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MINUTES OF FORRES AREA FORUM MEETING WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026

PRESENT

Ann Rossiter, Chair (AR)	Lindsey Standing, Vice Chair (LS)
Loretta Oliphant, Treasurer (LO)	Councillor Paul McBain (PM)
Councillor Kathleen Robertson (KR)	Gill Bird (GB)
Lorna Creswell (LC)	Stephen Kelly (SK)
Sandra Maclennan (SM)	Mike Scott (MS)
Angela Sutherland (AS)	Tina Coffey, Minutes (TC)

1.	<p>Welcome and Apologies: Chair welcomed those attending and apologies were received from Ray MacDonald (RM). Introductions were made.</p>	
2.	<p>Forres Community Heat Network Presentation: Gill and Stephen from Community Energy Moray gave the group information about a possible Community-owned heat network for Forres which was identified as a location to investigate with a particular focus on the high street. A feasibility study would have to be sourced which Share Energy would undertake if enough interest was established, they would also source the funding but would need the support of the community. Looking at the old Tesco site in connection with AES Solar. Informed it would be community owned and both the UK and Scottish governments generally fund 50% (upfront capital costs) with the other 50% funded in other ways such as loans and possibly community benefits with shares sold, any excess heat would be sold. Gill and Stephen were looking for representation from groups. For more information please contact: gill@tsimoray.org.uk and stephen@energy4all.co.uk</p>	
3.	<p>Minute of meeting held on Wednesday 4th February 2026: The minutes from this meeting had been circulated, there were no amendments. The minutes were proposed by Sandra and seconded by Mike.</p>	

4.	<p>Matters arising: Chair wrote and thanked the Auchernack Trust for their contribution; the money will be well spent in accordance with application and grant criteria.</p>	
5.	<p>Treasurer's report: Current balance £3,067.96 which includes £900 ringfenced money together with £750 Auchernack Trust grant money which leaves £1,662.96 available in the account before the following payments: £50.00 for secretarial duties, £30 room hire and £165 room hire and coffee morning payment, leaves an available balance in the account of £1,417.96.</p>	
6.	<p>Correspondence:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fraud and Scam Information from last meeting on 04.02.26 • Mark Witkowski, Station Commander Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire & Moray LSO Area – Scottish Fire & Rescue – further events and confirmation that quarterly reports will be submitted for our records. Next one due in April. • Seated Yoga – CLAN - Chair was informed on 5th March by the CLAN co-ordinator that CLAN will be delivering Gentle Seated Yoga to Forres Area cancer patients later in the year in Forres hosted by their CLAN trained Therapist. Dates to be confirmed. FAF will assist with the promotion • STP Funding Finder – February 2026 	
7.	<p>Mount Dora Twinning Association: No recent communications.</p>	
8.	<p>FACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both the General Manager and Finance Manager have resigned • Andrew Logie has joined the board • FAF members discussed FACT and the work ongoing to run the TH • Information emailed out to members – see below <p>Dear Members,</p> <p>I am writing to update you on the current situation at FACT and to ask for your support at an important time for the organisation.</p> <p>I also want to acknowledge openly that, over the past 12 months, communication with members has not been as regular or transparent as it should have been. We recognise that this has not been helpful for keeping members informed or engaged. The Board accepts this and is committed to improving how we communicate going forward.</p> <p>The Board is currently working through a period of challenge and change. Our focus is on ensuring that FACT is well-governed, financially stable, and able to continue serving the community. While some matters are still being actively addressed, I want to reassure members that the Board is taking these issues seriously and is seeking appropriate advice and support where required.</p> <p>We are committed to being more open with our membership and to providing clearer, more regular updates. In the meantime, the Town Hall continues to operate, and the Board remains focused on safeguarding its future and its role within the town.</p> <p>As part of strengthening our governance and capacity, we are seeking to recruit people into key voluntary Board roles.</p> <p>We are looking for a Treasurer, who will help oversee the charity's finances, support good financial governance, and contribute to informed decision-making.</p>	

