

**Assynt Community Council****28 September 2017****Stoer Village Hall****7.30pm****Minutes (Approved 2<sup>nd</sup> November)****1) Present:**

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), J Thomas (JT)

**Others Present:**

C Belshaw (CB), B Cook (BC), S Forrest (SF), A Kneebone (AK), G Robinson (GR), M Simpson (MS), C Ward (CW)

**2) Apologies:**

K Anderson (KA),

**3) Expressions of Interest:**

There were none.

**4) Minutes of August Meeting and Matters arising:**

VL asked that the wording be changed on two items.

LT then proposed the draft minutes be accepted and AD seconded.

Matters arising were as follows:

**i. Scottish Water Update:**

David Logan from Caledonia Water has now been in touch with Kelly at the Leisure Centre with a view to carrying out work on the car park.

**ii. Campervans:**

Following a meeting to discuss waste handling facilities for campervans in the area, an action group has been set up (under the auspices of the ACA Development Group led by Madeline MacPhail) and is due to meet up again on 17<sup>th</sup> October.

**iii. Benches:**

The bench donated by the Assynt News is now in place on the path along the Culag river. The bench at the end of Lodge Road is still to be repaired.

**iv. Clashnessie Beach Access:**

RK is in the process of forwarding photographs and dimensions of the site to Matt Dent. It was suggested a ramp might be in order to allow disabled visitors safe access to the beach.

**v. Late Bus:**

The vacancy for a driver to operate the late afternoon Lochinver-based service to Ullapool and back has been advertised locally. Ewans are currently running this service and will continue to do so until the end of the year.

**Action:** DS will keep in touch with David Summers regarding local response to the advertised post.

**vi. Deer in Lochinver:**

MH reported back that it is unlikely the proposed project to erect deer fencing around Culag Park qualifies for funding under the Centenary Fields Programme. Requests for quotes from local fencing contractors have so far been unsuccessful

**Action:** MH to continue pursuing.

**vii. Geopark and Rockstop:**

DS reported that all outstanding rent has now been paid.

**viii. Electric Charging Points:**

AD has passed on the necessary information to the HC official who is progressing this for Lochinver.

**ix. Patient Transport:**

DS attended a recent meeting with the Sutherland Community Partnership transport subgroup. He is not sure how effective this will be in the long term. SAS will be trialling video consultation with an A+E consultant from back of ambulance to assess patients who request transport to hospital, and advise if there is a better option.

VL asked about the working group set up some time ago to tackle the issue following a public consultation. This is no longer in place after the East Coast Highland Councillor involved in the exercise was not re-elected.

**x. War Memorial Repair:**

DS has been in touch with John Morgan. Hoods, the contractors, require scaffolding and are in the process of sourcing a supplier.

DM suggested a cherry-picker might be cheaper and more practical.

JT has varnished the gates and will ask Roy Macleod to carry out a minor repair along the base of the gate to avoid further damage.

**xi. Spar Post Box:**

AD has met with Sean Rooney and the assistant manager of Lairg Sorting Office. Two potential sites have been identified outside the Spar in Lochinver, but there is likely to be a two month delay before the box is in place.

**xii. Bus Shelter:**

AD reported that the refurbishment of the bus shelter outside the church has been completed and the invoice received.

**xiii. ATM:**

The new ATM at Lochinver Village Hall is now operational. AD is waiting for a quote from Easter Ross Glazing for a weatherproof cover.

**xiv. Elphin Speed Limit:**

There had been some concern at reports of the 40mph limit being reduced to 30mph. It was felt the additional cost of new signage shortly after the installation of the existing signs was questionable given the Highland Council's budget restraints.

AD pointed out that the decision to reduce the speed limit was made by the Scottish Government rather than HC, and that the 30mph zone will lie within a small section of the existing 40mph zone.

The ACC had agreed to support the community's appeal for speed restrictions to be put in place and the residents of Elphin should be congratulated on their endeavours.

**5) Financial Report:**

PJ gave the latest balances for the instant access bank accounts - £4474.22 as of 6<sup>th</sup> September.

**6) Correspondence:**

PJ has forwarded the weekly Planning Application reports to all ACC members. There was no other correspondence.

