

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held on Zoom on Wednesday 12th January 2022 at 7.30pm

Present: Iain Thomson, Chair (IT), Jamie Dick, Vice Chair (JD), Andrew Mackay, Treasurer (AMK), Sandy Allison (SA), Catherine Anne MacDonald (CAM), Donna Gilchirst (DG)

Apologies: Jakcie Young, Secretary (JY), Louise Skinner (LS)

Invited guest: Angela Platts, THC Community Support Co-ordinator, Sutherland

Also attending: Highland Councillor Linda Munro, (LM), Kaye Hurrion, LDCI Chair (KH), David Watson, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust manager (DW), Caroline McMorran, Northern Times

Police Scotland: Report received by email

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/apologies (as above)/Police report. Chair Iain Thomson opened the meeting, the first in 2022. Police report indicated one domestic incident, one concern for person, two road traffic collisions, one threat toward police and one email/online fraud. Nothing else of significance.

Item 2. Angela Platts, THC Community Support Co-ordinator, Sutherland. Angela introduced herself stating she has been in post since August 2021. As a result of Covid her main focus has had to be on humanitarian aid specifically due to the pandemic, including isolation issues. She is now working with Sutherland Pathfinder, which launches this month online, seeking to help those with emotional wellbeing and mental health issues. Now widening her remit, she is able to look at supporting various other projects, e.g. growing projects, helping to find funding to improve playparks – in Lairg working with LDCI and the CC. Angela confirmed that there is no THC money available at present. This was a brief introduction only. Angela is available for further contact at any time via the CC or LDCI. Chair thanked Angela for her attendance and information.

Item 3. Adoption of Minutes of December meeting. The Minutes of the December meeting were proposed by Iain Thomson; seconded by Sandy Allison.

Item 4. Matters arising from Minutes. (1) Bridgend House. No update in JY absence.

JY/LS Action. (2) Migdale Hospital. See Item 10. **JY Action.** (3) Speed indicator signs. As still no update, CCs will take further action separately from THC. SSE has no money for projects but may help with volunteers. LM offered take the issue forward; IT will speak with SSE. **LM/IT Action.** (4) Main Street noticeboard. Lockharts have offered to make a new board with Sallachy Estate offering the funding. (5) Ferrycroft jetty. No update. SA raised the problem of private locked boats being moored at the jetty which causes an obstruction to other users. This could be dangerous should an emergency arise. A community jetty would alleviate the problem. Ward Manager to be asked regarding the locked boats. **MG Action.**

Item 5. LDCI update. (KH) The report covered seven current projects. (1) Care & Wellbeing. Processing the Memorandum of Agreement with Albyn Housing. Sale of the Coach House was completed in December 2021. (2) Ferrycroft playpark. Still waiting to hear back from THC regarding access to Scottish Government funding. LM volunteered to enquire into THC assistance. **LM Action.** (3) Helping Hands fund. Supporting twenty residents locally through Community Larder deliveries. A generous donation of food to the Community Larder was received from the Church of Scotland. (4) Health walks. Next walk planned for 25th January when it is hoped to hold a small gathering following the walk. (5)

Carvings. Twice yearly recommended oiling is in hand and up to date. (6) War memorial. RBLS has welcomed the offer by LDCI to coordinate celebrations for the centenary. (7) Queen's Canopy. Working with KoSDT, Woodland Trust and others, assessing available land for suitability. IT requested KH liaise with him as Sallachy Estate may be able to help within its own tree planting schemes.

