

Assynt Community Council

30 August 2018
Elphin Village Hall
7.30pm

Minutes (Approved September 27th)

1) Present:

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

Others Present:

K Currie Highland Councillor (KC), A Mitchell (Assynt Foundation)
and 3 other members of the public

2) Apologies:

V Ling (VL)

3) Expressions of Interest:

None.

4) Minutes of June Meeting and Matters arising:

Matters arising were as follows:

4 i. Litter

The litter pick-up has now been rescheduled for 22nd September. Jo from the Harbour has agreed to provide large litter sacks. CALL are also planning to carry out a beach clean-up at Baddidarach.

ii. Clashnessie Beach Access:

RK has been in touch with Matt Dent again and the necessary site plans for the construction of the walkway and ramp have been passed to the planning department. The cost to the ACC is estimated at £101.00 (including a 50% discount since this is a community council project).

Action: RK to keep an eye on the situation.

VL has also received further correspondence from Matt Dent regarding the Clashnessie Falls access sign. HC has now refused to revamp the existing sign which would make it clearer to walkers how to access the path. A Core Path consultation meeting was recently held at the site with a local resident who was allowed to raise his objections. Matt Dent insists any changes to the existing signage would result in the outcome of that being null and void.

Action: DS and VL to recontact Matt Dent asking why the ACC were not invited to take part in this consultation exercise when it's clear they should have been, and why they were not informed a proposed site meeting was due to take place. They will also remind him that he originally agreed to redesign the existing sign and his decision to go back on this promise has been made purely on bureaucratic grounds, due to his own oversight or negligence in the first place.

iii. Playpark:

JT reported that deer are now getting into the playpark. JT also referred to the request made some time ago for a No Through Road sign at the approaches to Baddidarach. DM felt certain there is a sign now in place.

vii Geopark Representative:

J Jennet is due to report back to the ACC following last month's meeting. DS confirmed that repair work at the Rock Stop has now been completed and the bill of £650.00 has been paid to the contractors.

viii. 24hr fuel at the Spar:

Following a number of trial runs, the out-of-hours service is now fully operational. Customers will only be able to draw fuel using the outside terminal if they have a chip and pin card.

x. NC500 (Drumbeg):

Nancy Millar has informed LT that representatives are in the process of drawing up a report highlighting the negative effect of the NC500 on the local area.

5 Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust:

A public consultation meeting is to take place in Lochinver Village Hall at 18.00 on 18th September.

7 i Clashnessie Falls Woodland Project:

PJ has contacted Forestry Grant Scheme officers on behalf of the ACC regarding the Forestry Commissions plans to fund a tree plantation close to Clashnessie Falls. They have acknowledged the ACC's objections. The ACC has also received correspondence from a local residence regarding this issue, objecting to statements made in the draft minutes of the June ACC meeting. The aggrieved resident has since decided to issue a statement in the Assynt News.

7 ii Parking outside the Surgery and the Caberfeidh:

LT has been in touch with local police officer Matt Stringer and John Clarke regarding this issue. John is unable to repaint the yellow lines until sometime next year, but there is an existing order prohibiting parking along this stretch of road (except for loading and unloading) and the police are within their rights to instruct people to move their vehicles.

Action: LT to speak to Matt Stringer again with a view to a brief statement being placed by him in the Assynt News asking drivers to park with more consideration for other road users.

7 iii Winter Road Maintenance:

Following the online survey concerning HC's existing winter road maintenance policy and further correspondence sent to HC by DM, Community Services Area Manager Tracey Urry will attend the September ACC meeting to discuss this issue in more detail. DM also reported that the stretch of road West of Ledmore Quarry is currently being resurfaced, the new salt dump at the harbour has been completed, and the cattle grid on the approaches to the Glac is due to be replaced once this year's tourist season has ended.

9 Applications for ACC Funds:

It had already been agreed that the ACC would invite requests for funds twice a year. The next applications will therefore be considered for awards at the end of the year.

Action: PJ to ensure posters are distributed and advertisements are placed in the Assynt News in plenty of time to allow all contenders to prepare their applications in time for consideration at the November meeting.

10 Flooding at Stoer Old Cemetary:

KC has conferred with the HC officials responsible for addressing the problem and there seems to be some confusion as to the best solution. JT suggested KC speak to local contractor Charlie Cowan who was prepared to carry out the necessary repair work.

Action: JT to pass on Charlie Cowan's contact details to KC so the matter can move forward.

