

Strathnairn Community Plan Group

Farr Hall, 7th March 2016, 7.30pm

1. Welcome and Apologies

Scott MacDonald (SMac, Chair), Sylvina Tilbury (ST, Minutes), Kirsty Adam (KA, part), Bea Wallace (BW), Peter Christie (PC), Paul Robinson (PR)

James Murray (JM, Strathnairn Community Council)

Jenny Stewart, Kathy Collins (JS, KC, Care In Strathnairn)

Caroline Tucker (CT, Strathnairn News)

Darren Read, Ewen Hardie (DR, EH, former members of CPG)

Apologies: Bev Maclean, Sally Moore

2. Approval of Minutes/Matters Arising (omitted)

3. Communications (additional item requested by DR)

DR, as a founder member of the original CPG, requested that the meeting begin by discussing progress and its communication to the wider community. He is concerned that 125 people in the community took the time to fill out the survey and give their feedback and they have not yet been informed of the outcomes. He also questioned the remit of the group and its current agenda compared with the results from the original survey.

SMac noted that the remit of the current CPG is intended to be dealing with the non-categorised outcomes of the survey that were not passed onto other community groups. Some of the outcomes have been reported but it was acknowledged that the current CPG has not been terribly good at reporting current progress. We do now plan to update the CPG web pages and explore the use of social media.

EH voiced concern about the responses from some community groups, saying that despite a great return rate from the survey (125 people) some groups have responded by saying they wouldn't be making any changes. He suggested that this now needs to be re-visited and updates requested from the various community groups. PR and DR both noted that goodwill would be required, and that communications with the groups would need to be tactful.

Speaking on behalf of the Community Woodlands Group, PC noted that feedback from the survey results was posted on their website but no subsequent comments had been received from anyone in the community.

ST noted that an action plan is really essential, as envisaged at the end of Stage 1. As for communication, KA noted that publication of minutes is the minimum we should be doing.

KA also noted that lack of cohesiveness and communication is a significant barrier. Someone needs to pull all these strands together, and KA believes that a Development Officer, as previously discussed, would be helpful for this. For example they could liaise with the various groups and help take the strain off individuals, who are all volunteers.

There was then some general discussion around the subject of a Development Officer and how effective such a post would be. It was noted that the previous Community Council voted in favour of establishing a Development Officer post so there is already a mandate for this. Opinions on the need for a Development Officer differed within the group, but the majority were in favour in principle. There was some disagreement about whether the Community Council vote did indeed constitute a mandate from the community (PR in particular felt that it did not), but again the majority were in favour.

Discussion then moved on to how such a post could be facilitated. It was agreed that the only community body that would currently be able to employ such a person is Strathnairn Community Benefit Fund, as it is a legal entity that already employs people. There was also some discussion around the subject of a community development company or trust (following on from the previous meeting) and there was general agreement that in the long term, if established, then this would be the most appropriate body to employ the Development Officer, but that SCBF could do so in the interim.

SMac reported that he, JM and Mike Fitzgerald are meeting on 29th March (action point from the CPG meeting of 1st February) and after a lengthy discussion the group agreed that this meeting should aim to reach an agreement in principle about the mechanism for employing a Development Officer.

ACTIONS

ST/SMac to liaise over updating the CPG web pages and publication of minutes.

SMac/JM/Mike Fitzgerald (not present) to meet on 29th March in order to discuss the Development Officer post and the potential for establishing a community development company or trust.

4. Defibrillators (KA)

This item was moved up the agenda at KA's request as she could not attend the whole meeting. KA reported that we now have agreement from all three suggested locations. KC confirmed that the Vestry at Croachy Church has agreed that a defibrillator could be sited on the wall of the church hall.

KA also reported on progress with costings. As reported at a previous meeting she has obtained a quote from a commercial supplier for c.£7,500. She has also been in touch with the charity Lucky2BHere who will supply defibrillators in return for a donation. They suggested that in the

case of communities with wind farm money the average donation is around £2,000 a unit, so that would make the total cost approximately £6,000.

The ambulance service eventually replied to KA's enquiry of three months ago stating that they don't supply free defibrillators (in contrast to the report at the previous CPG meeting). They pointed KA towards the British Heart Foundation who can give a small grant towards the costs. This option has already been explored and discounted.

As some attendees had not been a previous meetings, there was then some general discussion about the proposed siting of the defibrillators. EH suggested we could have more than three, highlighting the Daviot to Nairnside area as an obvious gap. KA explained we had explored this before and found there was no obvious location for a defibrillator here. Keppoch Cairn was suggested as a possibility and EH also suggested that some people may be willing to have one sited on their house. There was general agreement that we would start with the three agreed locations and look at expanding this in the future.

