

# Shieldaig Community Council

## Minutes of the Planning meeting Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 at 7.30pm

**Present:** Richard Munday (Chairman), Gerry Beard (Secretary), Gemma Livingstone (Treasurer)  
Viv Rollo, Donald Gillanders, Lyndsey Dacker, Cllrs Audrey Sinclair and Ian Cockburn

From the Highland Council Planning Dept. Julie Ferguson and Graham Sharp.

17 members of the community.

Apologies from Ann Barton

RM opened the meeting and explained that the meeting and the 'village walk around' was a response to the community's concerns surrounding a number of recent planning decisions. He then suggested that the meeting should proceed as follows:

1. **Members of the community to raise matters of concern**
2. **Planning Dept response**
3. **Summing up**

### 1. Community matters of concern; Issues raised

Seemingly straightforward planning applications from within the local community are subjected to insignificant modifications and arbitrary decisions, whereas applications from outwith Shieldaig appear to be treated much more leniently.

Disparity between applications for changes to existing houses and new build, and debates around whether 'this or that' is acceptable. New applicants need to be aware of what might, or might not be allowed.

The village relies on the CC to make representation to the planners if proposals put forward for development are generally seen to be inappropriate.

Serious delays when dealing with Building Control.

Building site access on single track roads can cause delays to other road users.

Matters surrounding more affordable housing at Baile Shuas would be considered at the next CC meeting (AGM) on the 23<sup>rd</sup> July.

### 2. Planning Dept. response:

Nobody objected or contacted the planning dept regarding the properties which are now of concern. Holiday homes are houses and as such planning treats all housing applications the same. There is no legal basis for turning down an application for a holiday home.

Please use the Pre-application process which can save money and time, advice includes site visits. Applications that are troublesome are explored further in an attempt to obtain a result which meets planning criteria and applicants aspirations. Not all sites can be treated the same because of size, context etc.

Building Control delays will be looked into.

### **3. Summing up; Community Councillor's responses**

Business Rate reliefs for holiday homes when public finances are under such intense pressures are hard to justify.

Holiday homes have mixed benefits for the communities. They provide some limited local employment, more significant business for local tourism operators. However the absence of year round local residents has an adverse impact on community life.

There were some good experiences of dealing with planning; some less good.

We need to be more diligent in our scrutiny of all future planning applications. Where an application raises no significant community issues we should leave it to the applicant and the Planning Dept.

If the application is for housing for a local person or a local business likely to create jobs then we as a CC will normally give it full support.

Holiday Homes, the market is delivering more than communities can support, however HHs do contribute to the wider community.

#### **b. Highland Councillor Audrey Sinclair (Planning Committee Member)**

Delegated powers are widely used, where applications do come to committee they are well examined and can be refused.

Community Councils can be Statutory Consultees and if they object the planners will have to bring an application to the Planning Committee.

Pleased to hear that there have been good planning experiences.

There seems to be a Building Control problem, perhaps BC can be asked to participate in a similar exercise to this.

Communication can be problematic, particularly if the the planners are dealing with an agent and at the same time with the applicant.

Construction access to sites and obstruction on single track roads needs addressing.

Business rates and reliefs – Government need to do something about this.

Community Councils have an important role in the planning process.

#### **b. Highland Councillor Ian Cockburn**

The Planning dept has been even handed in considering Holiday Homes versus local applicants.

Land reform needs parliamentary time.

Business rates on Holiday Homes needs the attention of parliament.

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In conclusion Richard thanked Graham and Julie for their time and to hear our concerns.

