

Shieldaig Community Council meeting – Minutes

Final, 13/10/20

Date: 19.00, Tuesday 6 October 2020

Venue: By videoconference

Attendees:

Ann Barton, Chair (AB)

Hugh Gosling, Secretary (HG)

Karen Starr, Treasurer (KS)

Kalie Wilkinson (KW)

Viv MacLennan (VM)

Alex MacInnes (AM)

Mackenzie Sutherland, Highland Council (MS)

Apologies:

None.

Approval of minutes:

N/A

Matters Arising:

Roads

Mackenzie Sutherland from the Highland Council attended the meeting to answer questions about local roads. MS has been in post since March 2020 and has prior experience on both the technical and road squad teams.

Potholes

KS asked about the possibility of warning people when potholes are severe. MS reported that, in the past, signs were put out but that he believes it is better to fix a pothole temporarily. MS explained that there are many grades of potholes, and the edge of the road (where there is often significant damage) is also classified as part of the road.

KS asked what information MS wished to receive to help him identify potholes. MS suggested a photo and grid reference (which can be uploaded to the Highland Council website). He will then send out a team (which are also regularly on patrol looking for issues) to assess the severity of the pothole.

AB suggested that temporary fixes are a false economy. MS agreed, stating that his goal is to permanently fix as many potholes as possible. However, during the lockdown, the Scottish Government only permitted major roads to be maintained.

Signage for motorhomes on the road over the Bealach na Bà

KW asked who authorised the new “No Motorhomes” sign at Tornapress. MS said there had been discussion within the Highland Council but that execution had been done hastily. He stated the road over the Bealach na Bà is not suitable for motorhomes and caravans and so has a weight limit imposed. Also, that “Not suitable for” signs are not legally enforceable.

Increased traffic along the Coast road (especially motorhomes)

KW reported an increase in the number of motorhomes using the coast road to access Applecross, as well as a general increase in traffic in recent years. MS agreed, and said it has been some time since the coast road has been assessed with a traffic survey, which is best done in the summer to accurately assess peak usage of the road. Data from the survey can be used to support additional spending on the coast road.

Speed limit and placement of signs on A896 through Shieldaig

AB asked whether the 40mph sign on the back road could be moved down the hill beyond the entrance to the village in order to slow traffic. MS reported that this would need a Traffic Order based on a traffic survey.

AB asked about calls from an earlier Community Council for the speed limit to be changed to 30mph. MS reported that such a change would normally require street lighting but that this rule may have been suspended. MS suggested the CC write to Iain Moncrief. He added that a change would require a traffic survey (again, best performed in the summer) but that there was a waiting list for surveys.

Speed control measures into the village

AB/VM asked whether rumble strips could be used to calm traffic. MS said this was not difficult to do and will look into it.

Damaged pedestrian barrier

VM mentioned that the pedestrian barrier outside Baile Shuas was in a bad state of repair after being struck by several cars. MS will investigate this.

Motorhomes blocking the lower entrance to the village

VM asked about erecting a "No Parking" and/or "Turning Area" sign at the southern entrance to the village to prevent parked motorhomes blocking the turning for larger vehicles, such as the school bus. MS said this was possible but questioned the efficacy of signage if the area was also used by local people to park their boats. He suggested that plastic bollards could be placed, but that they are unsightly and temporary.

Motorhome parking along the front of the village

AB reported that parking bays along the front of the village are regularly used by motorhomes for overnight parking and asked whether signage could be used to indicate Residential Parking Only, ideally painted on the road (subject to discussion with residents). MS said this was possible, but that it was unlikely to happen this year. He advised the CC chase this in 2021.

Numbers of motorhomes

AB mentioned that the number of motorhomes arriving in Shieldaig is increasing, and raised the question about whether the village should look into greater infrastructure for motorhomes. MS suggested that waste disposal was a key facility for such visitors.

