



ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Saturday 5th November 2022, 12.00, Wigtown County Buildings

Chair's Report

Dear Friends,

Welcome to our first AGM as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. Who would have thought it? It is not quite three years since Mary Pattison started ringing around, asking folks if they'd be interested in forming a Climate Group. Well Mary – it seems that we all were 😊.

So, I begin this Chair's report with an acknowledgement and a big smile. Thank you, Mary – nice one. Great idea, great leadership, great effort. You are a star.

In almost the same breath, I'd like to say huge thank you to everyone for all the determination, hard work and skill that so many folks have brought to MAC-CAN. To Anne Connick, especially, for keeping us moving and for getting us over the line. Anne has provided considerable oomph and leadership with so many things – especially when I have been travelling for work.

A lot of other people had an input into getting us to SCIO status – not only today's Core Group members (Mary, Julia, Jenna, Nick, myself, Jen, Anne, George) but folks who are still part of MAC-CAN and who gave such strong input and leadership in the early days – Gill Butler-Orli and Jack Tan did much of the groundwork that helped us shape our thoughts about what kind of entity we wanted to be. Nick Walker provided considerable technical input and guidance, and Julia Farrington brought her experienced words of wisdom more than once. Dru Hatcher, Sue Thomas, Jon Joy and Peter Buxton, were either on the original *Initiating Group* or closely associated with these and many other early MAC-CAN efforts, as well as still being members now of course.

Since our first meeting here on 15th February 2020, and our pre-SCIO (hybrid) AGM on 3rd July last year many people have shared their thoughts and ideas about what MAC-CAN should be, what we should do, and how we can best work together – sometimes Zooming in, sometimes face to face, and sometimes when we came together on various events and activities. These ideas and hopes were brought together the last time we were in this room - 30th April this year. The report from that meeting is with us today. Today we are prioritising and focussing on exactly how we can move more of those ideas into action – making clear plans for our activities over the coming year.

But haven't we been acting and doing things already – undertaking local actions in support of addressing the crisis of climate change? We definitely have – many things. Ok – so reports can be boring and I am mindful that a Chair's report can drone on a bit. But this is a moment that I must take to note just some of the highlights.

- ***Our Partnership with the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere (GSAB)***. We are blessed to have Jenna Cains on the Core Group. Jenna is GSAB Lead Officer for community and education and a *tour de force* who has given us many examples of how to bring ideas to action.

In partnership with GSAB we have: Visited Friends of Balkail Glen; visited Cree Valley Community Woodlands Trust Volunteers; conducted three Climate Conversation Webinars; organised this year's Apple Days as part of "Orchard Month" (see below); Participated in the Green Fayre at Newton Stewart.

- **Our pro-active networking:** with, among others, Scottish Communities Climate Action Network (SSCAN); South Machars Community Centre, Whithorn; Machars Action, Wigtown; Newton Stewart Initiative; Kilsture Forest Community Group; Solway Firth Partnership; Dumfries and Galloway Council; The Glentroll Hive; Third Sector Dumfries & Galloway; Friends of the Glen (Balkail Glen); Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership; Creetown Community Council; and Arran Eco-Savvy.
- **Our website and communications sub-group:** Lucy Smithies has been like a knight in shining armour (a visual image, not easy to pass up) getting our website up and running. Lucy has also given lots of her time designing posters, getting the word out, supporting every public initiative with great design ideas. Chris Dosser and Anne Connick did much of the initial work on this. A big thank you to Chris for moving this forward, and to Lucy for so ably moving it fruition. Our *communications sub-group* is now a formal part of MAC-CAN's structure.
- **Our links with Solway Firth Partnership** led to many helpful discussions and to two big beach cleans (Carleton). This was also thanks to Anne and her *Plastic Free Communities* connections.
- **Apple Days:** Building on Mary and George's initiatives, this year saw several Apple Days – Glentroll (also supported by Glentroll Hive), Creetown (also supported by Creetown Community Council) and Glenluce (also supported by Balkail Friends of the Glen). The Glenluce event also saw us link with the wonderful primary school at Glenluce.
- **Crop Swap and Seed Swap:** Great initiatives initiated by Sheralyn Stucky and Lucy Smithies.
- **Bioregionalism:** May I take a moment to acknowledge personally as well as 'professionally' in a MAC-CAN context, the really thought-provoking ideas and clear thinking that George Pattison has brought to MAC-CAN. Chief among these – and there are many to be chief of – is the growing sense of MAC-CAN leading the development of a BioRegion. I will leave it to George to bring the detail to this. However, I would like to throw my hat into the ring and suggest that this should be a definite "go" for us in the coming year and years.

