

Assynt Community Council

31 August 2017

Lochinver Village Hall Committee Room

7.30pm

Approved Minutes

1) Present:

K Anderson (KA), A Dickson (AD), M Hutchison (MH), P Jones (PJ), R Kerr (RK), V Ling (VL), D McBain (DM), D Slator (DS) (Chair), L Taylor (LT)

Others Present:

K Currie (KC) (Highland Council), B Alexander, M Scott (MS)

2) Apologies:

J Thomas

3) Expressions of Interest:

There were none.

4) Minutes of June Meeting and Matters arising:

MH proposed the draft minutes be accepted and AD seconded.

Matters arising were as follows:

i. Scottish Water Update:

The material tipped by the Achmelvich Bridge will be removed once they commence work on the proposed pumping station. To date, repairs to the car park at the Leisure Centre have still not been carried.

Action: DS to chase up.

ii. Campervans:

Madeline Macphail has organised a meeting to discuss this issue at Stoer Hall on Monday 4th September. There is a possibility that independent funding will be made available to provide facilities for campervans visiting the area.

iii. Benches:

PJ has approached Nick Gorton regarding his offer to replace the bench at the bottom of Lodge Road and has been told the existing bench will be repaired as soon as possible.

iv. Clashnessie Beach Access:

RK has been in contact with Matt Dent who confirmed that HC will carry out this work using material left over from another project. There should be enough material for a 20 metre ramp and platform. But there is no indication that the access can be maintained on a long-term basis as HC are only responsible for ground 3 metres either side of the highway.

Action: RK will continue to pursue and may also invite Highland Ranger Andy Summers to become involved.

v. Litter:

KC is unsure what the long term plans are regarding the provision of litter bins, but the existing metal dog waste bins have already been replaced.

AD reported that the new Amenities Officer has begun to carry out his duties and is already making a positive impact.

DM reported that litter on the Inver Loop path is being washed down the river causing an ongoing problem and suggested improved signage indicating where the recycling centre is located might go some way to reducing the problem of visitors not having anywhere to dispose of their waste.

vi. Broadband:

AD has placed a note in the Assynt News informing readers that fibre optic is now available in Lochinver, but customers are required to sign in for the service.

Action: LT to add a note on the ACC's Facebook page to tis effect.

vii. Late Bus:

At the commencement of the current school term, no provision has been made by HC for a late bus between Ullapool and Lochinver despite assurances being given by David Summers (Principal Transport Officer HC) that there would be a late service in place. DS has emailed KC and spoken to David Summers about the situation. The tendering process has been delayed, possibly because HC have yet to inform all those who put in a tender that the service will now be covered in-house.

DM pointed out that the HC officer responsible for providing school transport went on record in May stating the late service would be fully operational at the start of the next school term, but has now failed to fulfil this promise or inform all concerned why the service would not be available.

KC agreed this issue should have been dealt with well in advance of term time. The excuse that documentation had to be signed off by two senior HC officers who were on holiday at the same time is unacceptable, given the length of time they have had to address this issue. There is also the matter of driver recruitment for the in-house service, which will entail another lengthy delay.

DM asked that an official complaint be made and that the sheer incompetence of those involved be made public.

Action: DM to make a formal complaint on behalf of the ACC, and with the full support of KC.

MH also to place an article in the Northern Times highlighting the problem and in the meantime DS will urge as many members of the public as possible to complain.

viii. Community Services and General Upkeep:

The position of Amenities Officer for the village has now been filled.

ix. Deer in Lochinver:

DM suggested Durrant Macleod be contacted, given that by encouraging deer to cross the road to feed on his land, he creates an ongoing hazard to vehicles entering the village. One deer was killed outside the entrance to his property by a motorist the night before this meeting.

VL referred to the Centenary Fields Programme (run in partnership with Poppy Scotland and Legion Scotland) as a possible source of funding for the replacement fence around Culag Park. KC felt there might be an opportunity for those involved in the Lochbroom Woodfuels Enterprise project to help out won a more practical basis.

Action: MH to explore this avenue.

x. AOCB:

PJ has already distributed literature in the Assynt Centre and through the pages of the Assynt News advertising the Priority Service scheme for any vulnerable individual who might be affected by the proposed line replacement in North Assynt due to be carried out by SSE later this year.