**7) Local Issues (Stoer):**

i. AK referred to the number of cows wandering along local roads in general, and on the road through Balchladich in particular where a cattle grid restricts stock movement away from the immediate area. There have been instances of parked vehicles being damaged and on occasion tourists have reported feeling threatened by the numbers of cattle blocking the road. This has proved particularly distressing for cyclists.

It was agreed that it was within the law for livestock to be on the road where it was not fenced on one or both sides. Where it was fenced, as in Balchladich, animals should not be on the road unaccompanied. Discussion followed

on those who might be responsible, the common grazing rights and the issue of bulls being allowed to roam as well as cows.

CB pointed out that most cows present no danger. It's as much a case of educating visitors to the area on what to expect when driving through a crofting community. Anyone parking their vehicle on a public road does so at their own risk.

**Action:** RK to approach those responsible and express the community's concerns. It was agreed that generally, local owners are very cooperative and remove any stock causing problems when requested to.

ii. SF introduced herself to those in attendance and explained about the Development Trust set up in Bonar Bridge to tackle fuel poverty. The aim is to extend this scheme beyond Eastern Sutherland by way of promotional community events.

SF left her details with DS and left the meeting.

iii. BC referred to a notice in the latest Assynt News advertising a meeting to be held on October 16<sup>th</sup> at Stoer Hall regarding the development of Stoer Parliamentary Church. It implied that this was being hosted by the ACC who were lending their support to the owner of the property.

DS replied this is not the case. The church and graveyard have now been delisted and the owner wishes to put forward his plans to the local community. DS has agreed to chair the meeting as an impartial member of the local community council.

iv. CB reported that the Assynt Crofters' Trust have given approval for a small housing development at Clashnessie. BC added that the ACT is also looking for a permanent structure at Stoer Lighthouse along with a telescope, electrical charging points and possibly a waste disposal facility for campervans. This could provide further revenue for the ACT in the long term - some of which is already being spent on providing bursaries for local students attending college.

v. VL requested an update on the Clachtoll Broch project.

DM replied that the dig is due to finish at the end of September then the site will remain open over the winter for visitors to explore (apart from certain sections that have yet to be excavated). Historic Assynt are waiting for the finds to be fully investigated before a final report is made public.

DS suggested that it might be an idea for the artefacts to be displayed locally - such as inside the empty school building at Stoer - along with any other items of local interest.

CB asked if the vacant Visitors' Centre at Lochinver might be a better location. VL explained that this had been queried by the ACA, should the building ever come up for sale. However, there are several structural issues that need attention before any potential purchase can be considered.

vi. RK reported that the 'Lucky to be Here' charity has been approached for two defibrillators. One will most likely be located outside Stoer Hall and the other outside Flossie's store in Clachtoll.

## **8) Community Services:**

### **i. Litter:**

A new amenities officer to replace the one who recently resigned the post is due to commence duties shortly.

JT passed on a complaint about a campervan owner dumping their refuse outside a private property in the Nedd/Drumbeg area.

DS explained the Highland Council's policy of removing litter bins to avoid attracting fly tippers.

PJ asked why Ullapool has been allocated several new waste bins along the waterfront (for recycleable waste and general waste) if HC policy is to do away with all bins.

**Action:** AD suggested this be an agenda item next month.

### **ii. Passing Place signs:**

Hugh Morrison hopes to provide funds from this year's ward discretionary budget to supply more signage.

### **iii. Lochinver Public Toilets:**

AD has met with Willy Allison and the person responsible for toilet facilities in the area. It was agreed that some low-cost refurbishment can be carried out immediately.

**iv. Salt Dump:**

Graham Mackenzie has informed AD that the retaining walls will be in place by the end of October. The base will then be tarmacked by the local road crew and the cover is already awaiting positioning once the site is ready.

**v. Assistant Foreman Position:**

This has been advertised in-house and will then be open for all applicants.

**vi. Dog Waste Bags:**

Supplies are running low. Much discussion followed on whether further supplies should be ordered now, in the spring, or whether or not the ACC should provide any at all, given the fact that they are available to purchase locally.

VL suggested there should be a campaign to tackle the issue of dog waste. HC has produced leaflets instructing how communities can do this with the help of the police and dog warden.

