

# KILMACOLM CIVIC TRUST 2024 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 17<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2024

## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

### WELCOME

Good Evening Everybody. It is very good to see you all. I hope you enjoyed the talk. Personally, I found it fascinating to hear how things have been done in agriculture over recent centuries.

### Our KCT Executive Committee

As always, your Committee have put in many hours of their time to work on your behalf over the past 12 months.

Our Constitution allows for a Committee of 17. I said last year, that there were only 11 in 2019, which made life difficult if several committee members were away. However, by dint of a successful recruiting campaign, by the middle of last year, we managed to raise that to **16** which was excellent. However, last week, one member of the Committee (Jane McDonald) tendered her resignation because of conflicting, or over-running commitments, no matter what day of the week we chose to meet, thus we are down to 15 Committee members. That is still a good number, **BUT**, we are in need of new, and younger blood: because 3 of us are in our 80s – and will not go on forever. So, PLEASE, if you know of anyone in the Kilmacolm/Quarriers area who is 'young' i.e: in their 50s or 60s who is interested in what the KCT does and stands for, and is willing to join the Committee, that would be great.

### Our Constitution states that our Aims and Objectives are:

- To stimulate public interest in and care for the beauty, history and character of the parish and its surrounding villages.
- To encourage the preservation, development and improvement of public amenities and places of historic interest.
- To encourage high standards of architecture and town planning in the area.

### And we achieve this by:

Reviewing critically all newly submitted development and planning applications and submitting comment to Inverclyde Council on them.

Reviewing proposals for the development of public amenities.

Developing initiatives to promote the heritage and history of the area.

Maintaining, publicising and adding to the **KCT Archive** of the parish

Building up a library of audio-visual recordings by local residents of their, and their forbears' lives in the area (what we have achieved so far, and what is planned for the near future).

Supporting and assisting members with specific issues.

Liaising with and/or lobbying the Local Authorities where appropriate.

## **Planning Applications**

These have covered a variety of topics.

They are normally submitted to Inverclyde Council by residents in Kilmacolm, Quarriers Village and the surrounding country-side and are generally applications for alterations to existing houses, construction of new houses or outbuildings, tree felling and tree surgery, creation of new farm roads or new farm buildings. We dealt with 65 of these in the year 2023 (with comments to IC on 6). Since then have dealt with a further 14. Periodically, Inverclyde Council receive and inform us of Applications

## **Public Service Utilities.**

Over the past year we have examined and commented on a proposed relocation of a Gas Mains pipe and control unit from the centre of the village to a new location in the small recessed area opposite 'Saffron' Restaurant. We, and Colourful Kilmacolm examined and discussed it on-site with Scottish Gas representatives, made helpful suggestions, which were accepted, to preserve the pleasing aesthetic appearance of that area, and told IC Planning that we had No Objection.

We also considered a Scottish Water Application to install a water-bottle refilling tap at the edge of the Piazza. We objected and

said that there was a better, less obtrusive place to put it, but Inverclyde Council overruled us and granted Planning Permission.

**There have also, over the year, been two major Applications by Electrical Engineering Installation companies.**

The first, was to install a 49mW emergency electricity battery storage facility just off Auchentiber road, to the West of High Mathernock. We had no objection to that because it was going to be approx. 400m off the road, close by the Gryffe river, and shielded by existing trees. However, that was subsequently dropped and **was replaced by an Application by a different company to create a huge 700mW emergency electricity battery storage facility in the same area.** We objected to it because of the very large area it was to require, and number of equipments, which would destroy the aesthetic appearance of that very pleasant part of the countryside. As it fell into the category of a Major Development we sent our Formal letter of Objection to the Scottish Government stating that we fully accept the need for such a facility, but pointed out that there is a much better location for it, in a discreet area in dead ground, approx. 400m to the Northeast of the Devol electricity substation. We sent satellite and horizontal images of that area as part of our Letter of Objection. It will be some months before the Scottish Govt announce a

Decision. First, the proposal will have to be examined by an appointed Scottish Govt 'Reporter. It will then have to go through various Procedures after his examination.

Now for some self-congratulatory comment on the new paving that has been laid on either side of Lochwinnoch Road and Bridge of Weir Road in the business centre of Kilmacolm.

For years, ever since 2010, we have been telling Inverclyde Council in our various KCT Vision for Kilmacolm submissions, and in our comments on the IC proposed Local Development Plans for 2014, and 2019, that we would like to see the very poor quality concrete and tarmac paving in the business area, frequently dug up by Utility Companies,

replaced with something appropriate to a Conservation Area – along the lines of what was installed many years ago in the Centre of Renfrew, the Centre of Port Glasgow, and in the Cathcart Square area of the Greenock Council building. At last it has happened – as a result of Westminster Grants to the Scottish Govt for Local Improvement Schemes, which were devolved to Local Councils, including Inverclyde Council.

I think you will agree that the result is lovely, and has given the centre of the village a very much needed uplift. One or two people have said that it

is a pity that proper stone paving was not installed, but that would probably have required an enormous amount of money – and therefore would never have happened. My thought is that we should be thankful and grateful for what has been done for us – and hope that Utility Companies respect our new paving and treat it with care.