KC left the meeting after a brief update on Anders Povlsen and his Fashion Company's ownership of shares in the NC500.

5) Financial Report:

KA gave the latest balances for the two bank accounts -

Instant Access : £3674.19

Business Account : £104.83.

Action: DS suggested the allocation of ACC funds be discussed as an agenda item at the next meeting.

6) Correspondence:

i. PJ referred to the weekly planning applications forwarded to community councils. They are formatted in such a way that individual applications for each community council cannot be extracted and combined into a single, practical document that can be studied in more detail at the end of each month.

Action: VL suggested each weekly report be forwarded to all ACC members in future.

ii. VL referred to an email request from Steve Barron (HC Chief Executive) for nominations for this year's Highland Quality Award. Given anticipated budget cuts, it was generally felt that the money spent on this exercise could be put to more practical use elsewhere.

Action: VL to contact HC explaining why the ACC are unwilling to put forward a nomination this year.

iii. In response to a written complaint passed on to PJ, VL has inspected the public toilets in Lochinver. It was agreed her findings will be discussed as part of the next agenda item.

7) Community Services:

DS first read through the items brought up in the June meeting before discussing other issues of concern.

i. Parking in Lochinver:

AD has attempted to get an update from Graham Mackenzie regarding this contentious issue, given that a number of promises were made in May and have yet to be acted upon.

MH suggested a notice be placed in the Assynt News asking local car owners not to park in the road outside the Surgery when there are vehicles offloading at the Caberfeidh or Lochinver Larder as this blocks all through traffic.

Action: LT to look at doing this as soon as possible.

PJ pointed out that most visitors to the area are unaware there is a large car park at the back of Cruamer. This is particularly the case for campervan owners who are reluctant to drive beyond the first parking space they find. As well as using up the Disabled spaces, these vehicles also restrict visibility for any vehicle trying to emerge onto the main street.

DM suggested ACC funds could be used to construct a sign making it clear that there is ample parking available elsewhere in the village.

Action: LT to look at the feasibility of Tech Support making a sign and the legalities of positioning the sign if and when it is produced.

ii. Passing Place Signage:

AD to chase up Ward Discretionary funding for more signs encouraging drivers to allow traffic to overtake on single track roads, but the general feeling was that most visitors ignore the signs anyway.

iii. Cattle Grids:

The grid at Clashnessie is due to be replaced by the end of October, followed by the one at Balchladich. There is no further information regarding the cattle grid on the approaches to Lochinver.

iv. Toilets:

VL reported that the public toilets in Lochinver are spartan but functional. There is a leaking pipe in the Ladies' and when she last visited, the floor was strewn with single sheets of toilet paper. The sanitary bin also needed emptying, but the servicing of the waste receptacle is contracted out.

Action: AD to take up maintenance with the person responsible for the general cleaning of the facility.

It was agreed that there are no funds for an upgrade, but PJ suggested if the ACC are to fund signage identifying available parking, there could also be something directing visitors to the nearest Public Toilets.

v. Sheep Signs:

AD reported that these are now in hand.

vi. Flooding on Achmelvich Road:

This is yet to be resolved with Scottish Water. JC is also looking at the condition of the verge next to the crash barrier at the approaches to Achmelvich.

vii. Salt Dump:

Despite assurances given by Graham Mackenzie in May, the proposed new salt store at the harbour is no nearer completion for this year's delivery of road salt. The construction of a base, retaining wall and provision of a weather-proof cover were meant to be contracted out to the same team who were then to replace the cattle grid near the Glac and address the flooding adjacent to Loch Assynt. It appears none of this work is yet under way.

Action: DS to email William Gilfillan expressing the ACC's disgust at the lack of progress on the salt dump and cattle grid, given the length of time it has taken HC to respond. Copies to be sent to Graham Mackenzie and John Clark.

viii. **Recruitment of Assistant Foreman:**

There has been no further progress to date. AD felt this might be partly due to the need to advertise in-house first, but again the lack of urgency displayed by HC was considered unacceptable, given that Graham Mackenzie agreed in June to pass the issue on to Human resources for immediate action.

ix. **Dog Waste Bags:**

Of the 16,000 purchased in February, there are only 4,000 left.