	<p>You do not need to be an accountant, but some experience or confidence with financial oversight would be very welcome. The time commitment is typically a few hours per month, board meeting attendance, with some additional input around budgeting and year-end.</p> <p>We are also seeking an experienced Chair to provide leadership to the Board, support effective governance, and help guide the organisation through this period and into a more stable future. Previous experience of chairing or board-level leadership would be beneficial. The time commitment would involve preparation for and chairing Board meetings, with some additional input as required.</p> <p>If you, or someone you know, might be interested in finding out more about either of these roles, please get in touch by calling 01309 674388 or emailing info@forresarea.org</p> <p>A brief informal conversation can be arranged, with no obligation, or we may host another Directors Information Evening to explain what is involved.</p> <p>Thank you for your continued interest in and support of FACT. It is genuinely appreciated, particularly at times like this.</p>	
9.	<p>Forres Conservation and Heritage Scheme: Chair and Sandra will attend the next meeting on 17th March at 10am. High Street Stories is being run by Helen Avenell and they are making headway.</p>	AR/ SM
10.	<p>Forres Connected Culture and Heritage: No update – Vice Chair to email George Alexander regarding whether the group is continuing/when the next meeting will take place and feedback to Secretary.</p>	LS
11.	<p>Spirit of Community (SoC) 2022/3 & Local Place Plan (LPP): Invites out to groups for meetings on 9th and 23rd March and responses received, will collate responses, Tina to email information to all Councillors. <i>Post meeting - Garry McCartney called the Chair on 5th March and apologised that the article has not been featured yet in the Gazette. (He has been off work due to illness). It will however be online from early morning on Saturday so hopefully still time for people to email and engage with us. Garry is intending coming along on Monday to take a few photographs and in all probability do a follow up piece. Garry will also be doing a follow up article to help with the promotion of the next meeting and outcomes. Chair has provided responses to questions he has set for the article to be included in the Gazette week beginning 16th March.</i></p>	TC
12.	<p>Moray Forum: Informed new people are in post and moving forward will be looking at the roles and responsibilities of Forums. Secretary to email Head of Service regarding when the next Moray Forum meeting is to be held.</p>	TC
13.	<p>Transport Forum: Angela has spoken to the TF Secretary and there has been no meeting date set, Secretary to email the Chair, Marion Ross regarding whether the group will restart.</p>	TC
14.	<p>Forres User Group Meeting: No date has been set for the Leisure Group meeting, David Chapman and Tomas Sutherland will be chairing. Chair hoping to attend the meeting. Minutes can be found on Moray Engage. Library will be open on Fridays from 10am to 2pm from the beginning of April.</p>	AR
15.	<p>Active Moray Strategy and Plan (System Based Approach to Physical Activity and Health): Meeting on 9th March in Elgin, Chair to attend and feedback.</p>	AR

16.	<p>Moray Healthy Weights Systems Network: Chair unable to attend the meeting on 4th March, she spoke with someone within the group member and is looking to deliver 'Confidence to Cook' / healthy eating and taster sessions for OAP's. This is still in the negotiation stage and TBC.</p>	
17.	<p>Ray's Opportunities: Ray's Opportunities and Ray's Rest Rooms, Market Street Carpark</p> <p>A brief update on developments with the project.</p> <p>Planning permission of course rests with Moray Council and an application is in process, with an expected decision date in Mid-March. Developments on the ground need to wait until the appropriate permissions are in place. Substantial discussions took place with both Planning and Transport departments before the application was submitted.</p> <p>The existing building has been reimaged by the Architects</p>  <p>As you can see, it will have a pitched roof, slate, with the opportunity to utilise solar energy. The Changing Places toilet, funded by Scottish government, is accessed through the double door and is on the left at the back of the building. It will be equipped with the specialist equipment needed to accommodate users with complex needs.</p> <p>There will a be further four Rest Rooms within the building, accommodating wheelchair access and family requirements.</p> <p>As you can see, there is a small retail outlet at the front of the building, which faces east towards Leys Road; we envisage this as a street food outlet, and it will be let, not staffed by the charity. The idea of this is to provide some income to help make the project sustainable.</p> <p>Once planning permission is in place, we can move forward with the plans as we described in the last briefing; the Roof appeal – <i>Ray's the Roof</i> – will be the subject of Crowdfunding and grant application. We anticipate that the Crowdfunding project will be initiated towards the end of March and will run over the next weeks with a programme of local events, including for instance fancy-dress Bingo, a garden party, sponsored events, which we hope that members</p>	

