delays
- a major initiative to create facilities for the younger residents of Tarland has been launched with funding made available from a private benefactor; suggestions for the construction of a mountain bike trail will be discussed with interested youngsters; a decision on the details of the first phase of this long-term initiative will release funding to allow TDG to proceed with the construction of the first facility
- a Cromar History Group proposal to establish an Archaeological Trail is being actively supported by TDG; two complementary routes are planned with route details to be published in leaflet form linked with numbered sites on the ground; the Auld Kirk, Drummy Muir, Tomnaverie and the Culsh Earth House are some of the main targets for inclusion on the trail

- a photo competition on the theme *Tarland Through The Seasons* has been held and some of the submitted images will be used to create Christmas cards and a 2011 calendar for sale locally

Possible Future Projects:

The following list includes various project ideas which TDG may be able to support in the future in partnership with other organisations. As a community group, we are open to suggestions from all members of the local community and wish to encourage people to come forward with ideas that they think might be of benefit to those who live in the Tarland area and that TDG might be capable of supporting.

- improving visitor facilities by proposing and supporting the establishment of a multi-function centre with a restaurant, a retail outlet for local produce and artworks, and a history museum
- establishing a permanent orienteering course in Drummy Woods; this is intended to be another visitor attraction as well as a useful facility for school or youth club outdoor activities
- establishing a natural burial site to serve the local community
- creating a super-polytunnel type structure within the gravel pit beyond the golf course when extraction ceases to enable the establishment of an indoor community garden facility and visitor attraction
- developing a hydro-electric generating scheme to utilise energy from the Tarland Burn drainage system
- creating an archive of images of local people and places similar to the highly successful Glenbuchat and Finzean projects; one important outcome of this project would be to define our local identity as it is today and possibly to influence the future character of our community
- improving local facilities for collecting items that are currently transported separately by individuals to the centralised recycling facility at Banchory
- revisiting the long-standing proposal to establish a 'History Trail' between Tarland and Ballater.

Ongoing maintenance and other commitments include:

- keeping the path network free of encroaching vegetation, grass-cutting and way-marker maintenance; responsibility for grass cutting has now been transferred to the MacRobert Trust; several local volunteers are also involved in route maintenance
- Viewfield wetland is deliberately being maintained with minimal input of labour and is being allowed to develop into a natural nature reserve; Tarland School now makes use of the area for outdoor education
- regular meetings continue to be held with COAT and the MacRobert Trust to address access and path network development and maintenance issues
- Local Markets continue to be held twice a year and have proved to be very popular with local residents and stallholders
- the Tarland website is proving to be a very useful community facility and attracts interest from a surprising number of sources; the blogging section, however, has not attracted significant interest from the online community
- one issue of the Community Newsletter was issued during the last year; unfortunately, very little direct feedback is ever received from these Newsletters although they remain a useful vehicle for keeping local residents informed about the activities of the various groups that work to create and maintain local facilities

Other TDG activities:

Frequent liaison continues between TDG, Cromar Community Council, Tarland Welfare Trust and the Marr Area Partnership over issues of common interest. TDG is also regularly represented at meetings of the Deeside Access Forum organised by Aberdeenshire Council. Topics of mutual interest relating to public access for walking, cycling and riding are discussed and explored amongst representatives of many Upper Deeside community groups, estates and other organisations. The Group also hosted the Calder family at a meal in the Commercial Hotel by way of grateful appreciation for the huge amount of effort and commitment that Albert has contributed to nearly every aspect of the Group's work since becoming a founder member. His work in maintaining the path network for the last ten years has been particularly appreciated by all who walk in the area.

Membership:

Lizzie Bacon has decided that in future she will focus her community efforts through the Cromar History Group. We wish her well and thank her for her interest in TDG's work.

Jane Palmer, Lizzy Shepherd, and Jonathan Harston are recent recruits to the group who are already active in a number of projects. Ian MacIntosh has also indicated a keen interest to support the group. All such volunteers are very welcome since the group can only achieve success when it has enough active members to engage productively in the various projects we undertake.

Conclusion

This year has demonstrated that TDG is in good order and able to respond quickly and effectively to opportunities that have arisen. The composting and youth projects have both been initiated since the last AGM with one now fully operational and the other rapidly gaining momentum. I believe that most of the several completed and continuing TDG projects are successfully achieving their aims and that they combine to contribute significantly to the quality of life in our community.

On a personal note, I would like to thank very sincerely all those who have contributed to the work of the TDG during my chairmanship over the past three and a half years and to express the hope that my successor will receive equally inspiring support in carrying forward the work of the group.

**Peter Craig
Chairman**