### **We haven't, yet, had any success with Parking though.**

Again, for many years, we have pointed out to Inverclyde Council that there is a pressing need for more public parking areas in the centre of Kilmacolm. About six years ago, the Council finally acknowledged the Requirement and instigated feasibility studies to examine 2 sites: one being behind the former police station at Milton Woods; and the other being the unused plot of land at the Gilburn Road / Moss Road T Junction. Yesterday I telephoned Stuart Jamieson, IC Director of Environment and Regeneration, to ask for an update. He phoned back very quickly to say that he had spoken to the Planning Officer concerned, and the answer is that the studies are in hand but are **not progressing well** – because the Council is having difficulty in establishing ownership. The land is in Trusts, and the Council has so far been unable to establish contacts. Stuart Jamieson asked that if anybody in Kilmacolm knows who the Trusts are run by and how to contact them the Planning Officer would be very grateful if we could pass on the information.

Stuart Jamieson also said, to my no great surprise, that even when the feasibility studies are completed, the Council has no money to create new public Car Parks in Kilmacolm.

**Now for an Up-date on the still uncompleted building at The Cross that has replaced 'The Institute', i.e. the one that The Co-op is**

**operating in.**

I telephone Councillor Stephen McCabe on Monday this week to ask if he had any news on what is going to happen to it.

He responded immediately and said that:

The building was sold by a Mr Gupta in Feb/March this year (2024).

The new owners are an organisation called 'Z' Developments Ltd.

The new owners plan to complete the building.

At present there is no time scale.

That is all I can tell you about the development. The fact that there is a new owner is good news. Once we have news about when work will start, we shall let you all know.

**Now a few words about the Property Development Companies that are looking for land to build on, in the designated Greenbelt, claiming that there is a Scottish Govt and Clyde-Plan stipulation that there is a requirement for hundreds houses to be built in Kilmacolm/Quarriers.**

**You all know that with the professional assistance and advice of DLBP Ltd in London we successfully OBJECTED and fought off,**

**Gladman Developments Ltd** who applied several times to build a total of 125 houses on land at Knapps and North Denniston and 50 houses on Carsmeadow, behind the old fire station in Quarriers. In each case, after Inverclyde Council REFUSED their applications. Gladman Appealed and were REFUSED by the Scottish Govt. Despite taking their case to the Scottish Court of Session in Edinburgh, they were still REFUSED. They eventually gave up.

**Taylor Wimpey** who applied to build 100 houses on land known as Planetreeyetts, on the left side of the Finlaystone Road as one leaves the village. That was REFUSED by Inverclyde Council. Taylor Wimpey Appealed to the Scottish Govt , and the Court of Session, but were REFUSED. They eventually gave up.

**CALA Homes (West) Ltd** who have applied many times since the early 1990s to build 100s of houses on Land Behind The Police Station, Land between Pacemuir Estate and the Gryffe River, and land between Balrossie and the river Gryffe. Their latest attempt was in June 2022 when they submitted a Proposal of Application Notice to Inverclyde Council stating that they proposed to build 100 houses behind the Police Station. For a variety of reasons, they have never got down to submitting a Formal Application. We believe that that is because they, and other major Housing Development companies, were waiting for clarity on new Scottish Govt Planning Policy which the Scottish Court of Session had ordered the Scottish Govt to reconsider when all the Developers appealed against the new policy to The Court of Session. The fact that they have not yet made a formal application does not mean that they have given up though !!

**MacTaggart and Mickel** applied in 2022 to build up to 78 houses on Land West of Quarry Drive (i.e. land between the roundabout on

Wateryetts Drive and The Cemetery). We OBJECTED at a formal Public Hearing convened by Inverclyde Council. The outcome of that was that the Full Council approved the Application. The Kilmacolm Residents Association Appealed against that decision to the Scottish Govt. That Appeal was REFUSED. The present state of play is that Inverclyde Council are in deep negotiating with MacTaggart and Mickel over what MacT & M will provide that will be of MATERIAL BENEFIT to KILMACOLM. Once that has been determined to Inverclyde Council's satisfaction, the project will go ahead.

From what I have told you, you will deduce that we have been and continue to work very hard on Planning Issues.

**Our next task, which is about to emerge over the horizon, is that Inverclyde Council are now about to start the process for producing the Inverclyde 2026 Local Development Plan.** That will kick off with notifications to numerous interested parties followed by a

Draft Development Plan which will go out for consultation. That will set the Vulture Housing Developer flocks circling again !!

**We, your Committee** plan to produce a new 'Kilmacolm Civic Trust Vision for the Future' paper which we shall send to all members of the KCT for comment and requests for ideas. We shall also start a process, known as a 'Village Health Check' in conjunction with the Kilmacolm Community Council whom we shall encourage to lead it, the aim of which is to get members of the Local Community actively involved in examining critically, all aspects of life in Kilmacolm and Quarriers. To determine: Have we got enough housing? If not, what is required, and where should it be? What shortfalls are there in the villages (Schools? Medical provision? Parking (again !)? Road Maintenance? Street Lighting? Library? ATMs? Etc etc)

=====END=====