

Assynt Community Council

28 June 2019

Community Room, Lochinver Village Hall (7.30 pm)

Approved Minutes (amended for publication 30th August)

1) Present:

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

Others Present:

K Currie Highland Councillor (KC), J Jennett Highland Council (JJ), A Pellant Assynt Development Trust (AP), M N Thomsen Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust (MNT) and 3 other members of the public

2) Apologies:

None

3) Expressions of Interest:

None.

4) Minutes of May Meeting and Matters arising:

PJ referred to item 6 in the draft minutes and asked to clarify JJ's role as area Care and Learning Manager for the North. JJ had explained during the meeting in Drumbeg that she was attending on behalf of Norma Young who is manager for the West (which covers Assynt).

JT asked it be minuted that she has yet to receive the key for the dog poo bag dispensers.

Action: LT to speak to Caroline again.

DS proposed the minutes be approved and LT seconded.

Matters arising were as follows:

i. Litter

A clean up had been planned for 16th of June but did not go ahead. This will take place at a date to be arranged, and Joe from the Harbour has agreed to provide large litter sacks and to arrange their collection by forklift truck. Fiona and Vickii of CALL are going to help MH arrange the beach clean-up at Baddidarroch and Lochinver as soon as possible.

ii. Clashnessie Beach Access:

RK has still received no response from the planning department with regard to obtaining the necessary planning permission.

Action: RK to continue processing the planning application.

VL reported that Matt Dent has now amended the Clashnessie Falls access sign as requested, and has also offered to erect or replace other signs as necessary. DM felt that most tourist attractions in the area are poorly advertised, citing the Inchnadamph Bone Caves and the path from Tumore near Loch Assynt to Gleann Leireag as particular examples of poor or contradictory signage.

Action: VL will pass on all suggestions to Matt Dent. She had previously raised the question of a No Parking sign opposite the end of the Laid road with Matt Dent, who said to contact John Clark, Community Services.

Action: LT to do this.

JT also referred to a request made some time ago for a No Through Road sign at the approaches to Bad-

didarach.

Action: LT to discuss with John Clark.

iii. Playpark:

LT has been in contact with Garry Cameron with a view to the equipment being installed as soon as possible. There are currently only plans to install the equipment in one of the playparks.

iv. Cruamer Bench:

KA felt the ACC should now pay for a replacement bench since the Inver Lodge is under new management. There was some discussion regarding the state of repair of other benches in the village and their location. JT referred to one of the benches at the Jubilee Garden that is surplus to requirements. PJ also pointed out that the new bench opposite Gordon Nairn's currently faces a barrier of trees.

Action: DM donated this bench to the community and has already asked Andrew to cut back the vegetation to allow a wider view to be enjoyed.

v. Footpath between Kirk Road and Inverpark:

Action: DS to pursue.

vi. Dog poo bags:

PJ passed on a request from a member of the local community regarding the dispenser in Inver Park close to the Pottery. Visitors to the Pottery often allow their dogs to foul the grassed area adjacent to the car park and it was suggested the existing unit be relocated to the Pottery parking area. The general feeling was that this should be left to the Pottery to deal with.

vii. Geopark Representative:

JJ has kindly taken on the role of community representative.

Action: A Geopark meeting is due to be held at the end of July and she will report back accordingly.

viii. 24hr fuel at the Spar:

Sue Macleod has informed LT that engineers have now visited the site but there are still delays in sourcing the necessary equipment. The petrol station will be out of action while installation takes place, and adequate notice will be given once a date is finalised.

Action: LT to continue to press for an update.

ix. School Heating:

KC reported back that the proposed new heating system was on the capital spend list, but this project has now been put on hold. There was concern that the current system does not allow full control on site, and as a consequence the heating is left on during the summer holidays.

Action: JJ to check the heating is turned off once the school term finishes.

x. NC500 (Drumbeg):

LT is awaiting further information from local representatives.

xi. Stoer School Closure:

Action: PJ to include as an agenda item in October when the meeting is due to be held at Stoer.

5) Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust:

MNT gave a brief update on the Trust's work. Five Highland communities had been identified as being particularly vulnerable - Kinlochbervie, Creich, Golspie, Brora and Helmsdale. These are now receiving support from the Trust. But there are plans for consultations elsewhere with a view to tackling transport and employment issues as well as supporting the Children's Plan.

VL expressed the general concern regarding consultation exercises that appear to pay lip service to communities but lead nowhere. It was also questioned why some of the Highland communities identified as suffering deprivation actually benefit from a substantial windfarm income (whereas West Coast communities receive little if any external funding).

6) Financial Report:

KA read out the latest figures. Business Current account - £180.74 - Business Instant Access Reserve Account - £6876.08.

7) Correspondence:

i VL has received notice from the Forestry Commission of an application from Mr and Mrs Kershaw who own a croft in Clashnessie. DS and RK declared an interest in this matter due to their involvement with the local Grazings Committee. An application has been made to plant native woodland on land close to the access path to Clashnessie Falls, and this will also involve the erection of fencing along the boundary of the forested area. VL was concerned about historical conflict regarding the boundaries of this croft due to other fencing being erected on common grazing land without permission in the past.

It was agreed that it was not the ACC's role to get involved in the question of the boundary fence, but that they should ensure the forestry commission consulted the Grazings Committee.

But two aspects were of concern to the ACC:

Maintaining the traditional access path along the east side of the burn by correct placement of gates and by leaving the route free of trees. And any trees planted should not be of such potential height (in, say, 30 years) that they would obscure the iconic view of the falls from Clashnessie beach

Action: VL to draft a letter to the FC for the Secretary to respond on behalf of the ACC, and to inform both the footpaths officer and Clashnessie Grazings Committee.

ii DM has been asked again if the yellow lines at the entrance to the village are to be repainted to discourage inconsiderate parking outside the Caberfeidh and Surgery.

Action: LT to speak to Community Services Area Manager, Graham MacKenzie, and Head of Roads & Transport, Tracey Urry to establish whether there are legally enforceable parking restrictions in place along this section of road - and if so, to request the repainting of the lines as a matter of urgency.

iii DS referred to an online survey sent to the ACC regarding HC's existing winter road maintenance policy.

It had not made clear that only a single response was allowed from the ACC and VL was the first to reply. VL asked that school runs be prioritised (starting along outlying areas allowing school transport to pick children up from remoter areas on the way to school rather than leaving these sections of road until later) and also suggested pavement clearing should precede road clearing adjacent to urban schools since children should still be able to walk to school.

This survey was merely concerned with HC policy rather than on the practical issue of service provision. All agreed that VL's response was a fair representation of the ACC's opinions. Tracy Urry has confirmed that more detailed consultation will take place with the ACC before HC's winter road maintenance programme is finalised.

8) Community Services:

i PJ gave an update received from SSE via Alex Dickson. Traffic management had been set in place and equipment made available to cut back the tree adjacent to the kirk in Lochinver, but stormy conditions meant the access platform could not be used because the wind speed safety device made it inoperable. Mike Sutherland will reschedule the work so it can be completed as soon as possible.

ii LT reported that HC are due to send a team to reprogramme the street light timers within the next

few days to avoid them coming on during daylight hours.

iii LT has spoken to Robin Pope who confirmed that Lochinver has been included in the application to Transport Scotland for an Electric Car charging point. The justification is its strategic location on the NC500 and that it would fill a gap on the NC500 between Scourie and Ullapool

iv DM pointed out that despite it being given first priority by Community Services, the section of road West of Ledmore Quarry has still not been resurfaced as promised.

Action: LT will pursue this with Tracy Urry, and also point out that the concrete base supporting the cattle grid was not fixed when the welding was carried out despite it being in a bad state of repair.

9) Applications for ACC Funds:

Two applications for funding were received in June. Both were discussed in detail before a decision was reached.

The application from Assynt Dance Club was declined, partly because it was felt the ACC should not be expected to pay the ongoing costs of renting a venue for any local group. It was appreciated that the Dance Club is limited in numbers. With this in mind, it was suggested they look at reducing costs and increasing membership by amalgamating with other keep-fit groups or by using a smaller (cheaper) venue such as the Assynt Centre or Leisure Centre. It was agreed that, to date, the group had shown little attempt to raise funds by other, more proactive means.