Discussion then moved onto the application to SCBF. It was agreed that the application should be made in the name of CPG. KA queried whether a third quote would be required in addition to the commercial/charity options currently available (SCBF has previously indicated this would be a requirement). SMac confirmed on behalf of SCBF that this would not be necessary. DR noted that there is a potential question mark over SCBF's ability to give funds to a charity, but that SCBF could seek clarification from the wind farms and obtain special dispensation if required.

There was unanimous agreement that the application to SCBF should now be put together. The aim will be to submit to SCBF by the end of March for discussion at their April meeting.

ACTION

KA to write and submit application to SCBF on behalf of CPG

5. Community Emergency Plan

ST outlined the background (for the benefit of those not present before) and current progress on the emergency plan. SMO was unable to attend this meeting but has advised ST that she has made initial contact with Meallmore Nursing Home who have agreed to liaise with her. ST has not yet made contact with SSE to arrange a meeting (action point from last meeting) as we need more input from the community before we get to that stage.

KC and JS were then invited for their views on behalf of Care In Strathnairn. KC noted that vulnerable people are going to want to stay in their own homes, and would most likely not want a stranger to be visiting them. She suggested that CIS should be the main contact for the purposes of the emergency plan, and they can then cascade this through their volunteers. Needs are likely to include hot food, but there could be logistical problems (eg access in severe weather).

JS noted that CIS do not have a comprehensive list of vulnerable residents, only those who have made contact. Therefore the whole community would need to contribute this information. This was agreed.

It was also noted that there is currently a shortage of CIS volunteers. There are 24 people on the books but none are currently active. There have been recent attempts to recruit paid carers, eg through Strathnairn News (ST noted that this hadn't been very prominent). The suggestion was made that CIS could look at pooling resources with Stratherrick who apparently have some spare carers at the moment. EH commented that one reason for the lack of volunteers could be that CIS does not provide insurance.

JM noted that he had confirmed with SSE that the community would be eligible for a hot food van after the power has been off for 12 hours, and that this will still apply even if the hall is supplied with a generator.

Finally it was suggested that once an emergency procedure has been agreed, this should be widely publicised (eg in Strathnairn News) so that members of the community know what they can expect.

ACTION

ST to attend CIS's next meeting on 22nd March to discuss the emergency plan

6. Winter resilience

ST outlined why this is on the agenda. It was originally raised at a meeting last year and ST undertook to investigate the current position at which point the CPG could take a decision as to whether anything needed taking forward. ST has finally managed to make a little progress with this and has spoken with one of the local farmers who have an arrangement with the Highland Council for road clearance (John Matheson, via Fran Matheson). Since this item was raised, the CPG has been tasked with developing the Community Emergency Plan so winter resilience may not now be required as a workstream in its own right.

There was some discussion about gritting and the availability of grit piles and grit bins. ST has been requesting a grit bin for the hill at Loch Ruthven for some time now with little success (although JS noted this may have been about to happen when ST temporarily moved away). CT has had similar discussions with the Highland Council and has been told they don't supply grit bins to rural communities. Other members of the group appear to have been told differently in the past, so there is some confusion over the exact position. JS suggested that we could ask the council if we could purchase the grit bins and grit as a community.

ST suggested that this item could now be taken forward through the Community Council, perhaps inviting Highland Council TEC Services along to a future meeting. PC (Secretary of SNCC) agreed.

ACTION

ST/PC to liaise over handing this item over to SNCC to take forward.

7. Community Newsletter

SMac outlined the background to this agenda item, which includes the issue of payment for the newsletter editor.

CT then gave more details about her role as newsletter editor and previous attempts by the newsletter board to increase the remuneration for the role. She currently spends about 24 hours preparing each newsletter. SMO, in her former role as Chair of SNCC, had recommended that the newsletter board apply to SCBF for an increase in funding, including a higher payment for the editor role. This was rejected in favour of a payment in line with the SNCC minute secretary post. Following this decision the newsletter board has been working to increase the payment for the editor from advertising revenue.

SMac suggested that the application to SCBF had not been particularly well handled, which may have contributed to the decision that was made. DR suggested that as there have now been changes to the SCBF board, a future application may be looked on more favourably.

