

Assynt Community Council

29 November 2018

Lochinver Village Hall

7.30pm

Minutes (Approved January 31st 2019)

1) Present:

K Anderson (KA), M Hutchison Chair (MH), P Jones (PJ), D McBain (DM), D Slator (DS), J Thomas (JT)

Others Present:

A Pellant, ADT (AP) and 3 members of the public

2) Apologies:

R Kerr, V Ling (VL), L Taylor (LT), R + E Kershaw

3) Expressions of Interest:

None.

4) Minutes of October Meeting and Matters arising:

Reference to 'Struan' on page 5 was changed to 'Strone'.

Matters arising were as follows:

- **iii. Playpark:**

The fence has now been rebuilt by JT and LT and steps have been taken to make it deer-proof.

- **7 ii Parking outside the Surgery and the Caberfeidh:**

This remains a problem together with traffic volumes and speeding through the village. The following suggestions were put forward to improve road safety:

- a) a pedestrian crossing between the shops and the playpark along with clear signage
- b) the 30 mph limit ends a short way beyond the Culag Bridge but should be extended to the school (for safety reasons and because street lighting now extends all the way to the school)
- c) the 30 mph limit on the main A837 approaches to Lochinver could also be extended as far as the section where the roadside lights end (or a 40mph put in place before the busy junction at the Glac). The B869 would also benefit from the 30mph limit being extended a short distance from the same junction.
- d) only one set of traffic lights in the village is currently operational

Action: PJ to bring these issues to the attention of Graham MacKenzie and Community Services along with a request for the existing speed restrictions to be reassessed due to increased traffic volumes and the additional street lighting.

- **11 Toilet Closures Update:**

MH attended a meeting with HC's Chief Executive and other officers on 22nd November to discuss this issue and pass on local concerns. Kylesku toilet will remain open until it is sold. Conditions will then be put in place preventing the new owner from closing the facility, though there were doubts expressed on how this would be enforced. The Gairloch toilet block is to be relocated to Achmelvich once their new facilities are in place but the timescale remains unclear.

MH invited anyone with a practical solution (such as finding a way of subsidising local toilet facilities) to get in touch with her.

Action: MH to maintain the ACC's support to Kinlochbervie Community Council who are also facing similar issues and to continue pressurising HC until there is a satisfactory outcome.

- **10 Centenary Fields Status**

MH has now applied for playpark funding on behalf of the ACC.

- **v Bus Timetable**

There remains an ongoing problem with the late bus from Ullapool to Lochinver. An 8-seater mini-bus now operates this service and there are often situations where pupils from Assynt are unable to participate in after-school activities because the bus is fully booked. There is also the problem of ensuring these children who live outwith Lochinver village get home.

The option to use the Lochinver school bus as a supplement to this service is currently not viable because attempts to recruit a local driver have failed. It was suggested that one reason might be due to the fact that the post only offers 2 hours work each day which does not allow enough time for the duties involved to be fulfilled.

Another option might be to utilise one of the Connect Assynt drivers

Action: DS to contact David Summers on all the above issues.

- **10) Clashnessie Footpath**

HC Footpath Officer, Matt Dent, has been back in touch with VL and produced a clearer map identifying the correct footpath to the Falls. Funds are not available to produce a professionally designed sign, but he agreed to print and laminate a copy of the new map which could then replace the existing sign, subject to approval from Mr and Mrs Kershaw.

- **12) AOCB ii Cost of Fuel**

Further to Sue Macleod's response, there were concerns that the price of fuel at the Spar remains significantly higher than elsewhere.

MH agreed to contact Timothy Vestey for further clarification. However, the question was also raised whether or not the ACC should be challenging local businesses on their prices.

- **12) AOCB v ACC Website**

VL has since asked for one or two other members of the ACC to help her complete the site and keep it updated.

DS has already volunteered to assist, but there were no further offers. DS felt this might be because few councillors saw any benefit in having a website. PJ pointed out that most of the ACC's business is already shared on Facebook, posted on the noticeboard, emailed to any interested parties and published within the pages of the Assynt News. He felt that more duplication is adding unnecessary work, but if VL requires assistance perhaps a local individual studying Computer Skills at school could be invited to become involved in maintaining the website.

AP volunteered to help, dependent on the amount of work involved.

Action: PJ to include the website on January's agenda.

MH asked it be minuted that thanks are due to Lochinver Landscapes for the use of their photographs on the ACC website and on its Facebook page.

DS proposed the minutes be accepted and KA seconded.

5) Financial Report

KA gave the latest figures: Business Current acc - £153.75
Instant Access acc - £6278.28

6) Correspondence

PJ referred to various emails received during the last month which have been circulated to all community councillors.

- Following a request for support from Ailsa McLellan who has organised a group opposing Marine Biopolymers' application for permission to dredge for kelp along the West coast of Scotland, PJ sent a letter to our three Highland Councillors, MSP Gail Ross and MP Jamie Stone expressing the ACC's objections to Marine Biopolymers' plans. All were in agreement that permission should not be granted.
- Muirden Energy are currently developing a wind farm project on the Croick Estate South of Rosehall. Muirden's Head of Planning, Angus Elder, will attend the next ACC meeting (January 31st) to put forward their proposals for the transportation of turbines to the site.
- Lynn Sharp of HC's Improvement Service has contacted all community councils informing them that the Scottish Government is currently finalising its policy on the 'development of unconventional oil and gas' in Scotland. Views are being invited on their preferred policy position not to support this development. A moratorium was put in place in January 2015 preventing fracking for shale oil and gas and coal bed methane extraction. Consultation on the finalising of this policy document ends on December 18th 2018.

