

Assynt Community Council
27 April 2017
Lochinver Community Hall
7.30pm
Approved Minutes

1) Present:

K Anderson (KA), P Jones (PJ), R Kerr (RK), D McBain (DM), D Slator - Chair (DS), L Taylor (LT), J Thomas (JT)

Others Present:

G Farlow (GF) (Highland Council), M Bangor-Jones, K Bonnie, K Macleod (KM)

2) Apologies:

A Dickson (AD), M Hutchison (MH), V Ling (VL), M Stringer (MS)

3) Expressions of Interest:

There were none.

4) Minutes of March Meeting and Matters arising:

LT proposed the draft minutes be accepted and RK seconded.

Fire Service Update: The tender will be back in service once the two nominated drivers have completed their training.

Ranger Service: Andy Summers is now based in an upstairs room above 'An Cala' (the old Lochinver Mission).

Strone Hill Plaque: RK confirmed the Crofters Association already has a plaque of their own ready for erection. This will only refer to the land on the sea-ward side of Strone Hill and will not feature the view of the hills. GF still has this on his to-do list but is waiting for Unesco Designation to be confirmed before the final signage can be produced. GF has also considered approaching the NC500 Committee with a view to their erecting a sign at the same spot. A Geopod has already been sited adjacent to Rhiconich Police Station providing a shelter and viewpoint.

Scottish Water Update: All the road repair machinery has now been removed but nothing has been done to patch up the Leisure Centre car park.

Action: DS to take up the matter with Scottish Water.

Rockstop: The external doors have now been replaced.

*Correction: The doors have been measured for replacements but not yet replaced

Dog Waste Bags: Bags are currently being stored in the Council shed at the harbour. JT pointed out that they are not always accessible. She currently restocks the bag dispensers but will not be continuing to do this on a permanent basis.

Ice Plant: There are conflicting reports regarding the placement of the TV relay mast once the existing Ice Plant is removed.

First Responders Scheme: An article has already appeared in the Assynt News to publicise the campaign. This information will also be shared on Facebook. DS has received a number of enquiries from potential volunteers.

Action: DS to advertise and arrange a public meeting once everyone has had a chance to respond to the advertising campaign. This meeting in itself might also generate more local interest.

GF pointed out that the Scottish Government has recently announced a scheme to train more paramedics with a view to providing more at-home care.

The provision of Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) within the community was then discussed. It was felt that outlying areas such as the camp sites at Achmelvich and Clachtoll would benefit from their own AEDs, as well as Stoer and the Rockstop.

DS pointed out that the charity organisation 'Lucky To Be Here' is able to cover half the cost of each AED, but this still leaves an additional spend of £600. The charity British Heart Foundation would charge £1000 to £1500. There is also the matter of training and a commitment to carry out regular equipment checks.

Action: DS to ask Margaret about positioning an AED at Achmelvich camp site and LT to contact Sonia at Kylesku to ask if there is a requirement for an AED there. LT will also take on the custodial role of the 2 AEDs at Lochinver

Harbour, and DS will take on responsibility for the AED located outside the Spar in Lochinver. RK to enquire whether or not the Crofters' Trust would be willing to fund an AED at Stoer.

Patient Transport Service: A poster has already been placed in the surgery along with an article in the Assynt News requesting any feedback following telephone enquiries made to the PTS.

KM reported an incident where someone had to drive from Dundee in order to provide private transport to a local out-patient who was due to attend a 15:00 appointment at Raigmore Hospital. KA pointed out that the PTS is unable to cater for late afternoon appointments. DS has made a note of the situation and will monitor any further feedback received.

Action: PJ to add the PTS to the August agenda.

Local Groups: JT referred to the Play Park Group who have now achieved most of what they set out to. There are two new pieces of equipment stored in the Council shed awaiting installation.

Action: PJ to add Local Groups to the agenda again each month starting January 2018.

Changing Meeting Dates: The AGM has been brought forward to the May meeting and will take place in Lochinver on the 25th.

Action: PJ to include the dates of all future ACC meetings in the Assynt News when publishing each month's approved minutes.

ATM: JT reported that the necessary paperwork has now been completed and signed by all parties.

Abandoned Vehicles at the Cruamer Car Park: PJ passed on an update from MS. One of the owners has already been traced and the offending vehicle has been removed. Jimmy MacKay the HC warden has also served notices on the remaining vehicles and caravans.

