



## **MAC-CAN AGM – 12.00, 5<sup>th</sup> November 2022 – Wigtown County Buildings Secretary's Report**

Scott has covered a huge amount of ground in his Chair's report. It's heartening to see how far we have come from small beginnings.

When I started MAC-CAN in February 2020, after many months of deliberating how to go about it, I envisaged our inaugural meeting attendees spreading the word and bringing friends along to the next meeting and the next, etc . . . so that MAC-CAN would gain strength gradually as we all got used to working together. Alas it was not to be.

After cancelling what would have been our second meeting we all quietly got used to the Covid lockdown and found new ways of interacting socially. For some who were used to homeworking or networking virtually with family and friends maintaining contact would be relatively easy. For others learning how to live online was more of a hurdle.

With so much enthusiasm springing from the first meeting I felt I had to find some way to keep the group moving forward, so I circulated an email around the launch meeting attendees to see if they would like us to organise an online get together. Jon Joy facilitated our first online meeting in May 2020. From there we soon had an 'initiating group' established to explore ways of building the organisation. Scott has already mentioned the key players and I would like to add my heartfelt thanks to his.

Throughout the first summer of the pandemic we worked on the wording of our vision and discussed potential structures for MAC-CAN. At the same time we debated long and hard on whether we should utilise social media. Reluctance was based around the idea that attracting 'likes' and irrelevant comments would not move us forward. Jack Tan urged us to grow a worknet rather than a network. We compromised – Gill and Jack created a closed Facebook page for members.

We appreciate that many of our members do not use social media, so all the while I asked members to send in articles, snippets and news of events that might be of interest to the wider membership. I undertook to try and send out regular email newsletters as well as acting as meetings secretary until it became a bit too onerous. Gill and I began to share secretarial duties and just before Christmas 2020 we opened up our online meetings to the wider membership. It also seemed that it might be possible to arrange outdoor face-to-face meetings but we were thwarted by the second hard lockdown.

Over the winter months we had some well attended general meetings. One of them began with an impromptu farm walk videoed by Kylie McConnell at Barnbarroch Farm. At another we had local farmer, Rory Christie, give us a talk about his state-of-the-art dairy followed by discussion. Many thanks to Dru for organising that.

With the wider membership in attendance we were able to get a better idea of what kind of organisation we should be. We were supported by Nathalie Guillaume, Community Health Development Worker, and Christine Clarke of Third Sector D & G to begin formalising our organisational structure. By February 2021 – just ahead of the first anniversary of our inaugural meeting – we had a constitution (as an unincorporated voluntary organisation) and a lovely logo designed by Shalla Gray. As it was clear that lockdown would last for some months we aimed to have an AGM in June if possible. Initial work on developing a website was undertaken by Chris Dossier.

During the intervening months some of us took on officers' duties – Scott as chair, Gill and I as co-secretaries – with strong support from other members of the core group. As we had no formal address or bank account we paid Machars Action to supply basic administration services. We held our hybrid AGM in Machars Action's meeting room on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021. At this meeting it was decided that MAC-CAN be put on a more formal footing and Jenna Cains joined our Core Group as a representative of the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB). In the follow up meetings over the next few weeks Anne Connick agreed to take on the role of project officer to work on applying for Scottish charity status.

To help raise local awareness and, hopefully, grow the membership we planned activities and events for the remainder of 2021. At around the same time George and I discussed the possibility of offering use of a large portion of our land and our workshops to MAC-CAN with Gill Butler-Orli, who has previous experience of leading land-based voluntary projects. Establishment of the MAC-CAN Croft emerged from these discussions.

With a growing awareness that the COP26 climate summit was only a few months away we got busy. Our first public event was participation in the Wigtown Shindy in August 2021.

During Scotland's Climate Fringe Festival – 19<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> September 2021 - we officially launched MAC-CAN on the International Day of Peace with a vision statement authored by Julia and Scott. During the festival we also worked with Solway Firth Partnership to organise a big beach clean at the remote Carleton shore and launched the MAC-CAN Croft project with an open day.

Further opportunities for members to meet were created in the run up to the COP 26 summit in Glasgow – regular croft days, an Apple Day, walk & talk meetings in Creetown and Whithorn, online Climate Conversations with Scott and Jenna and the Art Competition for the local primary schools. To round off a busy year our final event of 2021 was a foraged wreath-making workshop at the Croft. By this time Gill had quite understandably withdrawn from the core group to focus on developing the croft and Anne had taken on the task of generating and circulating members' newsletters and minuting meetings.

The main focus of 2022 has been preparation of documents to apply for charity status. Anne and Jen did the bulk of the groundwork on this, for which we are deeply grateful. With great relief the application was submitted on 13<sup>th</sup> July. Approval was granted on 25<sup>th</sup> August.

Maintaining members' interest and engagement continued to be a priority and has always been a major focus of discussion at Core Group meetings. The Climate Conversations around the local area, organised by GSAB, have assisted greatly with this. We have encouraged members to participate in these meetings and this is an ongoing initiative. So far we have attended conversations in Whithorn and Glentool. As Covid restrictions eased we have tried to create opportunities for members to meet in person. Through the summer and autumn months we have organised an open day and a first birthday party at the croft, wildflower walk in Kilsture Forest, walk and chat at Balkail Glen, a visit to the Cree Woodland Volunteers' tree nursery at Barclye Farm, participated in Newton Stewart Initiative's Green Fayre and, over the last month, organised three apple days at Glenluce primary school, Glentool Hive, and in Creetown's Community Orchard.

In June we set up a separate 'Communications Group' to focus on getting the website finalised and launched as well as improving our use of social media. Lucy has done sterling work on the website with Anne and Jenna helping to pull it all together. We are beginning to see that we have a 'local presence'.

As you can imagine, none of this could have succeeded without the background meetings and criss-crossing of emails. Our initiating and, later, core groups have worked hard to keep it all together but at the same time we have managed (in Scott's words) to 'keep it light' and have gelled well as a group. We feel we have been successful in beginning to build a climate aware and active community in DG8.

Mary Pattison  
3<sup>rd</sup> November 2022