Additional parking for the village

AB raised the question of whether we should create an area of tarmac beside the loch (at the lower entrance to the village) and so create an additional visitor parking area. MS felt this might be possible and that there are potentially funds available to pay for infrastructure improvements for visitors.

AM mentioned that a Tourism Infrastructure Survey had been started in 2019 to evaluate parking problems/hotspots in the area and that Lochcarron and Applecross had been assessed (although the scheme may have been suspended due to the pandemic). This scheme is part of wider consideration of tourism infrastructure and will feed into a major review of tourism infrastructure by the Highland Council beginning this month.

In conclusion, MS said he was happy to help with any plans developed by the CC and suggested he be invited to the next meeting, if needed.

Shieldaig village phone box

KW reported that plans to change the use of the phone box may be more difficult than previously thought as it is not on the list of boxes to be decommissioned by BT. KW will endeavour to discover how much the phone is used.

Planters

We have only received 8 of the 12 planters commissioned. The Treasurer will follow up with the maker. The planters are currently being stored behind the Village Hall/Church for safe keeping. AB is working on a map and questionnaire (which will be made available in the shop). Decisions on placement and use will be made once the community consultation is complete.

Chair's Report:

AB reported that:

- She is regularly topping up hand sanitiser around the village.
- She is regularly collecting and sanitising donations to the Grub Hub, which continues to be used, although not extensively. Questionnaires were put in the Hub to learn about need.
- The book swap is very popular. More books are needed.

Treasurer's Report:

KS reported that the closing balance on the CC account was £23,081.43, and that total spend since the last CC meeting was £2,360.00, all on care packages.

The following funds remain from the coronavirus grants received:

- HIE: £749.95 (of £20,000.00)
- National Lottery: £5,564.60 (of £10,000)
- Foundation Scotland: £5,000.00 (of £5,000.00)
- North Highland Initiative: £0.00 (of £626.62)
- Scottish and Southern: £1,550.00 (of £1,550.00)
- Highland Council: £500.00 (of £500.00)
- Tesco: £500.00 (of £500.00).

Henrik from HIE has contacted the Treasurer to confirm that no funds need to be repaid. He also requested a report on how HIE funds covering the last couple of months.

Secretary's Report:

HG to draft a letter to the previous Chair requesting that all records be transferred to the new office bearers. HG to liaise with the previous Secretary to hand over the role.

AOCB:

Hardship funds

The CC is conscious that there may be great hardship in the community over the coming winter months due to low earning during the tourism season and the continued uncertainty around the coronavirus pandemic. Some money remains from the first round of coronavirus funding (see Treasurer's Report) but it was agreed to apply for more, if eligible. KW will speak to Henrik from HIE about the HIE Communities Recovery Fund. AM reported that the Highland Council is making provision for hardship over the next few months.

AB suggested the CC create a questionnaire to evaluate the predicted needs of the community. KS will start this work. This questionnaire can be sent directly to previous recipients of care packages (HG has their contact details). HG suggested a newsletter to inform the community and will start work on this. It was also agreed that the CC should review the eligibility criteria for members of the community requesting hardship funds. AM indicated that some guidance will be issued by the Highland Council.

Co-option:

Becky Cameron was unanimously co-opted as a member of the CC. The CC can co-opt a maximum of two more members of the community and it was agreed to investigate if there was any interest among members of the community. AB suggested we also reach out to any interested Youth Members, aged between 16 and 18.

Virtual conferencing platforms

Generally, Zoom was the preferred platform. KW would be given a £60 donation for the use of her personal Zoom subscription to cover CC business.

Communication preferences

It was agreed that phone calls should be limited to weekdays and that all communications between members of the CC should be conducted via email or phone.

AGM

HG to draft the agenda (which must be published by Tuesday 20 October). AB suggested that each member propose one goal they would like to see achieved in the first full year of the CC.

Date of Next Meeting:

Tuesday 3 November 2020. This meeting will be the AGM, followed by a regular CC meeting.