Building a MAC-CAN led BioRegion would be a significant strategic initiative with great practical potential for sustainable living. It would also be a further hook on which to hang our endeavours – getting us noticed and in policy terms and helping us leverage funds to develop the idea in practice. Getting buy-in for this, getting youth involved, assembling the nuts and bolts will take time and a proper project plan. I think we should do this, and would be delighted to help develop that plan and support the process by which it could be developed.

- **Douglas Ewart High School:** COVID has imposed many additional challenges on The Ewart and curtailed what we might have been able to do with them. However, they are probably our most significant partner in terms of MAC-CAN's youth engagement and education mandate and this year we have started to move ideas into practical actions that would support and enhance the school's work, and bring focus to MAC-CAN's embryonic youth and education work. Meetings are ongoing with Viv Bradley and others at The Ewart – watch this space 😊.
- **International links:** After much discussion, plans are moving toward action next year with Likia community and their neighbours in the higher elevations of Mau Region in Kenya's Rift Valley. Likia's high elevation and rainfall means that farmers there produce some of the crops and livestock that we do here in SW Scotland, and they have also built strong partnerships across in dispersed rural communities. Alice and Joseph are leading their expert farmers group and it is with this group that we may develop a kind of twinning arrangement, with the support

also of colleagues at Egerton University in Njoro. Environmental Scientist Susan Akoya will be giving us a talk soon on climate issues facing Kenya.

- **Children's Art Competition:** What a great initiative this was – well done to Jenna and Anne for bringing that one home.
- **The MAC-CAN Croft:** One of the biggest successes of the year, now well on its way to even greater things. A true example of bringing ideas to action. So much action, in fact, that it has become an ideas generator in itself! I will leave Mary to write more on this in her secretary's report.
- **MAC-CAN general meetings and working informally with other groups.** Members have been actively involved in MAC-CAN general meetings often in the woods: e.g.
 - Balloch Wood Walk followed by a meeting at the Gemrock Museum
 - Cree Valley Woodland Volunteers – big thank you to Peter Buxton for this and for such a warm welcome to the many other things that this great initiative does.
 - Kilsture Forest and wildflower walking – brilliant initiative led by Gill Butler-Orli
 - Feeding informally into wider conversations through Beach Cleans; Upcycling and Recycling (Chris and Elisabeth Pugh have done some super work on this); meetings about the Scottish Land Reform Bill; '*Propagate*' (with Abi Mordin facilitating discussions on food and providing really helpful opportunities for learning and conversation); Discussions about organic farming (with Kylie McConnell leading discussions about organic farming at Barnbarroch); the four GSAB organised *Connecting Cairnsmore* events; SSCAN groups; webinars at various times; ongoing discussions with Sarah Farrell, D&G Climate Emergency Officer; and the COP26 build up.

I had no idea that this list would be so long yet fear I may have left some things out. So please forgive me if things that were organised by others did not reach my ear, or if my brain failed to recall them.

I would like to also formally acknowledge and thank the other folks in the Initiating Group (Dru Hatcher, Sue Thomas, Jack Tan, Mary Pattison, Anne Connick, Gill Butler-Orli, Julia Farrington, George Pattison, Shalla Gray, Nick Walker, John Joy, Chris Dosser, Andrew Robbins) who helped guide us into what became MAC-CAN and led to the formation of what we now call a 'Core Group.' These early days were challenging in COVID times and it was not easy to maintain energy, or to meet. Without a real team effort, it could not have happened. The Initiating Group was the vehicle that drove us forward and provided energy, solidarity and stability.

It has been our ambition in the MAC-CAN Core Group, to set a culture of kindness and gentle conversation in these turbulent times. We have recognised that often, we need serious conversations and to deal with the inevitable friction that occasionally arises in any human endeavour. By and large we have succeeded. And I would like to thank each and every person that has contributed to this strong and positive approach in our dealings with each other and with our friends and partners.

