

DORNOCH BEACH USER GROUP

Minutes of meeting held on Friday 27th November 2020

Present: Phil Tomalin (PT), Cllr Jim McGillivray (JM) - Highland Council
Paddy Murray (PM), Jerry Bishop (JB) - DACC
Neil Dalton (ND), Anthony Hope (AH) - ESRA
Isla Fullerton-Smith (IFS) - Dornoch Beach Wheelchairs
Neil Hampton (NH) - Royal Dornoch Golf Club
Lynne Redfern (LF), Darren Redfern (DF) - Dornoch Caravan & Camping Park

1. **Single Track Road signs & 20mph zone:** It was noted that there are no signs to warn traffic passing the Golf Clubhouse on Golf Road and the Caravan Park on Beach Road that they are entering a single track road with passing places. Also, there are no signs to warn long vehicles that the road ahead is not suitable (e.g. an RTA this year involving 2 motorhomes on Beach road). There is no signage to warn vehicles entering into the 'Top' car park at the junction between Golf Road and Beach Road that (i) it is a No Through Road and (ii) there are limited (No) turning places for long vehicles when the car park is full.

It was **agreed** by all parties that:

- a. Installation of **Single Track Road signs** is required to warn traffic accordingly
 - b. New **Passing Place signs** are required to manage traffic flow (particularly at the two new proposed passing places).
 - c. A **20 mph zone** would help with road safety in an area where there are often many pedestrians and young children (*n.b. Roads Dept are have agreed to install the relevant speed test equipment as a first step but a 20mph zone will require a Road Traffic Order to implement*).
 - d. **Additional signage** as outlined above would help with traffic management
2. **Top Car Park:** There was general discussion on the arrangements in the Top Car Park. PM and IFS outlined some of the problems encountered during the year post lockdown. PM also reported on a recent Zoom meeting with Shane Manning (SM), Principal Traffic Officer - THC, to explore available options for traffic management and parking.
 - a. **Passing Place:** PT showed the marking for a proposed new passing place by the ESRA shed and confirmed the boundary of the road and car park. It was **agreed** that this would be an improvement.
 - b. **Entrance:** ND & AH confirmed ongoing issues with access to the car park and it was generally accepted that the new posts on the north side of the entrance road had made matters worse. **No decision was reached**, but suggested remedies included removing the posts to allow cars to park on the grass (*NH confirmed this area is currently leased by RDGC, but any new lease would NOT include this area*), moving the posts back 2m to provide more parking space (*see above comment by NH*) leave as is, or paint yellow lines/box junction to try and prevent parking which blocks the entrance.
 - c. **Long Vehicles:** it was **agreed** that the Top car park is not suitable for long vehicles and that suitable signage should be installed to discourage such vehicles entering beyond the junction of Beach Road and Golf Road.
 - d. **Overnight parking:** PT confirmed that the car park is adopted and managed by THC. The current sign outlines the restrictions including no sleeping in vehicles overnight. However, JB noted that lack of enforcement staff resulted in frequent contraventions, not helped by some online websites citing Dornoch Beach Car Park as one of the best places for an overnight stay! DF said that numbers had reduced since the two new signs had been installed by DACC and IFS also noted that people sleeping in tents on the beach were a bigger problem. It was **agreed** that overnight parking for sleeping vehicles was not desirable and that steps should be taken to try and enforce the current restrictions.
 - e. **Charging:** PM outlined an option raised by SM for the Council to install Pay and Display parking (P&D) which could help justify additional enforcement presence in Dornoch and maybe generate funds for Community use via the Area Committee. Questions were

raised about the affect on local residents, particularly those walking dogs on the beach. LF suggested if a cost was introduced that it should be low so as not to put off tourists. JB observed that the previous day (26th Nov) the car park had been full at 12.30 and the problem was reducing the number of vehicles trying to park there. PM said any charging could be limited to the Tourist season and that the community would have input on details such as time restrictions, charges, etc.. PM also said that provision for parking permits for IV25 residents could be made available and that some or all of the cost may be able to be met from the Common Good Fund. PT expressed reservations about this, but it was **agreed** that the concept of P&D parking would need to go to a full public consultation and if accepted it could be part of a solution to better manage parking at the Beach.

- f. **Litter Bins:** PM said that problems with collections experienced immediately post-lockdown had been addressed and that in his experience waste collections had been more than adequate since then. IFS stated her wish to screen the bin area to improve the visual amenity. PT said that the Waste Collection team were opposed to this as screening inevitably created areas out of sight which attracted dumping of additional inappropriate waste. IFS had also approached PT to enquire if a recycling facility (Blue bin) could be added in the area. JB said he had emailed Alan Mckinnie to ask if this would be possible and PT said that an answer had been received that morning in the **negative**.
- g. **Beach Award:** JB reported on the last assessment for the Blue Flag beach award, noting that the one area for improvement (Amber status) is a lack of essential information on the notice board (*viz. safety information (including hazards), Useful contacts (beach operator, medical/emergency services), Beach Code of Conduct, a Map of the beach showing location of facilities, Water quality information*). He explained that a recent grant award from the Common Good Fund to DACC had provision for a new sign and suggested it be positioned between the existing Town Map and wildlife interpretation signs. IFS & PM were against this location and suggested both the Town Map and any new sign be located on the other side of the car park (near the wooden shed). JB was opposed to this, noting that the Town Map had been the subject of a consented planning application by DACIC and that some of the 'missing' information identified by the Beach award assessors had been on display in the shed, but hadn't been seen by the assessor. **No agreement was reached on the location of a new sign** to meet Beach Award criteria, although it was **agreed** that the Beach Award should be retained as a matter of priority.
- h. **ESRA shed:** AH confirmed that it was ESRA's intention to demolish their existing shed once the new building was open. ND noted that some parts of it are over 150 years old and that some of the concrete construction is now crumbling. IFS said she would like to see a café in the building, but JB noted the lack of services and AH confirmed that the waste water arrangements for the new ESRA building had been both costly and specified to meet only their own limited use (i.e. not suitable for a public toilet).

