

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held in Lairg Community Centre on Wednesday 2nd March 2016 at 8.00pm

Present: Jeff Norrie, Chair (JN), Andrew Mackay, Vice Chair (AMK), Hector MacLennan, Treasurer (HM), Jackie Young (JY), John Sutherland (JS), Iain Mackay (IM), Sandy Allison (SA)

Apologies: None

Police Scotland: Officers attended prior to meeting and left report

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Also present: Highland Councillor Hugh Morrison (HMN), Gary Thompson

Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above)/Police report.

JN welcomed everyone to the meeting which followed on from a private annual review meeting of the Lairg Windfarm Ltd Community Fund attended by Carol Eliot of Foundation Scotland.

Police report. PC Dave Thompson and colleague attended prior to the start of the private meeting and left a report leaving them free to attend to other urgent business. There were ten incidents recorded in the last month comprised of four road traffic matters, one stray animal, one 999 call dialled in error, one medical matter, one neighbour dispute and two advice calls. No other points were raised to pass back to the police.

Item 2. Adoption of Minutes of February meeting. The February Minutes were adopted as a true and accurate record. Proposed: Sandy Allison; seconded: Andrew Mackay.

Item 3. Matters arising. (1) Drainage beside Lairg Cemetery. AM has been in discussion with Crispian Cook for Lairg Estate and a letter from Mr Cook was read to the meeting. AM showed photos taken today of the water-logged ground but said that the water was not getting through the wall from the Estate ditch. Mr Cook stated that the ditch is set back a little from the cemetery wall and that the land rises up not an inconsiderable height to the base of the wall indicating that there would need to be a substantial flow of water in the ditch to inundate it and lead to water running through the wall to the cemetery. The best help he feels that Lairg Estate can give is to allow the Highland Council to form a proper French drain ring (circa 2m in depth, back filled with gravel) going round the outside of the cemetery wall on the Estate land and to allow THC to maintain the drain thereafter. The possibility remains that ground water is rising up within the cemetery, which could cause H&S problems for THC. Cllr Morrison has tried to discuss the issue with Director William Gilfillan but will do so again in light of this most recent development. It was also stated that there is a burst drain higher up on Lairg Estate which is aggravating the problem. **HMN Action.** (2) Length of term of office for CC Chairs. This question was raised last month. Cllr Farlow has indicated that at each AGM office bearers stand down and are elected afresh. Therefore a CC member may be returned to the Chair indefinitely if so voted by the other members. (3) Loch Shin Sailing Club. It was agreed in December to invite representatives from the Club to update the CC after February. JN will issue invitation. **JN Action.**

Item 4. LDCI update. JN read a three page updating report which included a list of eleven meetings attended by the Development Officer in the last month with another six already scheduled for March. Of particular interest is the progress, in discussions at least, regarding the siting and installing of a footpath to Lairg train station. Current projects include: the Fitness Room, for which discussions are nearer to an outcome which would lead to funding

being sought; SSE Resilient Communities Fund seeking funding for various aspects such as allowing a power generator to be used during any prolonged power outage; local telephone directory is now at the printers; exploring the possibility of a Youth Café in Lairg; Community Broadband project has now completed base information gathering and is proceeding to a community survey; Energy Savers project seeking funding in association with Lairg Learning Centre towards a wider project aimed at reducing CO2 emissions through fuel efficiency, sustainable travel, waste management etc; Lairg website - funding being sought to finance a new website. It was suggested that the CC could have a tab on this when it is up and running and discontinue a separate identity making it easier for the public to access local information. Further details of all projects are available from the Development Officer.

Item 5. LCA update. The AGM was held last night at which it is understood the accounts were accepted, SCIO was agreed and two new directors were appointed.

Item 6. CALL update. Information received over the last couple of days has proved contradictory. Initially press releases and an email from MSP Paul Monaghan to CALL indicated that plans for the contentious pylon route had been put on hold but the latest information appears to indicate that this is not the case. Part of the Beauly – Loch Buidhe transmission line upgrade may be on hold but this announcement does not appear to affect the Lairg route. Everyone was greatly disappointed but the fight to establish a satisfactory pylon route will continue.

Item 7. Lights for Air Ambulance update. The invoice was received by email from SAAS and will be sent on to LDCI to try to complete the paperwork for Foundation Scotland re the windfarm benefit award. **MG Action.**

Item 8 .Falls of Shin update. Press announcements this week celebrate the award by the Big Lottery which when added to other funding already in place appears to secure the future of the project. The final tranche required is awaited from HIE.

Item 9. Financial report. (MG) Treasurer's Account balance stands at £2510.71; four payments made in the last month: two for room hire for CC meetings, one to Faclan Word Service, one to Lairg Estate (second part of newly agreed rental of tennis courts). Windfarm Account balance stands unchanged at £389.76. Projects Account is also unchanged at £104.73.

Item 10. Planning applications. Nothing relevant in Lairg. HMN will try to change the named person to receive Planning notifications from SA to JN. **HMN Action.**

Item 11. CASPLAN. Those who have studied the plan were very disappointed by the lack of any real information on the Lairg pages. The Sutherland Transport site is not mentioned at all; local ideas abound for this site to be developed into a tourism/transport hub amongst others. The Sutherland Arms site is mentioned but indicated for housing; local thinking is that this is an ideal site for a much needed care/nursing home. Both these projects would greatly enhance the village and surrounding areas bringing jobs, economic and social benefits in large measure. MG and JN will compile a submission ahead of the 18th March deadline.

MG/JN Action.

Item 12. Community Council website. IM will liaise with Emma Armstrong to take over maintenance of the site in the short term. This will include arranging payment for the domain name registration. It is hoped that talks with LDCI can lead to a joint website venture. **IM Action.**

Item 13. Windfarms. Nil of note.

Item 14. Lairg Angling Club jetty. SA advised that SSE have donated £2,000 towards extending a new concrete jetty. SSE also advised that the water level in the loch has been dropped by two and a half metres but it could go further.

Item 15. Correspondence. (1) Nil of note.

Item 16. Any other competent business. (1) **Lairg in Bloom.** JY advised that a new five year lease has been obtained from Lairg Estate to allow the setting up of a polytunnel to go ahead. This will also meet the conditions laid down by the SSE Achany Panel and should see the release of funds as per the recent application. (2) **TECS.** Collapsed bridge and culvert at Culmaily, also grid and railings issues on the same road. **HMN Action.** (3) **THC Laundry Road site** has been sold. (4) **Transport.** On Fridays a bus meets the 5.12pm train from Inverness where it terminates in Ardgay at 6.42pm and travels on to Durness allowing for stops en route in Ardgay, Bonar Bridge, Lairg etc. The public should be encouraged to use the service as without regular numbers it will inevitably be cut. (5) **Electric vehicle charge point.** HMN is working towards having a charging point installed in Lairg. (6) **Recycling point in Bonar Bridge.** THC indicates that this service will not now be withdrawn. (7) **NC500.** Concerns raised again that the promotion of this route for tourism draws people away from the inner areas of Sutherland with no real provision for highlighting the amenities available by investigating the route inland. North Highland Initiative should be asked either to attend a CC meeting to discuss this issue or better, to hold a road show in Lairg to allow the spread and exchange of information. **MG Action.**

Item 18. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 6th April 2016 in the Lairg Community Centre. The invited guests will be NHS Highland. The room is already booked.

Item 19. Lairg Windfarm Ltd – Lairg Community Fund. At private session, an award of £2,000 was made to Lairg Community Association to help with the funding of the power generator for the SSE Resilience Scheme.

Meeting closed at 9.50pm.