Action: ACC to look at this again next Spring.

x. **White Lining:**

DM is concerned that the lack of white lines on certain stretches of road presents a serious safety issue when driving at night.

AD reported that John Clark has been made aware of this issue and is expected to reply after further consultation.

8) Geopark and Rockstop:

DS reported that the bill for £500 for legal services will not be paid by the ACC.

Since there are no outstanding maintenance issues, this will no longer be a standing item on the agenda, but it would be advisable if a representative of the ACC inspect the property each year and report back on its condition.

9) Daymark Project:

VL referred to an email from the UK Charity Tour de Coast asking the ACC to propose a local site on the coast for the placement of a Daymark. This project involves the erection of 100 numbered structures along the coastline, identifiable by phone app, which will provide an incentive for visitors to travel to those less publicised places where they might find peace and tranquility while ticking each one off their list.

Action: DS suggested the organisers will be in touch again, and asked everyone to consider asking for suggestions informally in the meantime. RK is also to discuss this with the Assynt Crofters' Trust. Proposed locations can be sent to

<http://www.tourdecoast.org.uk/>

10) Electric Charging Points:

AD has spoken to Robin Pope, HC official responsible for these, and he has given the go-ahead for the ACC to suggest a suitable site. Transport Scotland are unable to fund this until next year, but once the suggestion has been forwarded, it allows them time to look at providing power, etc.

The ACC agreed that the car park at the rear of Cruamer would be an ideal site.

Action: AD to pass on this suggestion.

11) AOCB:

i. VL reminded the committee that she is available to help with any complaints relating to NHS 24 that might not have been brought to the attention of the Health Centre staff.

ii. KA asked for an update on the Patient Transport service that has seen a number of late cancellations recently. DS is due to meet with representatives of the Scottish Ambulance Service to pursue this issue.

iii. LT passed on a concern on the amount of money spent on the road improvements through Elphin and the ACC's support for such expense when there are other issues that have been sidelined due to lack of funds.

DS appreciated that the public perception could be that this costly exercise was resolved very quickly, but Elphin local community has carried out a vigorous 3-year campaign to improve road safety through their village and the outcome owes a great deal to their resilience. Any individual requesting figures for what this project cost should contact their local Highland Councillor.

iv. LT referred to the number of emails he receives relating to ACC business and apologised for being unable to acknowledge receipt of each one due to work commitments.

DS stressed that most emails are for information only and do not require a response.

v. MS referred to the poor condition of the War Memorial in Lochinver.

Action: DS has been in touch with those responsible and will ask for an update. The repair work is costly and complex and the ACC has already made a £500 contribution to its refurbishment twelve months ago.

vi. DM asked if any action had been taken following MSP Edward Mountain's request for issues that needed raising in Parliament.

DS had sent a list, including concerns about the impact of the NC500, but to date has received no response.

vii. MS expressed her disappointment at the new plaque put in place at Strone viewpoint.

DS replied that the Geopark intend placing another one identifying the local landmarks once funding becomes available.

viii. AD briefly referred to the poor condition of certain properties along the main village road through Lochinver and the impression it gives tourists. There was some discussion, and after a show of hands it was agreed it should not be the ACC's place to ask individual owners to maintain their properties.

ix. AD has been in touch with the manager of the Spar shop regarding the provision of a post box in the centre of Lochinver to replace the one at the old Post Office. The person responsible for post boxes is due to visit the village in the near future and the matter should then be resolved.

x. AD reported that Ewan Aird is scheduled to begin work on repainting the bus shelter soon.

The condition of the fencing along Cruamer has also been discussed with Councillor Hugh Morrison and AD will be reporting on the progress of this exercise at future ACC meetings.

xi. AD reported that the new ATM at the Village Hall is due to become fully operational by Wednesday 6th September. The old ATM will then be taken away a week later.

DS thanked AD for his persistent efforts in bringing this project to a successful conclusion.

The meeting closed at 20.35.

Due to a clash of events, the October ACC meeting will now take place on Thursday, November 2nd 2017 at Lochinver Village Hall.

PJ September 2017

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