Item 6. Financial report. (DG) The balance in the Treasurer's account stands at £2,978.88. Outgoing payments were to Faclan Word Service and DG for secretarial and treasurer work respectively. The windfarm account is unchanged at £3478.10. The Project account is now inaccessible. It has a balance of £4.73 which should be transferred to the Treasurer's account and the Project account then closed. This can only be done by an elected office bearer. Tennis courts fees. IT will speak to Lairg Estate regarding the payment of fees and responsibilities for maintenance etc. **AMK/IT/JY Action.**

Item 7. Planning applications. Weekly notifications still not being sent to IT. AMK confirmed nothing relevant at present. LM will push for IT's inclusion in circulation. **LM Action.**

Item 8. Bird hide. IT to discuss what physical help SSE will give regarding the maintenance/upkeep from this spring. He will ask if they will commit to a 25year plan in line with the lifetime of the neighbouring windfarm. **IT Action.**

Item 9. Windfarms. (IT) Garvary. Delay in processing agreed community benefit plan. Sallachy. Final THC decision due in March. Creag Rhiabhach. Works continuing but behind schedule. Unlikely that turbines can be installed by March. Road conditions still causing concerns. AMK keeping on this. IT stated that once again not enough local companies are contracted for tasks they could easily accomplish. The machinery and expertise are here and should be utilised by developers.

Item10 . Highland Councillor's report. (LM) Budget time again. (1) Transport costs are up 40% due to Covid. This is due to various causes including enhanced cleaning regimes, social distancing observance, etc. (2) NHS Highland currently has forty-nine care homes closed to admissions due to Covid cases and isolating staff. Care at Home is under excessive pressure. Staff from other services are being called upon to help with basic care to leave trained staff free to work as required. Cumulative mental health effects are building, showing mental disturbance, loss of confidence, etc. Communities were commended for stepping up to volunteer help. (3) Migdale hospital. In communication with Kate Kenmure, NHS Highland North Interim Manager, indicates a clinical team has been established to go through the options for the Strathy ward, working with a Healthcare planner. A virtual meeting is being set up and Kate Kenmure will report to LM following that. (4) Ward Discretionary Budget still has some cash available. Projects must be submitted for consideration before the end of March. The Covid cash will continue meantime. Anyone struggling/in need should contact CAB in Golspie through which help can be given towards heating, meters, fuel etc. Many people in employment are unable to meet basic costs, finding themselves in situations unlike any they have experienced. Cases are assessed on an individual basis. LM will send information to CC for posting on its website. **LM/JD Action.**

Item 11. Correspondence. All correspondence had been circulated by email. Letter to the Chair from a local resident regarding her opinions over the Aires project and the CCs involvement in discussions will be answered by the Chair. CM confirmed her attendance at the October CC meeting and the article in the Northern Times was simply her report of the meeting. No statement was issued by the CC. KH thanked the CC for the support she received at the time. Although she did not attend the October meeting of the CC, her representatives advised her that the meeting has been held in a respectful and proper manner. **IT Action.**

Item 12. New website. The site is functioning and CCs are encouraged to submit material to be added to enhance it further.

Item 13. Any other competent business. DW gave a brief report on behalf of KoSDT. (1) Working with the three local CCs, estates and forestry bodies it is hoped to establish an action plan for future planning, planting, education and volunteer involvement. More local trees should be planted following an audit of what there is now. This plan would layer on top of all other groups' activities, aiming to fill gaps. It does not aim to set up new strategies. (2) The Community Rail Partnership for the Far North Line is struggling to find volunteers for its committee. Anyone interested should contact DW direct or via the CC. (3) Since April 2021 KoSDT has disbursed £100,000 supporting local households in need. There is huge demand and this is expected to continue over the next few years. Many who are struggling have never been in this position before and are there now through no fault of their own. Any stigma which might be attached to seeking help must be eradicated with help and support being more widely available. One in four children in Sutherland live in poverty. 33% of families are in extreme fuel poverty. Conditions are right for the perfect storm due to lower incomes and higher costs for energy, food, etc. Local MSPs must take action. The Community Larder mentioned earlier has assisted over 3,000 people in the last year. Better paid jobs are needed locally and energy prices need control. KoSDT will continue distributing funding as appropriately as possible. IT agreed that careers need to be created locally with more done to encourage people to remain and work here.

Item 14. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 3rd March. The meeting will commence privately at 7pm with the annual report from Foundation Scotland followed by the regular CC meeting at approximately 8pm. The link for the meeting can be obtained shortly before from goulder4929@gmail.com

Item 14. Applications to Lairg Windfarm Community Benefit Fund. No applications to discuss.

Meeting closed 8.50pm