

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held in Lairg Community Centre on Wednesday 4th October 2017 at 7.30pm

Present: Jeff Norrie, Chair (JN), Jackie Young, Secretary (JY), John Sutherland (JS), Sandy Allison (SA), Eilidh Price (EP), Louise Skinner (LS)

Also present: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM), Roddy MacLeod (RM) and Agata Baranska (AB) of North Highland Forestry (FCS)

Apologies: Andrew MacKay, Vice chair/Treasurer (AMK), Iain Mackay (IM)

Police Scotland: PCs Dave Thompson (DT) and Steven MacKenzie (SM)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above)/Police report. Chair Jeff Norrie welcomed all present. While the FCS representatives set up their presentation the meeting moved to work through the agenda. Police representatives arrived at 8.15pm having had a call to attend to en route. Their report covered fifteen incidents: four road traffic related, four foot patrols with no issues, one seizure of air weapons, one theft of outdoor CCTV camera, one non-emergency 999 call, one neighbour dispute, one domestic bail check, one advice call and one fraud of the 'ringing the changes' type. Businesses are warned to be aware not to enter into any negotiations involving changing large denomination notes for smaller, etc. Regarding recent enquires by CC concerning the regulations covering unsafe loads, the CC was advised to contact Sgt Allan who is willing to come to a meeting to answer questions on the current legislation. The issues of closed police stations and reduced officer numbers were briefly discussed, noting the waste of money and resources on Lairg Police Station and many others locally. It was agreed to send a letter of strong objection to Police Scotland. **MG Action.**

Item 2. North Highland Forestry. Already introduced to the meeting, RM and AB proceeded to give their presentation regarding FCS plans and policies for replanting, maintenance, etc. The detailed presentation covered timber extraction, legal requirements for FCS after felling, landscaping, restocking, etc. The necessary 'fallow period' after felling was explained. The major issues caused by the pine weevil (*hylobius abietis*) were discussed at some length. The full presentation will be circulated to the CC and anyone seeking further information should contact any CC member. **AB Action.** Q&As included the issues of horses on public footpaths; where these are 'all access', e.g. the inner path at Ferrycroft, horse riders are required to remove any dung deposited by the animals though this is not the case where a footpath is not so designated. Appropriate signage at the Ferrycroft path entrance would be most beneficial. The dog waste bin on the path has been removed in accordance with THC policy but there is now no nearby receptacle. RM and LM will both attempt to have appropriate bins placed at the paths. **LM Action.** Asked about the felled area opposite the petrol station, RM was unaware of the proposal for FCS and LDCI to make a feature using the three large tree stumps and incorporate an adjoining picnic area. LDCI will be asked for an update. **MG Action.** The unsightly broken trees left at the Dalchork clear fell site should be tidied up with the standing dead wood and windblown trees by the AA box, also issues regarding power lines throughout the area. These points and others raised in general discussion will be taken back to Steve Jack, FCS, by RM who will keep the CC informed thereafter. **RM Action.** With thanks for an excellent presentation RM and AB left at 8.35pm.

Item 3. Adoption of Minutes of September meeting. The Minutes of the September meeting were adopted as a true and accurate record. Proposed: Sandy Allison; seconded: Eilidh Price.

Item 4. Matters arising. (1) Ferrycroft paths. (LM declared an interest as a Director of Highlife Highland.) Drainage issues on the outer path will not be addressed, this not being designated an 'all access' path. The inner path is recommended for those using pushchairs, wheelchairs, etc. **(2) Bird Hide.** JN recorded a great effort made by CC members and SSE volunteers who recently spent over five hours working on improving the path access. SA received particular thanks for his work with the dumper/digger moving the donated material from the roadside to the pathway, where the volunteers then spread it on the path. The work of the SSE volunteers, Team Leader Mark Inglis, Charlie Smith, Kevin Squire and Ross Mackay, is very much appreciated by the CC. A letter of thanks will also be sent to Reay Forest Estate who kindly supplied the tracked dumper. **SA/MG Action.** With CC approval SA will remove the left over scalplings from the parking area. The wood of the hide will need treatment, best next spring, when scaffolding will be required to reach the high spots. Volunteers will be sought nearer the time. Also strimming around the path and the hide should be done then. **March/April agenda. (3) Overgrown trees.** This issue has resolved and will be removed from the agenda. **MG Action. (4) Tennis courts.** SA will carry out exploratory investigations of the drainage in the coming weeks. Little can be done until the pavement work opposite the chemist shop has been completed. **SA Action. (5) Lochies bump.** SA will discuss with John Clark, THC Roads Department. **SA Action. (6) Water damage at library.** SA will enquire of John Chatten regarding the recent ingress of water into the library. Apparently a one-off incident but in need of investigation to prevent recurrence. **SA Action. (7) Winter gritting.** Cllr Morrison advised by email that he has been assured there will be no reduction in the gritting fleet in the Lairg area. **(8) Water at cemetery.** Cllr Morrison advises that this issue has been raised with a different THC official and he is hopeful of something being done this time.