11 Toilet Closures Update:

MH commented on the amount of work carried out by Kinlochbervie community councillors to publicise the public outcry regarding this issue and petition HC to delay their decision. MH also confirmed that the

HC Comfort Scheme does not work and that those establishments who agreed to participate in the system are not making any money out of it. There is also a strong feeling that local communities should not be hoodwinked into taking over the ownership of any older, outdated toilet facilities that HC intend closing

KC intends putting a motion in place with HC next week that they consider reversing their decision. The suggestion that the Scottish Government can bail HC out by increasing capital spend will not apply as that money is only available for new projects rather than refurbishing facilities that have been allowed to fall into disrepair. KC added that HC continues to underestimate the strength of public feeling on this matter.

12 AOCB

ii Assynt Development Trust Update

Adam Pellant asked that the draft minutes of June recording his presentation be reworded.

"The Scottish Land Fund has been approached for advice and a consultant will be appointed to oversee the tendering process and subsequent purchase once an expression of interest has been lodged." should be replaced by

"The Scottish Land Fund has been approached for advice and a consultant will be appointed to oversee the 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."

Adam had also asked if he could present another update to the ACC on behalf of the ADT this month. It was agreed that this be put back to September and that he issue an advance statement of what will be covered before next month's meeting. It was felt in general that many of the ADT's plans are set to take effect so far in the future and dependant on so many other factors that there is little point in discussing them in great detail at present.

iv Defibrillators:

DS reported that the defibrillator located outside the Spar has now been serviced.

vi Animals on Culag Park:

MH reported that a new pedestrian gate allowing public access to Culag Park is now in place. This gate has a self-closing mechanism which should overcome the problem of sheep and deer accessing the park. ADT continues to explore the possibility of a legally enforceable ban on dogs entering Culag park. An inquiry has been lodged with both Community Services and Environmental Health Depts of HC. The response to this inquiry is overdue and will be pursued by ADT.

Action: KC to look at the legal ramifications of this matter more closely.

DS proposed the minutes be approved and DM seconded.

5) Financial Report

KA read out the current balances:

Business Current Account - £130.74

Business Instant Access Reserve Account - £7076.67 (minus the £680.15 bill for the Rock Stop work)

The HC annual grant of £448.01 has now been received.

6) Correspondence

i PJ has received an email from a local member of the community expressing concern that the ACC appears to be promoting the ADT's use of unpaid volunteer staff at the Information Desk inside An Cala.

This is not the case. The June minutes were a record of a statement made by an ADT representative and

the ACC neither condones nor condemns the practice. MH has since forwarded the objection to the Chair of the ADT with the permission of the original complainant.

ii PJ has also received an email from Alex Dickson regarding a number of issues. Two have now been partly resolved (the defibrillator and 24-hour fuel at the Spar). But he has also requested that speed limits within Lochinver be re-examined. An argument can be made (supported by the police) that the 30mph limit be extended from the Culag Bridge as far as the school entrance in line with the street lighting.

With increased traffic joining the approaches to the village from the B869 at the Glac, it might also be in order for a 30mph limit to be imposed on traffic heading west into the village in advance of the junction, maybe as far back as the Star Pool.

The issue was discussed but no concrete proposals were made.

Action: LT to speak to Matt Stringer regarding traffic speed in general and to ask him to include a reminder in the Assynt News that the existing 30mph limit extends beyond the West side of the Inver Bridge.

iii PJ referred to 2 specific recent emails received by the ACC requesting wider distribution - one a questionnaire for Private Water Supply users (sent from Glasgow Caledonian University) - the other a set of e-book pamphlets from RBS warning of on-line scams.

However, the literature included with both emails is in pdf format. This cannot be copied and pasted into Social media (Facebook). The alternative - printing several hard copy documents - is too costly.

DS has already pointed out this problem to GCU.

Action: LT to look at whether the pdf files can be converted to jpeg Picture Documents that can then be posted on the ACC's Facebook page and on the ACC website once it is up and running.

7) Glencanisp Walled Garden

Amy Mitchell, Project Manager for the Assynt Foundation's Glencanisp Walled Garden gave a brief report on her role and the plans for the future of the walled garden. It is hoped there will be two poly tunnels in place by next spring, part-funded by the Climate Change Fund, allowing the growing of local produce by volunteer trainees. Questionnaires will be circulated within the local community beforehand.

8) Response to Planning Applications

This will now be a regular agenda item. There were no contentious planning applications during the last two months.