We are not political in a party-political sense. But our focus on climate change, environmental and sustainability inevitably involves strong opinions about how best to address these crises and challenges. We know we need to professionalise, to be compliant with our new SCIO status, and to get our 'back office' in order. This is coming along nicely now, with help from all, although I have especially appreciated the input and corrective steer that Jen, Anne, Nick and Jenna have given us. So, we keep our ambition to flow easily, to recognise that things only work with voluntary effort when capacity is there, to cut each other slack when we occasionally miss deadlines or can't quite deliver what we intended. We will still keep things light and friendly while also committing to professionalising and being strong in regard to compliance with our SCIO obligations. We definitely have become a 'learning organisation' which is at times challenging but also great fun.

On which subject, many, many thanks to my Core Group (CG) colleagues and friends. There isn't really any single leader in our CG – everyone mucks in and leads in various ways. There will be some changes in the CG for the coming year as we move to Trustee Stewardship. We now need to have a Board and Trustees. How this happens will be up to those who are becoming the new CG and who become trustees. Also, since we shall now have an official membership, all members have a right to put themselves forward as trustees or to be nominated (with their permission) as potential trustees. So, in a very real way, MAC-CAN will be shaped and guided by its members. Specific changes are:

- People moving on (Nick)
- People staying with MAC-CAN but stepping down from CG (Julia)
- People staying with CG but stepping down from office holding (Scott)

As I step down as chair may I again thank my CG colleagues. Mary and George were the initiators and foundation stones of MAC-CAN with many of our initiatives coming from them, not least the Croft. But it's not just what they do, it's the warmth they bring and how they do it; bright, fun and strong team players as well as leaders. From my point of view, Anne Connick has a new word in front of her name now "Indispensable Anne." Anne has done so many things off her own bat and provided much of the glue that held the CG together when there might have been some slippage. Jen has been a breath of fresh air, bringing a clarity of thought, rigour and strength to the role of treasurer and way beyond that role. Her wisdom and commitment provided an instant upgrade to our professionalism.

A big thanks to Nick who is moving to pastures new in the Highlands. Nick has provided much needed guidance and experience many times when decisions needed carefully to be weighed. Warmest wishes to him and Andrew in their next chapter. A big thank you also to Julia who will still be here and therefore available to be captured when needed. The lessons from her work with the Kilsture Forest Group, and her wider experience certainly helped MAC-CAN a lot – and our partnership is a good one. A recent bout of COVID meant that Jenna's energy levels briefly dropped to those of a normal human being. But Jenna brings us so much more with her wisdom, clear thinking and capacity to deliver on so many things. Many thanks to all of you.

In conclusion, may I highlight five things that in my view must form part of our planning now:

1. **Action Plans** (small, medium and perhaps large) professional, with identified leadership, capacity implications, management, monitoring, risk identification and management, and the potential for funding and budgets.
2. **Securing funding**
3. **Networking and 'Worknetting' – consolidating links with the other organisations.** This is a time of great change at policy level nationally and beyond. We need to keep abreast of the policy environment as well as the economic and environmental issues of concern to us.
4. **Maintaining and improving our website and communications.** Clear, open and encouraging communications, with an attractive website and social media presence.
5. **Membership and the Development of MAC-CAN** (noted in 2021)
 - a. A specific focus on inclusion, access and on **young people's involvement**
 - b. A review of ideas about 'membership' from everyone interested in being a part of MAC-CAN
 - c. A specific plan for expanding our membership base and enabling people to participate in ways that they wish.

Dr Scott Jones, Chair, MAC-CAN

Annex

MAC-CAN exists in a local, regional, national and international context. Some of this context bears repeating here as an annex. Notable events include:

- COP26 in Glasgow (November 2021) and Egypt follow up (6-18th November 2022)
- We are still in the UN Decade on Ecological Restoration that was launched on World Environment Day last year
- The Sustainable Development Goals most directly linked with environment were due to be revised last year to 2030 (Numbers 13 – *Climate Action*; 14 – *Life Below Water*; and 15 – *Life on Land*). Taking account of the new targets from the Convention on Biological Diversity, Kunming, October 2021.

MAC-CAN's "*triangle of concern*" may perhaps be captured in the following way:

