



Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network

**Annual General Meeting
Saturday 4th November 2023, 12 pm
Kirkinner Community Hall**

Chair's Report

Dear Friends

Welcome to MAC-CAN's second AGM as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation. It's almost four years since we met in Wigtown to discuss the possibility of setting up a local climate action network. So much work has been done over those years to set up the framework for our organisation, involving many of the 33 people who attended our inaugural meeting, and to build us into the work net we have become. We have also been well supported by more established organisations to deliver local activities such as Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere, Solway Firth Partnership, Propagate, South Machars Community Centre, Newton Stewart Initiative.

I would particularly like to mention the members of our board of trustees - Scott, Nicola, Jen, Gill, Rebecca and George for their support, for MAC-CAN and each other, who have worked with great skill this year to help establish our young charity. We are also blessed with a dedicated team of volunteers on what we used to call our 'core group', recently renamed Ops (Operations) Group – Jenna, Fiona and Lucy.

Lucy, in particular, is worthy of a special mention as she helped with setting up our communications group and in the last year has managed our website and Facebook page to promote all the wonderful work being carried out around DG8 to build a strong community of climate and nature activists.

The website and Facebook pages have been our main means of communication this year while we become better accustomed to our new email account. We look forward to further improvements in the next few months. Many thanks to Chris Dosser for his technical help in setting up our communications network and to Anne Connick for sterling work in setting up members' lists and links to other organisations.

All this work behind the scenes supports delivery of our charitable purpose:

*to advance climate, biodiversity and environmental protection
and/or improvement through positive, local education and
practical action.*

And we achieve this by networking, facilitating, promoting and celebrating our own work and that of other local groups who share our concerns about climate chaos and biodiversity loss.

The first of these principles – networking – was a challenge during the Covid lockdowns, although most of us improved our skills at working online to meet, discuss and plan. The biggest challenge has been creating a network across the whole of DG8 (dare I call it our bioregion?). It has been a great pleasure this year to get out and about and meet people in person. There are still some communities we have not yet had the opportunity to engage with, but this will be a priority over the next couple of years.

The activities we have initiated and supported this year have been varied. We've continued with what are now well-established events:

- Potato Day, which is an annual fundraiser for Food Train. This year we also included a plant and seed swap and promotion of the Galloway Apple Project
- Regular South Machars Crop Swaps. We've visited Whithorn, Newton Stewart, Wigtown, Carsluith, Kirkinner and the Men's Shed at Minnigaff
- Apple Days during Orchard Month – which this year lasted 2 months – our events took place at Challoch Church, Carsluith, South Machars Community Centre's first Food Festival, twice at the Croft and, finally, Port William
- Machars Abundance – this is an initiative started by Lucy to prevent orchard fruit from going to waste by collecting and distributing windfalls and harvest surplus
- Seed saving and sharing – collaborating with Rhins Seed Library and our friends at Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership
- Beach cleaning with Solway Firth Partnership, O N Us South West Scotland, Wigtown Bay Coastal Rowing Club
- and, last but not least, the MAC-CAN Croft where the weekly Wednesday sessions are going from strength to strength. We have also held wreath making workshops, apple grafting sessions, an open day with around 60 visitors and two apple days.

As we have become more established we have been invited to participate in events arranged by other organisations:

- Communities Climate Action Networker in Newton Stewart organised by Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere
- Some of our members participated in the UK wide AMPHoRA project, to research the effects of ammonia and nitrate pollution from agricultural practices
- Visits to other food related projects across our region facilitated by Dumfries and Galloway Food Partnership and the Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere: Food Conversations at Stranraer College, Bread Club at Summerhill Community Centre, Glenkens Food Hub and Garroch Walled Garden, the community garden and café at Penpont. Abi Mordin at Propagate engaged a young film maker to promote community growing initiatives across the region. Some of the filming took place at the Croft and also at South

Machars Community Centre. The finished film *'Rooted – Growing a Local Food Ecosystem'* is excellent and is now being screened at local venues.

- Newton Stewart Green Fayre.

And, as we become more widely known we have been delighted to welcome visitors to the MAC-CAN Croft:

- The Galloway and Southern Ayrshire Biosphere team
- Dumfries and Galloway Sustainable Food Partnership's Community Food groups
- A group of delegates from a Swedish biosphere
- Wigtownshire U3A Practical Gardening Group.

You may have noticed that most of our activities so far have been food related. Of all the climate actions that we can take one of the easiest is through our food choices – taking notice of where our food is produced, how it is processed and distributed. During the Covid lockdowns many people rediscovered an interest in gardening and, with empty supermarket shelves, looked for alternative food sources including home grown fruit and vegetables. Seed suppliers sold out quickly in early 2020 and seed saving and swapping started to happen. These activities are now well established in our local communities and are also an excellent focus for community building.

During the past year we have started two new initiatives:

Clothes swaps have been very ably organised by Fiona Prior. Alongside these there is usually a textile skills workshop and refreshments are made available. Wider issues around sustainable fashion and textiles can be discussed. We're lucky to have a wealth of creative people in our communities to share skills and knowledge. But there are also great resources available online for free. If you're interested our trustee, Rebecca, can provide a list of useful resources. Through Rebecca I discovered Fashion Revolution and I love their mantra:



This applies to all climate action, of course.

Another initiative that some of our members have started this year is B-lines. This is part of a Buglife project to protect and enhance habitat and corridors for pollinators. They have a strong, knowledgeable team – Anne, Gill, Rebecca, Jacqueline, Alan

and Lisa. So far, they are building awareness but will be looking for volunteers for practical action next year.

Have you spotted that the same names keep cropping up? The saying “if you want a job done, ask a busy person” is very true. But we really would like to see our activity groups grow, so why not come and join us?

Last year we held two member meetings. In April we revisited the list of ideas that was generated at the inaugural meeting and came away with a wish list. At our AGM last year we had workshops focussing on some of these ideas to try to find ways to turn them into action. The wish list is still live and we will deliver action as volunteer capacity allows. However, we have found that from actions already started sometimes unexpected spin offs develop. Don't you just love serendipity.

Focussing on our second principle, facilitating, we do organise specific MAC-CAN events but we also offer support to our members with advice, information and equipment so that they can organise and run activities that matter to them and fit with our goals. Because we already have such a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience within our local community groups it is usually relatively easy to connect individuals and groups with the resources they need.

We love to share information and stories about activities happening in and around the area, promoting those organisations and events that best serve our community in tackling different aspects of the climate and ecological crises. Once again, Lucy's skills come to the fore. She is expert at spotting new events and initiatives and sharing information on Facebook. She is also keen to populate our website with stories. Please send her your interesting articles, photos and videos. We would all love to hear and see them.

Celebrating is something we do quite well. “All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy.” We feel it is important to celebrate our achievements. The first way we do this is by reporting events on social media which usually generates positive feedback. However, there is nothing to compare with a live event. Our Croft open days are great fun and well attended, with home-made cakes, freshly baked pizzas from our outdoor oven and lots of chat. Likewise, our apple days and the crop swaps celebrate harvests. (Though, it has to be said, there **can** be too many courgettes). We actively seek out the celebrations of other community groups and do our best to support them.

From all the above you can see that members are the lifeblood of our charity. By participating in discussion and decision-making and in practical activities, MAC-CAN volunteers bring about positive changes in the Machars and Cree Valley by delivering our charitable purpose and shaping MAC-CAN's future.

Quite understandably, following disruption to schooling during Covid, it has been a challenge to engage with schools and young people. This is the generation that will be most affected by climate chaos and it is essential that young people are involved in planning and delivering activities that will lead to a sustainable/tolerable future. If you have younger folk (aged 12 or over) as members of your family, or

organisations that you are involved with, who would be interested in joining us we would welcome them with open arms.

Our trustees recently applied, successfully, for funding from the National Lottery's *Awards for All* so that we can appoint a part-time co-ordinator. After the AGM we will be advertising the post and we hope to have someone in place early in the new year. This will take a lot of pressure off the board of trustees and the ops team.

This doesn't mean that we won't still need volunteers to help run activities. So I look forward to seeing our membership and activities grow in the coming year. We will be able to build better and faster with more volunteers. Please don't be shy – every one of you has something to offer our wonderful small but beautiful organisation.

Mary Pattison
Chair,
Machars and Cree Valley Climate Action Network
SCIO Number: SC051955