

Lairg Community Council AMK

Minutes of meeting held on Zoom on Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Andrew Mackay, Chair/Treasurer (AMK), Jamie Dick, Vice Chair (JD), Jackie Young, Secretary (JY), Sandy Allison (SA), Iain Thomson (IT)

Apologies: John Sutherland (JS), Brian Martin (BM), Louise Skinner (LS)

Also attending: Highland Councillor Linda Munro (LM), Kaye Hurrian, LDCI Chair (KH), Robert Johnstone, LDCI (RJ), Caroline McMorran, Northern Times, Donna Gilchrist

Police Scotland: Report by email

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/apologies (as above)/Police report. Chair opened the meeting, welcoming all present. There had been no meeting in April.

The police report noted thirty-two incidents over the last two months: four suspected persons, one Covid call, five external agency requests, one animal call, one alarm activation, one false call of good intent, three concern for persons, one vandalism, seven road traffic matters (including 4 x fixed penalties for speeding), three firearms offences, two police information calls, one theft, two assist members of the public, one domestic incident.

Item 2. Adoption of Minutes of March meeting. The Minutes of the March meeting were adopted as a true and accurate record; proposed: Jackie Young; seconded: Sandy Allison.

Item 3. Matters arising from Minutes. (1) Speed signs. Monitoring progress at Creich CC with a view to perhaps placing a joint order for equipment if THC approves. (2) Saval road signs. LM understands the action has been taken. AMK to confirm and advise LM. **AMK**

Action.

Item 4. LDCI update. (KH). The LDCI's report covered six projects. (1) RJ gave the update on the Care & Wellbeing Project. LDCI attended a meeting on 30th March, called at the request of the Scottish Government (SG). Attended by THC Housing Development Manager, Scottish Government's Scottish Rural Housing Fund Programme Coordinator, and Scottish Government's More Homes Divisional Controller. Delays have been caused by Albyn Housing being faced with setting up a new team. SG wish to move the project forward by asking Albyn Housing to put out to tender all eight houses to establish cost certainty. This will allow a costs review and a funding package to be considered. It is proposed that the project can go out to tender in early May with a time scale of around eight weeks. (2) Aires. The sites previously under consideration have proved unsuitable for various reasons. LDCI is looking for an alternative site. (3) Helping Hands Fund. Now in the second year of the fund it is being extended to offer white goods and help with heating costs. Six households are currently being supported with weekly deliveries from local foodbanks, and other ways of supporting local families are being considered. (4) Magazine. Ongoing success and has led to an increase in membership of LDCI. (5) Ferrycroft play park. LDCI formed an umbrella group with local parents in hopes to take forward funding applications. Plan would be for LDCI to buy then gift equipment to Highlife Highland. Maintenance and upkeep responsibilities would not lie with local group or LDCI. LM believes that THC will not accept gifted equipment, only undertaking to safety check it. She will check and confirm to KH. It would be worth discovering how other areas have achieved re-equipping their parks. **KH/LM/LS.** (6) 'You Are Here' and Church Hill Wood signs. LM confirmed that tagged signs are allowed to be attached to posts in car parks.

Item 5. Financial report. (MG) The balance in the Treasurer's account stands at £3228.52 unchanged since the last report. The windfarm account is unchanged at £3478.10.

MG introduced Donna Gilchrist who has kindly offered to take on the position of Treasurer after the AGM at which MG will stand down from that post. DG attended tonight to meet the CC and see how a meeting runs. She was warmly welcomed and will take up the duties in June.

Item 6. Planning applications. Nil of note.

Item 7. Bird hide. (SA) SSE is willing to be involved with the maintenance work and will be holding a meeting next week after which SA expects to learn what can be achieved to improve the building and the approach pathways. KH advised that BBC Springwatch is seeking permission to use the hide for filming of black-throated divers on the loch. Perhaps also from a vantage point nearer the village. CC is happy for this use of the hide.

Item 8. Windfarms. (IT) (1) Achany Extension. CC is in discussion with Creich CC regarding SSE's offer for community benefit. It appears they wish to offer £2,500 per installed megawatt (half the current rate) to the local communities but they wish to extend the offer to a far wider Highland area. Local CCs are concerned at this change in attitude/offer as it is unfair to the local communities. SSE also indicates that it plans to administer any funds rather than use the established routes. A meeting of reps from the local CCs will take place in the next couple of weeks. (2) Garvary. JY has received a phone call from Michael Baird on behalf of the Struie Action Group requesting Lairg CC to support the opposition to this proposed development. CCs agreed that Lairg will take its usual neutral position regarding the proposal, reflecting that there are varying opinions held by members of the community. The CC would only submit an objection if it was requested by a majority of local residents.

Item 9. Highland Councillor's report. (LM) (1) £20m will be ring-fenced for roads, ditching, drainage, sightlines, and later resurfacing, etc, distributed as £10m for this year and next. THC requests information from local communities for works which should be carried out using this funding. It is hoped to be able to target issues such as disability issues, dropped kerbs etc. Serious road damage/potholes, drainage etc should also be highlighted with CC advising LM, Cllr Hugh Morrison and Joanne Sutherland, Head of Roads Dept, THC. AMK again reported the serious potholes at the Dalchork sub-station road end at the passing place.

LM/MG Action.

Item 10. Correspondence. All correspondence had been circulated by email.(1) Promotional information from Royal British Legion Industries circulated ahead of VE Day on 8th May. The sales information shows the various 'Tommy' signs and symbols available. Via Creich CC this information has been passed to the local branch of Royal British Legion Scotland.

Item 11. Any other competent business. (1) IT has been asked by members of the community how much funding has been allocated to Lairg CC from the windfarm. KH directed him to Eilidh Coll, Foundation Scotland, and to that website where all the information is readily available. (2) Parking at Balblair straight. IT commented that one or two vehicles are regularly parked in the bell mouth of a property at the Bonar end of the straight on the left westbound lane. It can appear that the vehicles are protruding onto the carriageway, or be about to reverse out. In the interests of safety Creich CC Chair will be asked if he can informally discuss this with the owners who could pull the vehicles further off the road. **MG Action.** (3) Migdale Hospital. JY enquired as to the current and future use of the Strathy Ward in Migdale which was closed due to staffing issues, then prepared for use during the pandemic. It is thought that the ward is once again standing empty which is a waste of the amenity. LM advised that Kate Kenmure is the local NHSH District Manager who should be able to answer the question. The contact email will be supplied to MG.

LM/MG Action. (3) JY asked for news of when the Falls of Shin Centre might reopen. MG advised that the Development Manager had reported to Creich CC that expressions of interest have been received following advertising for new operators and it is hoped that the facilities will reopen by July.

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Item 12. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 9th June at 7.30pm. It is hoped that this meeting can be held in public. It will also be the AGM which will start the evening. Lairg Community Centre will be contacted to book appropriate space to allow for social distancing. Failing that the meeting will be held on Zoom.

Item 13. Lairg Windfarm Ltd – Lairg Community Fund. In private discussion awards made recently by email were ratified. Lairg Community Association Children's Party had been awarded £1,500 to plan and lead Halloween and Christmas events for local children aged 0-13 years. Lairg in Bloom was awarded £1,500 to provide floral displays throughout the village during the spring and summer months.

Meeting closed 9.05pm