EH pointed out with regard to funding that SCBF and SNCC currently get free space in the newsletter amounting to around half the content. He suggested that the newsletter needs to begin to charge these groups for space, along with any others who currently get newsletter space for nothing. He noted that Highland Council provides money to SNCC for marketing purposes.

There was some general discussion around the format of the newsletter and its frequency. CT stated that the community currently gets a very good deal from Speedprint, although there can be some fluctuations in timescale. We compare favourably with newsletters in other areas when comparing like with like. ST asked whether bi-monthly was frequent enough. CT explained that the main reason the newsletter cannot be produced more frequently is a lack of resources (in terms of time, committee members and finance). DR then suggested that the website could be included in the editorial group of the newsletter which may allow for more time-critical content to be published there.

PC mentioned that newsletter deadlines can often make it difficult for the SNCC meetings to be made available in time for publication in the following newsletter. JM noted that something has to take precedence and that this is currently newsletter deadlines.

There was unanimous agreement that the community newsletter is an excellent facility and that the editor post is worthy of higher remuneration. It was agreed that this should be taken forward by SNCC on behalf of the newsletter board.

ACTION

CT/SMac/PR to liaise over a forward plan for the newsletter and a future application to SCBF.

8. Farr Hall (SMac)

SMac reported on a meeting he had attended with the hall committee. This was in his capacity as a SCBF director, but he has confirmed with Doug and Mike F that there is no issue with confidentiality and he is able to report to CPG. The hall committee is preparing an application to SCBF for kitchen refurbishment. SMac had attended their meeting to assist with this, but also raised a number of other ideas with the hall committee which have been put forward in the community through various means. SMac undertook at the hall committee meeting to send them a “wish list” for them to consider, as a quid pro quo for getting funding for the kitchen extension. This has been done, and it has also been suggested to the hall committee that they hire an architect.

There followed some general discussion. BW asked if SMac could circulate the wish list to the group, and also cautioned against this being passed directly to an architect. ST agreed and asked who would be putting together a brief for the architect. JM emphasised that a clear brief and direction for any appointed architect would be essential. In addition to the items on the wish list outlined by SMac, DR noted that there is a problem with access to the changing facilities to the wider community. ST then raised the issue of funding for the hall, and the possibility of free access for the community as Daviot Hall does. There was general agreement that this should be explored.

The need for public consultation was stressed, and EH pointed out that this must be done differently from last time when the community was presented with the final plans for comment. DR noted that at present the hall committee is not really directly accountable to the community, however as a registered charity they must need to provide public reports (KC/DR).

It was unanimously agreed that the hall committee should be supported in taking these plans forward.

ACTION

SMac to circulate “wish list” to meeting attendees.

9. Broadband

SMac outlined progress so far. The next meeting of the Ward 13 steering group is on Thursday 10th March and Community Broadband Scotland are to make a presentation to the Community Council on 21st March. To date SMac has been the Strathnairn representative, but anyone else is welcome to attend. SMac has emailed the latest information from the steering group to ST and will circulate to other attendees.

Some general discussion followed. It was noted that funding will not really be an issue as Community Broadband Scotland will provide at least 90% of funding. DR commented that there is a strong drive coming from the Government and the communities that benefit most will be

those that shout the loudest. We can also take into consideration the forthcoming 4G/5G rollout which will potentially provide mobile broadband in areas that currently have none.

PC pointed out that Ward 13 doesn't include the eastern end of our strath, and this would need to be considered as part of any plan coming out of the steering group.

ACTIONS

SMac to circulate latest information from the Ward 13 steering group

ALL to consider whether they wish to attend forthcoming Ward 13 meetings and advise SMac if so.

10. Mobile Signal

SMac noted that this item is specifically in respect of trying to get a reliable mobile signal in Farr Hall.

DR noted that this will be network specific, but that in respect of Vodafone he is aware that there is a community version of the Sure Signal box which has 30 to 40 channels. SMac asked if DR could find out some more about this, or provide contacts.

ST asked whether anyone is aware of if/how the mobile companies are planning for new masts, and whether we could lobby for one locally. DR believes the strategy is now not so much for new masts but more towards upgrading existing masts to cover dead spots. There is a document explaining much of this which he can provide a copy of.

ACTION

DR to provide more information and/or contacts for community Sure Signal device and also provide copies of other useful information, to SMac in the first instance.

11. AOCB

It was generally agreed that the agenda is currently very full and that the group would benefit from prioritising issues and focusing on one area at a time. There was agreement that this boils down, once again, to the need for an action plan and strategy. This will go on the agenda for the next meeting.

Date and time of next meeting - 4th April tbc