9) Local Issues (Elphin)

i Graham Mackenzie has placed a notice in the press regarding a temporary Traffic order imposing a 30mph speed limit on the bends along the Knockan approach road into Elphin and beyond. This will remain in effect for 18 months from 2nd July 2018. Unfortunately, HC have yet to provide 30mph signs warning drivers of the new speed limits so most are likely to adhere to the existing 40mph limit displayed on the signs.

Action: PJ to contact Graham Mackenzie asking that new signs be put in place as soon as possible to conform with the Traffic order.

10) Centenary Fields Status

MH referred to the Fields in Trust project set up by the British Legion to protect green areas close to War Memorials that can be used by the local community.

After much discussion it was agreed an application should be made on behalf of the playpark next to the memorial in Lochinver. This will protect the ownership of the play park from being forcibly passed on to the

local community by HC in the future.

Action: MH to process the application on behalf of the ACC.

11) Electric Car Charging Points

After much deliberation, it was agreed the car park at the rear of Cruamer would make an ideal site for an electric car charging point.

RK asked if more charging points could be installed elsewhere in Assynt.

LT replied that this will probably have to wait until the next financial year, but other premises such as privately owned hotels and guest houses can install their own charging facilities if needed.

Action: LT to invite Robin Pope of Transport Scotland to attend the next ACC meeting in September.

12) Community Service

i LT has been in touch with Graham Mackenzie regarding the placement of clearer signage at the approaches to Lochinver advertising the large car park at the back of Cruamer. This is rarely used at present and would be particularly useful for campervan owners.

The issue of inconsiderate overnight parking was discussed and the frustrations caused by having no formal authority responsible for handling complaints related to this issue.

DM reported that there have been several instances of wild camping and vandalism in the vicinity of Ardreck Castle and a notice is to be erected asking for visitors to treat this historic site with a little more respect.

13) AOCB

i JT reported that sheep congregating at Stoer Cemetery are a problem again as the sheep-scarers have been removed.

DS suggested new scarers be purchased and put in place.

ii DS reported that the ACC website is close to being launched.

Action: DM to provide a suitable photograph for inclusion on the Home page.

iii DS referred to the constant problem of burst pipes in Raffin and elsewhere on the Stoer peninsula. He has contacted Scottish Water and they have agreed to carry out a major pipe replacement scheme, but this will not take place in the immediate future.

iv KA referred to the broken seats and table in the play park.

Action: LT to ask Caroline to get them removed.

v MH passed on a request from a member of the public that the local bus timetable be revised :

Passengers arriving in Lochinver late morning are not given enough time to do much if they want to return to Ullapool the same day.

The request also claimed that the 'late' bus should leave Ullapool earlier BUT some people at the meeting countered that pupils staying after school in Ullapool often miss the late bus back to the village because it leaves so early.

It was agreed the schedule of the late bus between Lochinver and Ullapool (replacing Ewans and run by a Lochinver-based vehicle and driver) could be revised to suit local demands for since it doesn't effect any other timetables outwith the immediate area.

Action: DS to contact David Summers with a view to adjusting the timings.

vi MH, at the request of a local resident, related that this person had been physically and verbally abused on their way to work on one occasion. There was no local police officer on duty when it happened and the call was diverted to a call centre outside the Highlands. The person wanted to know if a 999 call would have been appropriate regarding this incident.

RK pointed out that had the call been made to 999 (rather than 101) the matter would have to be treated as an emergency, followed by an immediate response from Ullapool or Dingwall if there was no local officer on duty.

KC suggested the local officer be asked to attend a future ACC meeting. MH pointed out that he has always done so in the past when able to.

All non-ACC members left the meeting.

14) Community Council Scheme Review

DM has already prepared a detailed response on behalf of the ACC to this extensive questionnaire circulated to all community councillors by the HC.

MH read through the questions and DM's responses were agreed upon, or revisions suggested as necessary.

It was agreed that the current system is democratic and is best left alone even though the general feeling was that HC officers are rarely held accountable to community councils and situations brought to their attention are often allowed to escalate. Setting a minimum population size for each community council by possibly incorporating smaller councils into larger bodies would prove impractical given the distances involved. However, there was agreement that steps should be taken to better engage the local community and attract younger members.

Action: DM to forward completed questionnaire to HC on behalf of the ACC.

Action: PJ to include brief updates each fortnight in the Assynt News recording the ACC's success stories (and failures).

The meeting closed at 21.50.

The next meeting will take place on Thursday 27th September at Lochinver Village Hall at 19.30.

PJ August 2018

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

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