3. **Play Park Car Park:** PT, PM & JM all noted the background to the Play Park car park and IFS gave some background to the Play Park itself, noting that lack of finance had resulted in only partial fencing around it and that said screening with trees had been deemed unsuitable by the CGF managers.

JM explained that the wooden posts in the car park had been moved back 2m from the road over the summer to allow campervans to park in between the new log dividers, which had been spaced at a generous 3m width. It had been suggested by a DACC member that these dividers should be removed as they presented a potential hazard. Although ND noted he had seen a driver stumble over a divider when getting out of his vehicle it was generally agreed that they served their purpose of ensuring vehicles were parked at 90° to the road (thus maximising parking spaces) and on balance they were a good thing. However, it was **agreed** to look at getting the retaining pins driven down further to make them level with the top of the wooden logs.

JB noted the condition of the surface of the parking area and it was **agreed** that some maintenance would be required before next season. JB said he had discussed the issue with J&S Gunn and they would be providing a quotation for levelling and resurfacing the area between the road and the parking bays with scalplings, although there was no budget provided for this in the

recent CGF grant. PT confirmed that any work within 3m of the public road would require prior approval from the Roads Dept.

PM then outlined the possibility of THC taking over the management of the Play Park parking area as per discussions in item 2. above. It was agreed that if enforcement were to be introduced this should include restrictions on overnight parking and IFS suggested that charges could be lower than the Top car park to encourage people away from there.

JB reported that SM had outlined 2 options; either a guaranteed income via a service level agreement or a profit-sharing scheme agreed with the community. PT noted that any changes to Common Good Land (& any P&D charges) would be subject to statutory public consultation by THC. It was generally agreed that parking charges for the Play Park car park be explored along with charges for the Top Car Park.

4. **Overflow Car Park:**

- a. Entrance: JB explained an issue with access to the Overflow car park raised by a regular visitor to Dornoch over the summer which resulted in a motorhome shredding a tyre on the raised ironwork of the bollards at the entrance. He also pointed out the damage to both wooden stobs either at either side of the entrance, causing by the tight turn required on exit. He proposed a solution of moving 4 wooden bollards back to create a splayed opening and replacing the metal hinged bollards with a metal gate mounted on 2 new wooden strainer posts. The entrance would then be re-surfaced with scalplings. It was agreed that, subject to costs being within budget and approval from the Roads Dept was obtained, that this work should be done ASAP.
- b. P&D: it was agreed that if charging was introduced then it should cover the Overflow car park as well. NH confirmed that the land was NOT part of the current or any future RDGC lease.
- c. Signage: Following a suggestion by IFS, it was agreed that once the entrance had been remodelled, motorhomes and campervans should be actively encouraged to park in the overflow car park by means of additional signage, but DF said he would not want to see campervans parking overnight here, which was agreed.

5. **Food Hut**: PT & PM explained where the proposed lease for the Food Hut was. PT also showed the position of a proposed new passing place. A number of reservations were raised about the operation of the food hut and PM explained that it would be incumbent on the leaseholder to ensure all litter was removed from the site. Questions were also asked about parking on the road adjacent to the Food Hut and PM explained he would be asking for the operator NOT to serve people who had parked in the passing place.

PT said that a number of responses had been received to the current consultation on the proposed lease, with a majority currently against. He had checked with the Common Good officer who had confirmed that an alternative adjacent site may be agreed without the need for a new consultation. He suggested that a position on the CG land in the Overflow car park may be a more suitable location. It was agreed that this may be the best solution.

6. **Beach Toilets**: JB outlined the work provided for by the recent CGF grant, including internal and external painting and re-setting of the coping stones on the walls outside the building. DF noted that the latest signs on the doors had increased the number of campervans paying for waste disposal at the Caravan Park
7. **Caravan Park**: DF reported a nuisance caused by campervans parking overnight without paying in the layby opposite the entrance to the Park. JM suggested that the layby be marked as a turning area to deter such behaviour - agreed. *(Post meeting comment from PT to note that the single track road starts much further back than the above 'layby' – i.e. at the start of Beach Road at the junction of River Street & Well Street – which may affect any decision to try and deter parking here).*

LF said that they had plans to repurpose their current putting green (which is not well used), partly with some additional play equipment and partly with a crazy golf course, which would be open to the public to play. It was **agreed** that this was a very welcome development.

DF also noted that the Caravan Park now had an electric vehicle charging point which was also available to the wider public. JB **agreed** to feed this information into the latest THC Tourism Infrastructure Plan.

PM thanked DF & LF for all their hard work over the summer and congratulated them on the improvements they had made in the park. In response, LF detailed further work over the winter to refurbish both their male and female toilet & shower blocks using local tradesmen at an estimated cost of £30k.

8. **Airfield Car Park:** JB reported on DACC plans to install a picnic bench near the airfield car park, as suggested by a local resident. It was **agreed** that a wooden bench be located outside the designated operational area, to the south of the car park on suitable concrete plinth adjacent to the current wildlife interpretation panel.

PM concluded the meeting by thanking everyone for their attendance and explaining that whilst some items discussed may be able to be advanced sooner, most of the decisions taken would be fed into a wider Dornoch planning session to be hosted by HIE in the New Year.

Meeting closed around 12:00