	<p>will be able to support. We will need your help as we anticipate the roof will cost in the region of £60k.</p> <p>Our expectation is that we will begin work on the building in May. Fingers crossed.</p>	
18.	<p>Round the Table:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • AR – spoken with Moray Food + who are keen to do a benefits session to assist people to access more funding which they may not be aware of – Group were in agreement that the Chair would try and arrange an afternoon visit and covered by Auchernack Trust fund for those aged 60+ • LC – gave a copy of 30 year old book about Youth Matters from 30 years ago from a 1996 project and gave to Forres Gazette – suggested each person on the Community Council focuses on one point in the community and will take to the ‘Join the Dots’ event and talk about Community Wealth Building. <p>Osprey Bus is looking for a Treasurer and hoping to stay at Transition Town Forres at present. Estates have vacancies and are still recruiting for Moray Council.</p> <p>Listed buildings – query as to whether it is the frontage or the whole building of the Town Hall that is listed.</p> <p>Credit Union are looking to share their premises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SM – Applegrove grounds – is there a plan to redevelop the grounds, it was though yes to get rid of the tarmac and reuse the space. <p>Hustings discussed, thought there would be hustings at some point.</p> <p>Grant Park – consultation has taken place to identify ideas, ongoing discussions and a public meeting coming up in April.</p> <p>Joint Transition Participatory Budgeting, large sums of funding available.</p> <p>Tourism – Strategy for discussion and EGM for Tourist Bid to discuss whether it will try to reform or dissolve.</p> <p>Rotary Club – clothing and accessories sale on 27th March with a pop-up event in the Tolbooth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PM – as a businessman in Forres he is looking into producing a Forres calendar, keen to work with the Business Association and other groups and try to produce a calendar together with e.g. fridge magnets and take forward to help promote the area. • LS – Facebook followers have grown and will tag in the Community Councils. • TC – St John’s coffee morning on 14th March, 10am to midday in the TH • AR – Pilot of ‘Door to Door’ foods has been well received and she hopes to continue with this initiative. 	
19.	<p>Councillors:</p> <p>Councillor Robertson attended the Community Planning Wildfire Summit to discuss how to deal with wildfires, a mix of fire, police, council and land owners together with personnel from Cairngorm National Park (CNP) attended. From 1st April to 30th September no fires in the CNP. Discussed byelaws, funding and having an Integrated Wildfire Management Plan for Moray, proper lines of communication, roles and responsibilities need to be set up and suggested all meet in the autumn. Byelaws to be approved by ministers and the Council is leading the way. Asset register is to be updated.</p> <p>Councillor McBain informed all of the 20mph sites, link to map below https://engage.moray.gov.uk/20mph-speed-limit-consultation</p>	

	Feedback is being taken for 18 months and depending on the feedback could be made permanent – trunk roads first then other roads – all funded by the Scottish Government.	
20.	AOB: Credit Union 'Window of Opportunity' will continue beyond the end of March, providing information in the window promoting various opportunities.	
21.	Date of next meeting – 6 th May 2026, venue 7pm in the North Room, Forres Town Hall	

Meeting dates in 2026: 3rd June, 1st July, 5th August, 2nd September, 7th October, 4th November and 2nd December

For further information please email: forresareaforum@btinternet.com