It was agreed that the ACC fully supports the continued prevention of fracking in Scotland.

Action: PJ to respond on behalf of the ACC.

MH referred to an email promoting Adult Learning and specifically inviting women in the Highlands to make their voices heard by establishing local women's groups to support grass roots activity. Anyone interested can contact Andrea Johnson, Project Manager at ajohnson@wea.org.uk

7) Response to Planning Applications

There were no issues to discuss.

8) Funding Applications

Two requests were made for funding.

Assynt Mountain Rescue are looking to acquire a replacement 4x4 Ambulance Sprinter van and are already conducting a major fund-raising campaign.

Connect Assynt are relocating to new premises and are looking for financial support to cover removal costs and new telephone lines.

It was agreed that both applications should be awarded the funds they requested - £500 for Assynt Mountain Rescue and £250 for Connect Assynt. A representative of Connect Assynt has already agreed to return any moneys not spent on the relocation exercise once it is complete.

Action: KA to contact Assynt Mountain Rescue for details of where to send the cheque.

9) Proposed Closure of Unapool Polling Station

VL has looked into this and all local residents approached regarding the issue were strongly opposed to any planned closure.

Action: PJ to report back to the Elections Team by email (election@highland.gov.uk) before the consultation closes on December 10th.

10) Community Services

The following were discussed:

i Winter Gritting Programme

Tracy Urry has responded briefly to the ACC's concerns regarding gritting times and the school bus timetables with a promise to pursue the matter further. PJ added that a dossier recording last winter's gritting problems has been forwarded to William Gilfillan who has promised to take up the matter with Tracy.

The general consensus was that Hugh Morrison's suggestion for gritting crews to start half an hour earlier has not been given serious consideration - either because the crew members themselves are reluctant to change their hours of work or the managers responsible for overseeing the operation don't see a need for change despite ample evidence to the contrary. The downgrading of the section of road from the school to Inverkirkaig is also unacceptable and it was felt it should be reinstated to a Priority 2 route.

There were also grave concerns, following anecdotal evidence, that school bus drivers regularly have to salt sections of road by hand before the scheduled gritter turns up some mornings. The drivers often feel obliged to attempt a school run regardless of road conditions. It was stressed that ultimately it is the driver who is responsible for pupil safety during journeys to and from school and no one should be pressurising them to disregard their concerns. The ACC suggested any future problems relating to driver/pupil safety should be recorded and included in a letter, signed by all drivers concerned, then forwarded to the appropriate HC department with copies to the local MSP and MP.

Action: DM to reply to Tracy Urry's email in the meantime, and MH also to also respond in writing with a copy to the Chief Executive.

ii Litter

JT passed on complaints regarding the amount of rubbish being fly-tipped at various locations, for example on the roadside at Ardvreck. It is clear the existing bins are unable to cope with the high volumes of litter during the summer months. One suggestion was that larger wheeled bins could be put in place during the holiday season, or skips to accommodate the extra waste and deter littering.

PJ referred to a request made by VL in October that ACC members look at spending community council funds on projects that would benefit the community as a whole. He felt it might be worth looking at using some of these funds to pay for extra bins at a number of strategic locations with the proviso that HC empty these bins on a regular basis.

Action: MH to check the cost of hiring large bins or purchasing ones similar to those along the main street in Ullapool.

iii Stoer Old Cemetery Flooding

JT attended a site meeting with Garry Cameron and it was agreed the most practical solution would be to pursue this locally rather than through Community Services by using local contractors.

11) AOCB

i Dog poo remains an ongoing problem, particularly on the All Abilities path (which is the responsibility of Culag Woodland Trust) and along many of the village pavements.

Action: PJ to place a reminder in the ACC's Assynt News column.

ii Alex Dickson referred to the recent upgrades carried out at the Inver Lodge staff accommodation. This has gone some way to improving the overall appearance of the village. But it has also highlighted the poor state of repair of various other properties located along Lochinver's main street - one in need of external painting and one that continues to have boarded up windows and doors. These can only create a negative impression on visitors to the area. The small industrial units opposite Peet's are also in need of a

general tidy up again and he suggested the ACC contact the harbourmaster.

Action: DS to contact Robin Vestey regarding the staff accommodation next to the Police Station.

iii Following the latest successful grant applications, Alex Dickson suggested the local community be reminded that ACC funds are available all year round for any smaller worthwhile schemes put forward by members of the public.

Action: PJ to advertise this in the next Assynt News ACC column.

DS wondered whether ACC funds could be used to repair one of the memorial benches at the Culag Woods viewpoint.

Action: DS to contact Culag Woodland Trust.

iv AP gave a brief update on the Assynt Development Trust.

The ADT has applied for a number of electric-powered bikes to assist local commuters and visitors. When asked whether this would affect the local bike hire business, AP confirmed that ADT would be working alongside them.

The meeting closed at 21.30

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 31st January at the Committee Room of Lochinver Village Hall at 19.30.

PJ November 2018

Contact us here - assyntcc@gmail.com

Follow us on Facebook - Assynt Community Council

or visit our website - <http://www.assyntcommunitycouncil.org.uk>

Proposed dates for 2019 ACC meetings (subject to change):

January 31	Lochinver Village Hall	February 28	Lochinver Village Hall
March 28	Elphin Village Hall	April 25	Lochinver Comunity Hall
May 30	Drumbeg Village Hall	June 27	Lochinver Village Hall (including AGM)
July	<i>no meeting</i>	August 29	Lochinver Village Hall
September 26	Rhu Stoer Hall	October 31	Lochinver Village Hall
November 28	Lochinver Village Hall	December	<i>no meeting</i>