The application by the Assynt Fallen was approved and the sum of £500 will be awarded on behalf of the ACC. The Assynt Fallen, under the auspices of Trish and Malcolm Bangor-Jones, will provide detailed personal information on all those individuals named on the War Memorial in Lochinver. There will be a display in the Village Hall during the lead-up to Games Day, as well as an exhibition in one of the tents on the Games Field, and there are plans to hopefully provide a more permanent display along with information pamphlets.

Action: PJ to inform both applicants of the ACC's decision.

JT left the meeting.

10) Stoer Old Cemetary Update:

KC has met with two HC officials who plan to visit Stoer cemetery before the end of June to assess the situation. Despite the lack of available funds, ways to alleviate the problem will be investigated further.

Action: KC to telephone the officials concerned early July and report back to PJ and MH.

11) Toilet Closure Update:

RK attended the recent public meeting in Kinlochbervie and told how the community's strong feelings were made clear to those individuals from HC who were present. As a result of the public outcry following the proposed closures, Achmelvich toilets will remain open until the end of October and a portakabin toilet unit will be installed to replace the current facility as soon as possible. Sarah-Anne Macleod from Achmelvich camp site and Jorine van Delft from the Youth Hostel have both made positive suggestions to HC on how the costs of running the facility can be cut - partly by installing an honesty box. HC agreed to look at this suggestion and to consult the local community before installing the portakabin.

DS pointed out that there is a strong likelihood of the HC repeating the same cost-cutting exercise next year. Kinlochbervie have already set up a Facebook campaign asking for support to combat HC's plans to close toilets throughout the North-west Highlands.

12) AOCB

i AP passed on Ewan McLachlan's request for more volunteers to man the tourist information desk at the Mission.

ii AP informed the meeting of the Assynt Development Trust's plans to acquire various properties close to the Mission and Culag Square from HC through an asset transfer scheme. The Scottish Land Fund has been approached for advice and a consultant will be appointed to oversee feasibility, consultation and business planning to check if it's viable to go ahead with community use of the assets (and to assess different options for use of the different assets, eg. affordable housing creation or business enterprise). Expressions of interest in a Community Asset Transfer have already been lodged with HC but formal transfer requests to HC will not be made until most of the feasibility/consultation/business planning work is completed.

AP then showed the meeting a map listing the properties that the ADT hope to purchase. These include the storage sheds in Culag Square, the fenced gas storage compound, the old fishmonger's unit and the abandoned plot of ground that was once used by Jimmy Crooks.

KC pointed out that HC are looking to offload unwanted assets in order to bolster their revenue stream and the ADT should not be expected to pay the market value for these properties.

iii VL asked that members of the ACC consider the Community Council's response to the planning applications sent for their consideration each week. Apart from the Caplich Wind Farm development and Stoer Church, no planning applications have been discussed in any detail at recent ACC meetings.

Action: To be included on the next agenda.

iv DS reported that £250 has been donated to the Lucky to Be Here charity in payment for new batteries for the defibrillator located outside the Spar.

v LT has received a complaint regarding sewage being released into the sea close to the lifeboat station and pontoons. He has been in touch with Scottish Water and they agreed to get someone to look at it within 24 hours.

vi KA pointed out that there were sheep on Culag Park last week despite the new deer fence.

MH explained that there are problems with the access gate to the Mission. The contractors are looking to fit a weight mechanism that will make the pedestrian gate self-closing. There is also an ongoing problem with dogs being taken into the park despite the 'No Dogs' signs, appeals to the community and other efforts of the ADT to make the park both deer and dog free.

MH thanked DS for his hard work during his chairmanship and the meeting closed at 21.30

There is no meeting scheduled for July.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 30th August at Elphin Village Hall at 19.30.

PJ June 2018

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Proposed dates for remaining 2018 ACC meetings (subject to change):

September 27th	Lochinver	October 25th	Stoer
November 29th	Lochinver	December	<i>No meeting</i>