

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held in Lairg Community Centre on Wednesday 5th September 2018 at 7.30pm

Present: Andrew Mackay, Chair/Treasurer (AMK), John Sutherland (JS), Jamie Dick (JD), Sandy Allison (SA), Lousie Skinner (LS)

Apologies: Jackie Young, Secretary (JY)

Also attending: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM), Magda MacDonald, Project Officer, LDCI. (MM), Kaye Hurrion (KH)

Police Scotland: Chief Inspector Iain Maclelland (IM), Inspector Jamie Wilson (JW)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Items 1/2/6. Welcome/Apologies (as above) /Police report/Police station. Andrew Mackay, Chair, welcomed everyone following the summer recess and invited the police representatives to address the meeting. JW gave the report which since June mostly comprised minor calls but included eight fixed penalty driving incidents, one drink driving, two assistance calls, one drugs related, and one domestic. IM then explained the background to the current situation where, owing to changes within Police Scotland, there is now no operational requirement for the Lairg Police Station which has had only limited usage since 2011. Police Scotland is reducing the large estate of premises throughout the country. IM stressed there is no planned change to the operational policing of the area. The option exists to make an asset transfer to the community of the Lairg building. A recent public meeting showed a strong local desire for the building to be transferred with the proposal for a bunkhouse-style hostel being popular. The community has been frustrated by seeing this good building standing unused for so long. IM explained that the last refurbishment was carried out shortly before the creation of Police Scotland at which time plans for policing in the north were quickly changed. Cllr Munro indicated the tremendous support and goodwill for the hostel project should be matched by prompt action by Police Scotland. KH indicated that it is hoped, if the project goes ahead, to offer a permanent space within it for the police to use whenever required. JW indicated that this provision would be well received and feedback on this could help move things forward. Both officers spoke highly of the officers currently serving the area stating that they have a very protective attitude to the communities. SA raised the issue of the number of campervans during the summer months which heavily increase the traffic on local roads while little income is generated for the local economy. Many vans 'wild camp' choosing not to stay on recognised sites and this often leads to litter and chemical waste problems. Many of these drivers have no understanding of how to drive on single track roads. Overall these visitors are costing the Highlands as they make use of the services and facilities available but without contributing. IM suggested contacting Visit Scotland for advice and ideas as to how to get the best benefit from the ever increasing numbers of tourists. LM and MM will liaise with a view to arranging a meeting with Visit Scotland. **LM/MM Action.** IM and JW left the meeting at 8.05pm taking the feedback regarding the positive support for the transfer of the police station building to the community.

Item 3. Adoption of Minutes of June meeting. The Minutes of the June meeting were adopted as a true and accurate record. Proposed: John Sutherland; seconded: Sandy Allison.

Item 4. Matters arising. (1) **LCA acoustics.** This issue was discussed at a meeting on 11th June. SA will follow up on that discussion. AMK will liaise with LCA for update; perhaps invite a representative to an upcoming CC meeting. **SA/AMK action.** (2) **Drainage at Lairg Cemetery.** This ongoing problem has still not been resolved although the land has dried considerably during the hot summer. The water comes from a field drain or spring, it is not a

mains leak. The issue continues to cause a safety hazard and distress to mourners at funerals and visitors to the cemetery in any wet weather. Lairg Estate has given permission for work to be done. LM has had no response from Joanne Sutherland in spite of several attempts, and will push again for a reply. **LM Action.** Drainage at tennis courts. SA is prepared to attempt an improvement but not without a THC representative present. This is a long-standing issue which should be resolved without further delay. **SA/LM Action.**

Item 5. Public toilets update. LM advised that final decisions are expected in October. It is anticipated that key toilets will be kept open but how this will be financed is not known. LM will advise further following the meeting to be held on 8th October. **LM Action.** LM and her Sutherland colleagues will continue to fight for funding for the roads throughout the area, strongly resisting any moves to channel funds from this budget to any other.

Item 6. Police station. See Item 1.

