

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held On Zoom on Wednesday 2nd November 2022 at 7.30pm

Present: Iain Thomson, Chair (IT), Jamie Dick, Vice Chair (JD), Andrew Mackay, Treasurer (AMK), Jackie Young, Secretary (JY), Sandy Allison (SA), Louise Skinner (LS) Donna Gilchrist (DG), Catherine MacDonald (CM)

Apologies: John Sutherland (JS), Kaye Hurrion, LDCI (KH)

Also attending: Highland Councillor Marianne Hutchison, (MH), Highland Councillor Michael Baird (MB), Alison Magee, LDCI (AM)

Invited Guest (at private wind farm session): Chris Lee, Foundation Scotland (CL)

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/apologies (as above)/Police report. Chair opened the meeting, the first of two winter ones planned to be held on Zoom. The police report was received and circulated by email. It noted one online fraud attempt, two RTC with minor damage, two welfare checks (concerns for person/s), and one fatal RTC. The only other calls were from licensed persons informing of planned shoots around the area.

Item 2. Adoption of Minutes of September meeting. The Minutes of the September meeting were proposed by Sandy Allison; seconded by Louise Skinner.

Item 3. Matters arising from Minutes. (1) Lairg Tennis Courts. IT reported that there is a lease agreement in place. It dates from some years ago and he will review it before reporting back to the CC. DG authorised to pay the outstanding invoice at this stage. **DG /IT Action.** (2) Speed indicator signs. MH advised that Joanne Sutherland and Brian Fraser of THC Roads Dept confirm that Lairg is on the list for traffic/speed survey. It was agreed that the A836 approach to the village is the main concern, but issues arise on the A837 approaching from the west and the approach from Rogart A839. There is a sign on the A836 approach from the north. THC Cllrs were reminded that attempts to have speed indicator signs on all approaches to the village have been on the agenda for years, so far with no success. **MH/MB Action.**

Item 4. LDCI update. AM gave the Chair's report and updated the CC regarding the playpark proposals. Public consultation results showed over 90% of correspondents in favour of the Ferrycroft plans, with various suggestions made for the use of the Ord Place site, therefore there are now two projects being proposed, Ferrycroft and Ord Place. IT urged caution before committing to a Community Asset Transfer at Ord Place stating ongoing maintenance and full operating costs should be carefully considered before any steps are taken. AM confirmed that if costs proved too high then the Ord Place plan would not be viable and the site would remain owned by THC as a grassed area. THC would continue to cut the grass at no cost to the community. CCs believe that the majority of residents in the community want something to be done with the site and if LDCI takes it over this would be beneficial.

Cllrs MH and MB advised that Scottish Government has allocated funding for playparks. This is not a lot of money and locally will be divided between Wards 1 and 4.

Other items in the Chair's report covered the Food Larder, Dial-a-bus, Lairg Lunch Club, Helping Hands fund, Health Walks, War Memorial Centenary Day and Winterfest. Details of all these are available from LDCI.

An additional slot had been proposed here for an LCA update but sadly due to technical difficulties their representative was unable to join the meeting. Technical issues abounded throughout this meeting.

Item 5. Financial report. (DG) The balance in the Treasurer's account stands at £4,420.10 reflecting receipt of the admin grant from THC and the refund on Bird Hide rates. Outgoing payments were for room hire and secretarial services. The Windfarm account balance stands at £1,756.04, unchanged since the last report.

Item 6. Planning applications. IT listed four applications within the CC area. No issues arose from any of these.

Item 7. Bird hide. IT advised that there will be no assistance from SSE therefore the maintenance required reverts to the CC to arrange.

Item 8. Windfarms. (1) Acheilidh, formerly Lairg 3. Scoping was submitted to the Energy Consents Unit in July 2022. Twenty turbines at 230m with associated development works. The CC will be consulted as part of the EIA process. Community benefit discussions will follow Scottish Government Guidance. (2) Braemore. Planning permission has lapsed therefore the development is now out of time. (3) Meall Buidhe. Refused by THC, the developers have submitted an appeal to the Scottish Government. (4) Strathoykel. Also rejected by THC, this will go to a public enquiry. Cllr Baird advised that a new Scottish Government policy for a National Plan Framework linked to the next Sutherland Local Plan is due next year.

Item 9. Highland Councillor's report. (MH) (1) Bridgend House. THC survey of the property security indicates that the fencing is standard and secure. No action can be taken by Environmental Health unless actual sightings of vermin are confirmed. The CC, on behalf of the community, asked for THC to conduct an owner search after which further efforts to deal with the property might be possible. **MH Action.**

Item 10. Correspondence. All correspondence had been circulated by email.

Item 11. Any other competent business. (1) Residents have complained regarding pallets apparently dumped beside the Lairg in Bloom polytunnel. Mice have been seen, giving rise to fears of other vermin. The pallets will be removed to the Waste Facility. Nothing can be done about complaints concerning car parking/long term storage at the site as these are on private ground. (2) Remembrance Day Service. Once again SA has kindly agreed to lay the wreath on behalf of the CC. (3) The website has been updated with the new arrangements regarding secretarial contact. (3) Migdale Hospital. JY has received reports that a ward at Migdale is to close, possibly due to loss of funding. Cllr Baird agreed to enquire and update the CC. **MB Action.** (4) Ambulance staffing. It is rumoured that Scottish Ambulance Service is recruiting technicians for the Lairg station. A previous campaign resulted in an assurance that there would be no technicians based there with the service staffed by paramedics. In such a rural area fully trained and qualified staff are essential. IT emailed SAS during the meeting. (5) Damaged road signs. Members of the public are requesting the CC to report road signs damaged by bullet holes on all roads around the village. There is an obvious danger if shots are being fired across public roads. Although this has been a common offence it is difficult to take action but the current complaints will be passed to the police. **MG Action.**

Item 12. Date, time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held online on Wednesday 11th January 2023 at 7.30pm.

Item 13. Applications to Lairg Windfarm Community Benefit Fund. Application by LDCI for funding to continue the running of the Lairg Lunch Club was approved with a grant of £3,095. Foundation Scotland will be asked to reconsider its conditions for this award. **MG Action.**

A Micro grant of £250 was awarded to Light up Lairg to help with costs of running the New Year Dance in the village. **DG Action.**

Discussion with Chris Lee took place regarding the possibility of wind farm funding availability for assistance with transport costs for trainees/apprentices travelling out with the local area. Foundation Scotland will look into how this might be set up. Approval of the wind farm landowner and community benefactor will be required. **CL Action**

Meeting closed 9.40pm.