Item 5. Suggestions re memorial for the late Hector MacLennan. This matter rests with Foundation Scotland which has been advised that the proposal is from CC and is not to be opened to public donations. If the CC proposal is accepted by FS the annual award scheme will be implemented but will not if that approval is not forthcoming.

Item 6. LDCI update. Care and Well-Being Centre: Funding secured from the Scottish Land Fund will cover the capital costs of asset acquisition and associated legal fees as well as the revenue costs such as consultancy fees, ground surveys, preliminary drawings, planning fees, refreshment of business plan and part time project officer post over 1 year period. Additional funding of £2500 has been secured from the Highland Council Ward Discretionary Fund to meet the costs of the ground surveys required. LDCI hopes to complete the purchase and anticipate transfer of ownership to LDCI by the end of November. An update for the community in the form of posters and flyers will be delivered within the next few days. **Winterfest:** Preparations for Lairg's annual event are underway with the venue and all main attractions provisionally booked. Letters to sponsors have been sent and some raffle donations have already been received. Many old and new stall holders have booked their tables in the Community Centre (over 30 so far). Liaising ongoing with the Primary School and the Learning Centre who will co-host the event this year. Arrangements are well in hand and LDCI is delighted to see so many volunteers stepping forward to assist. **Clean-Up Day:** LDCI hopes to organise one clean-up day before Remembrance Sunday so the area around the war memorial will be presentable. A date is to be confirmed.

Item 7. CALL. SA very concerned re the lack of contact from SSE. The SSE current proposed/preferred route will devalue property and is not appropriate in the opinion of the community. Recent information states that there are now no hen harriers in the area therefore that route which was rejected because of their habitat is now viable. The situation will be monitored with action taken when/if appropriate.

Item 8. Financial report. Treasurer's Account balance stands at £2907.33 reflecting the regular outgoing monthly payments. The Windfarm Account balance stands at £122.41 following one award last month. The Micro Grant remains closed until further funds are received from Foundation Scotland. Project Account remain unchanged from the last report. Following approaches made to Creich and Ardgay CCs, Lairg CCs voted to increase the hourly rate for secretarial services, payable from this month.

Item 9. Planning applications. One application locally noted but no objection raised. The weekly list is still not coming to JN. LM will attempt once again to reinstate the sending of the list to JN. **LM Action.**

Item 10. Community Council vacancy. As it is now many months since work commitments have allowed Iain Mackay to attend meetings, reluctantly the CC will now ask him to stand down to allow the CC to seek another member. All CCs will actively seek a recruit and bring suggestions to the November meeting. **Action All.**

Item 11. Windfarms. LM advised that no appeals were submitted regarding the Altnaharra proposal. JN and AMK hope to attend meetings later this month regarding Sallachy and Strathkirry proposals.

Item 12. Poppy wreath for Remembrance Sunday. Secretary will order a similar wreath to last year's. Decision to be made at next meeting as to who will represent the CC and lay the wreath on 12th November.

Item 13. Correspondence. All relevant correspondence had been circulated by email. Nil of note.

Item 13. Any other competent business. (1) CC Logo. EP confirmed that designing a new logo is on her worklist for when time allows. (2) TECS. Street light out for some time at the bank building; door of ladies' toilet in urgent need of repair, with the general state of repair of the building reported as 'atrocious'. Caretaker does a very good job to maintain a clean facility in the face of very poor conditions. **LM Action.** The appointing of a designated TECS rep was not done this month – **agenda item.** (3) EP displayed the new Mackay Memorial plaque which will be placed on the north-facing railings of the memorial in Lairg cemetery. She was congratulated on the impressive design. (4) Further to previous discussions regarding archiving of CC files held by MG, she has offered to designate space in her home and also sort through the files to remove irrelevant documents. This offer gratefully received by CC members, with appropriate remuneration. Once the space is established a small storage charge will be met by the CC; should the other local CCs wish to take up this offer, the storage charge can be divided. This space will not be large enough to take in other CC materials held elsewhere.

Item 15. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1st November 2017 at 7.30pm in the Lairg Community Centre.

Item 16. Lairg Windfarm Ltd – Lairg Community Fund. In private session, an application by LDCI Winterfest was awarded £1,235 towards costs of this year's event. Application by Lairg Community Association Children's Party was awarded £1,000.

Meeting closed 9.30pm.