Item 7. Bird Hide update – volunteers/date. SA, AMK and JD will assess how much oil based Cuprinol will be needed and to consider how to proceed. Plan for date etc to be decided once these issues are complete. **SA/AMK/JD Action**

Item 8. LDCI update. Following on from **Item 1** MM reported that the feasibility study into local opinion received one hundred and sixty-one responses, 81% of which were in favour of the community take-over. The plan is for an eighteen-bed hostel with facilities for cyclists and the aforementioned police space. The project is progressing through the various stages required to seek funding and ultimately complete. Once running as a community asset any profit will go towards other local projects bringing further income to the village. **The footpath to the railway station.** LM is helping LDCI regarding THC landowners' and road construction consents. Planning approval will be sought. **Ord Place.** It is hoped that the carver will be available in the second week of September. Planning permission will be sought regarding access to the site. **Bus Shelter.** School children are currently working on the refurbishment; should be complete by the end of the month. **Care Project.** Topographical and tree surveys are done. HSCHT working with LDCI to oversee the progress in the coming months. **Gunn's Wood.** FCS seeking to sell; LDCI has expressed an interest on behalf of the community. Positive local support with several people volunteering to form a sub-committee. Many ideas forthcoming. MM should have more information at the October meeting.

Winterfest. Preparations are well in hand for this year's event on 17th November. **New Board members.** Dr Aline Marshall and Chris Powell have recently joined the LDCI Board of Directors.

Item 9. CALL. The pylon line is going ahead. This item will be removed from the agenda.

Item 10. Financial report. Treasurer's account balance stands at £2,163.56 reflecting outgoing payments in the last month which included two room hire fees to LCA, annual rental of tennis courts paid to Lairg Estate, Faclan Word Service, Highland Council rates for bird hide. Windfarm account stands at £276 reflecting Micro Grant awards in June to the Crofters Show, Lairg Learning Centre and LDCI. Project account unchanged at £4.73. The reduced annual grant from THC has been received and is processing at the bank.

Item 1. Planning applications. None in Ward One. Cllr Munro will be asked to request again that the Weekly Planning Report will now be emailed to AMK and MG as Chair and Secretary. **LM Action.**

Item 12. Windfarms. (1) The latest Memorandum of Understanding between SSE Achany and E.ON Rosehall Panel and the local CCs was signed by AMK on behalf of Lairg CC. This will be sent to Foundation Scotland. **MG Action.** (2) LM indicated talks are ongoing with SSE to enable the three local CCs to draw down up to £1,500 from the Fund to be used for specified expenses, for example, hire of meeting rooms. Each CC should approach Fiona Morrison at SSE to take this further. **AMK Action.** (3) JY has indicated that she may be interested in becoming one of the CCs two representatives to the Achany Panel. AMK will

discuss with JY and advise Carol Elliot, Foundation Scotland in order to arrange induction. **AMK Action.** (4) Sallachy. A deal has been approved in principal with the developers regarding payments for community benefit. (5) Tirryside. Next meeting due on 13th October. LM and MM both plan to attend. (6) Lairg extension to existing development. Twelve turbines are currently planned. The new pylon line will pass through the development site. Public exhibition in Lairg planned for 20th September, 3.30 – 7.30pm, with one in Rogart the previous day. (7) Rates on windfarm developments. LM seeking information regarding the rateable values of windfarms and, if rates due/paid, where that income goes.

Item 13. Correspondence. All email correspondence had been circulated prior to the meeting.

Item 14. Highland Councillor's report. A press release is due from THC regarding the £5.2m overspend in the first quarter of this year.

Item 15. Any other competent business. (1) Equipment at Ferrycroft/Ord Place play areas. LM to enquire of Highlife Highland where removed equipment is and if it is to be replaced.

LM Action. (2) Lairg cemetery. Grass cuttings are no longer collected by THC as part of the maintenance programme. Gravestones are often covered by the cuttings and the paths are unsafe. Health and Safety issue. LM will seek permission for volunteers to go in to collect the grass cuttings and generally tidy the graveyard. **LM Action.**

Item 16. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3rd October at 7.30pm in the Lairg Community Centre. Notice is given that the November meeting will be one week later than usual – new date is 14th November.

Item 17. Lairg Windfarm Ltd – Lairg Community Fund. Application by Lairg & District Learning Centre was approved with an award of £2,500 to improve the website and social media presence. A micro grant of £234 was approved for LDCI to assist with costs of the Planning Application for the Ord Place project. The Planning application will be in the name of the CC to help reduce costs, but with LDCI carrying out the paperwork, etc. Application by LDCI for £300 towards design of a new logo was approved in principal but payment held until the next tranche of funding is received. The Micro Grant Fund is currently closed until that time.

Meetings closed 9.50pm