Bus Shelter: AD has begun the process of applying for discretionary funding.

Archived ACC Minutes: GF has received no further information regarding copies of previous minutes discovered by Andy Summers while clearing out the old Tourist Information building. He felt these could prove to be important historical documents in the context of the buy-out.

5) Financial Report:

KA read out the latest statement.

Business Instant Access Reserve Account: £4074.04 Business Current Account: £171.59

6) Correspondence:

PJ had already forwarded copies of the Planning Applications for April.

There were no objections. The installation of a BT Broadband Cabinet near Inver Park was welcomed as it should extend high-speed broadband coverage to areas of the village outwith the reach of the cabinet at the telephone exchange.

7) Community Services:

Elphin:

PJ passed on further information regarding the Elphin speeding issue. MS reported that static patrols have increased by local police to address the issue. Police motorcycles have also been instructed to help deter the problem of speeding traffic in the area.

Other areas:

DS has pursued various issues with Graham Mackenzie. It has now been confirmed that the salt stance will be relocated and operational by next winter. The fencing alongside the school path will be inspected before a decision is made regarding repair work.

Graham Mackenzie has also agreed to attend the May ACC meeting

A number of other outstanding issues were then discussed.

- i New signage is to be placed at the approaches to the Kirkaig Bridge cattle grid to warn drivers.
- ii LT has requested signs at the Glac junction reminding motorists to drive on the left.
- iii JT pointed out that a new sign has been erected on the outskirts of Nedd reminding drivers to use passing places to allow overtaking. But none have yet been erected at the start of the coastal road, or at Stoer as promised by Hugh Morrison.
- iv The lack of white lining was mentioned again - particularly the lack of clear markings at the road verges making driving at night more hazardous. GF pointed out that any large scale white lining now requires the deployment of a crew from the Central Belt and is also reliant on dry weather conditions.
- v Yellow lining was also due to be completed this summer, but so far there has been no further action.

vi DM also referred to the 'Ramp' signs adjacent to the cattle grid near the salt dump. These have been in place for 18 years awaiting the replacement grid to be fitted and are a constant eyesore.

Action: GF to pursue.

8) Spar Ramp and 24 Hour Fuel:

DS has spoken to Sue Macleod on both issues. The ramp is due to be fitted within the next few days. The provision of 24 hour access to fuel is on a list of things to do once the new Post Office work is completed.

Action: PJ to add to the agenda for August.

9) Play Park Bin Location:

JT asked why the dog waste bin had been removed from alongside the waste bag dispenser and positioned at the entrance gate to the Play Park.

Action: KM to raise the matter with those concerned.

10) Electric Vehicle Charging Points:

DS has passed on this matter to the Discover Assynt group.

11) Scottish and Southern Electricity Network North of Scotland Resilient Communities' Fund:

DS has taken a look at the on-line application forms as this is a potential source of funds. But every application would benefit from the completion of a Communities Emergency Plan first. Community Care Assynt is already looking at putting in an application, but DS is happy to pass on further details to anyone else who wishes to take this forward.

12) Reassess Community Council Web Site Effectiveness:

Following a second vote last year, the go-ahead was given to set up and run a web site for 12 months to see how effective it will be. This has yet to be carried out and VL has now been in contact with Monika Strell who is prepared to set up and host an ACC web site.

A quote has already been received for the initial cost for the design and setting up of a wordpress-based web site along with ad hoc maintenance and the purchase of the domain name www.assyntcommunitycouncil.org.uk.

Some discussion followed on the reasons for a web site in the first place. DM felt it a waste of time and money as the existing web site had only ever received two 'hits'. DS pointed out this was because the existing site has nothing on it - but DM explained that anyone browsing for the ACC web site would not know there was nothing there until paying a visit.

DS added that there is a great deal of other information relayed to the ACC that should be shared within the community, and the Assynt News and Facebook page do not provide a permanent way of displaying this information.

It was agreed the exercise would be tried out for 12 months but the cost would need to be reconsidered as there are several cheaper options. JT suggested the ACC should seek more than one quote for any work. Council discussed potential suppliers.

Action: DS to approach VL with a view to getting a further quote from Steve Webb.

VL passed on a request that at some point she would require personal details from each community councillor for the website.