**Action:** LT to promote the idea on the ACC Facebook page.

Following a show of hands, the majority agreed any purchases should be put back until early next year.

**Action:** DS to place an announcement in the Assynt News explaining why the ACC have decided not to buy any more bags this year, and appealing to responsible dog owners to make their own arrangements.

**vii. Outstanding Issues:**

DM queried William Gilfillan's response to a recent communication from the ACC regarding lack of action despite numerous promises made on his behalf on several outstanding issues.

AD has received an email from Graham Mackenzie but William Gilfillan has failed to reply directly to DS regarding concerns raised by the ACC.

**Action:** DS to make a formal complaint on the perceived lack of communication between HC officers and local community councils.

**viii. Road Signs:**

JT passed on a request for a sign to be erected along the road to Baddidarach identifying it as a dead end. There have been numerous instances of drivers struggling to turn around at the road end.

**Action:** AD to pursue the provision of a 'No Through Road' sign.

**9) Highland Council Planning and Communication:**

DM had raised this issue in response to the press release regarding the proposed Elphin speed restrictions. There were concerns regarding the way this information was made public without the local community council being informed first. There was some doubt regarding the HC's role in this, given that the information contained in BBC press release could have originated outwith HC.

**10) ACC Website:**

VL has yet to make further progress. It is to be hoped the site can also be used to publicise local bus timetables and provide guidance on how to process enquiries with a variety of public bodies.

In the meantime, VL requested information from each ACC member regarding contact details, memberships of other local bodies, particular roles in the ACC, etc.

**Action:** VL to email members with details she would like prior to making a full report next month.

**11) Allocation of Funds:**

It was agreed this be discussed at a later date.

DM suggested someone look at drawing up a process whereby the local community is made aware of what funds are available and how to go about applying for grants.

**Action:** VL to pursue this in time for the November ACC meeting.

**12) AOCB:****i. Collaborative Scotland:**

AD reported that Collaborative Scotland intends visiting Assynt next month under the Better Conversations project. A public meeting has been scheduled for the evening of October 26<sup>th</sup> in Lochinver allowing local businesses and

residents to discuss issues of concern with a variety of agency representative including the chief executive of North Coast 500. This meeting will be advertised once the details are finalised.

ii. **White Lines:**

DM expressed his concern at HC's response to a request passed on for white lining to be applied along certain stretches of road within Assynt. There are several places where the single track road is wide enough for two vehicles to pass, but drivers keep to the middle of the road causing a potential hazard to oncoming traffic. A central white line along these stretches would go some way to eliminating the problem. There is also one particular stretch between the Glac and the Torbreck Recycling site where the combination of a blind bend and dip in the road are a danger. It was suggested a mirror be put in place here to warn drivers of oncoming traffic. The addition of white arrows along other bends might also be beneficial.

RK felt that too many signs and street furniture distract and confuse drivers.

Discussion followed on the merits of such measures and the general consensus was that none of these requests are likely to prove practical. Educating drivers on how to proceed with caution would be more effective, especially as it would be impossible to standardise white-lining on all sections of road considered wide enough for vehicles to pass each other safely. It was also pointed out that the Roads Authority does not erect roadside mirrors. This is usually left to land-owners who require access onto a busy stretch of road.

DS added that current HC funding is unlikely to be available for such a costly operation.

Action: The 3 issues of white lines, white arrows and roadside mirrors will be considered separately at the next ACC meeting.

iii. **Lochinver School Heating:**

LT has received complaints regarding the inefficient heating system at the local school. Attempts by the staff to contact the maintenance manager have so far been unsuccessful. Recent temperatures of 10° were recorded in one of the classrooms which should have resulted in the children being sent home. The school has asked for the ACC's support should a walk out become necessary during the coming months.

VL suggested a log be kept of daily temperatures in the meantime.

**Action:** DS to contact the person responsible and report back.

iv. **White Lines:**

VL has received a report that there are no white lines along the centre of the road between the harbour and the Mission.

AD reported back that the white lining exercise was recently completed.

\*On further examination, it appears that fresh tarmac has been laid along a short section of road close to the Inverkirkaig junction obscuring the white lines.

The meeting closed at 21.25.

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

PJ September 2017