13) AOCB:

i School Bus

DM raised the issue of the sudden cancellation of the late school bus from Ullapool to Lochinver following the Easter break. Neither the school nor the ACC had been given formal notice or invited to discuss the matter with the Highland Councillors concerned even though the decision appears to have been made some time ago.

GF has since pursued the matter with the Transport department and Community Services department. William Gilfillan reported back that the cut in service follows a 'pink paper' budget exercise carried out in December behind closed doors to address overspending elsewhere.

GF suggested the ACC write to the Chief Executive expressing their profound concerns at the cuts, and the nature in which the entire exercise was carried out, given that it takes away the ability for local pupils to attend after-school activities including revision groups. The school is currently paying for Ewans to continue providing this service as a short-term measure due to impending examinations.

It was also pointed out that the late service (Monday to Thursday) provides a service for any foot travellers wishing to continue North after arriving on the afternoon ferry or on the Inverness bus. Bill Alexander is of the opinion that the cost comes under Community Service, but it was pointed out he has a duty of care to provide adequate access to local schools for all communities and has neglected his responsibilities in this respect.

Action: All those present agreed DM to draft a strongly-worded letter and DS to sign on behalf of the ACC. It was also suggested the letter should be copied to the press if the HC's response is unsatisfactory.

ii) Out of Hours Medical Cover:

DS asked that anyone who has asked for out of hours medical support and received a less than satisfactory response inform him, VL or Kenneth Kerr at the surgery. The surgery team are keen to monitor the situation but are only informed when a medical professional is asked to attend in response to a call.

iii) Geopark Funding:

DM asked for a letter of support from the ACC for their current fundraising campaign.

DS agreed to provide this.

iv) Charity Container

KM reported that the second-hand item repository at Torbreck Landfill site is no longer being emptied by the charity concerned and a padlock has been fitted. In the past, items of furniture were left there and taken away by Bythswood or New Start but this has proven to be too costly. Locals were also invited to leave items and/or collect anything that they could find an use for. But now the container is padlocked, everything ends up being disposed of along with other household waste. It was felt there should be an alternative means of passing on unwanted items to those in need.

PJ pointed out the Health and Safety issues. He mentioned New Start's reluctance to accept second-hand beds and sofas in perfect condition because the 'Fire Safety' labelling had been removed or was out of date.

Action: RK agreed to mention the matter to Kelly at the Leisure Centre. DS to telephone New Start to establish whether or not they intend removing the empty container. If not, the padlock can be removed and the container used as an ad hoc collection/delivery point for anyone with items to dispose of. DS also to contact 'White Rabbit' in Ullapool to enquire whether they would be interested in purchasing items donated.

v) Geopark update:

GF reported that the Geopark is advertising for a coordinator but there is already a catering and waiting staff shortage. The previous licensee has left a number of unpaid accounts but the Geopark hope to sort out this matter and will take full control once the new enterprise is up and running.

vi) Final Accounts:

KA had already passed on the final year accounts. All those present were satisfied with the way these were reported.

vii) Benches:

KA mentioned the number of benches in a bad state of repair. It was suggested that local businesses might be approached and asked for sponsorship to replace those no longer repairable.

Action: PJ to include on May agenda. DS asked that in the meantime, detail of which benches could be gathered and enquiries made if any local business would sponsor a bench.

viii) Street cleaning:

KM asked why street cleaning and litter collection is no longer taking place.

GF replied that a new advertisement will be put in place shortly for an operator to take on this work.

DM suggested it would be better if the job was advertised locally in the Assynt News or by poster rather than on-line on www.myjobscotland.gov.uk.

KA also referred to the amount of discarded cigarette stubs on the pavement outside the 'Caberfeidh'.

Action: LT to bring up the issue with the new barman.

ix) George Farlow Presentation

DS made a presentation on behalf of the ACC to GF who is standing down as Highland Councillor after the forthcoming local elections.

Mr Farlow thanked everyone and expressed his determination to keep promoting the area. He considered it a privilege to have supported this local community and pledged to help raise the profile of Sutherland through his continued involvement with the Geopark.

The meeting closed at 21.30.

The next meeting will take place in the Committee Room of Lochinver Village Hall at 19:30 May 25th and will also include the AGM.

PJ April 2017

assyntcc@gmail.com

Follow us on Facebook (Assynt Community Council)