

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held on Zoom on Wednesday 6th October 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Andrew Mackay, Treasurer and Acting Chair (AMK), Vice Chair Jamie Dick, (JD), Jackie Young, Secretary (JY), Sandy Allison (SA), Louise Skinner (LS)

Apologies: Iain Thomson, Chair (IT), John Sutherland (JS), Brian Martin (BM), Catherine MacDonald (CM)

Also attending: Donna Gilchrist (DG), Alasdair Marshall (AM), David Watson, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust manager (DW), Alan Ross (AR), Lesley McConochie (LMc), Morven Munro (MM), Dean Munro (DM), Cle Jarvis (CJ), Caroline McMorran, Northern Times

Police Scotland: None received

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/apologies (as above)/Police report. AMK opened the meeting welcoming everyone. The LDCI report/discussion was moved to be part of AOCB to allow for the regular business to be conducted first. No police report received. If received after the meeting it will be forwarded to CCs.

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) Bridgend House. JY and LS will follow up on this with renewed enquiries regarding ownership/future of the property. **JY/LS Action.** (2) Migdale Hospital. JY will have an update by next meeting. No-one had any news this month. **JY Action.** (3) Speed indicator signs. AMK will liaise again with Creich CC Vice Chair for an update regarding purchase and installation of equipment via THC. **AMK Action.** (4) Main Street noticeboard. Cllr Munro to be asked again regarding ownership of this with a view to posting bus timetables there. **MG/LM Action.** (5) Ferrycroft jetty. No new information. No response as yet from Ward Manager. (6) Overgrowth around Loch Shin. Two quotes will be sought locally for clearance work. Application for funding will be made to cover costs of machine hire, etc.

Item 5. Financial report. (DG) The balance in the Treasurer's account stands at £3,522.65. Outgoing payments since September were £128.14 to Faclan Word Service. The windfarm account is unchanged at £3478.10. The Project account remains 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. **AMK/IT/Action.**

Item 6. Planning applications. Nil of note.

Item 7. Bird hide. (SA) AMK was at a recent SSE liaison meeting when the Bird Hide was mentioned but it was indicated that the CC had not submitted any updating information. SA disputed this. Chair to follow this up. **IT Action.**

Item 8. Windfarms. AMK advised that road works for the Altnaharra windfarm will result in road closures between the 25th October and 23rd December. Closed times will be 9am-11am, 11.30am-1.30pm, and 2pm-4.30pm. Relevant notices will be posted and published.

Item 9. Highland Councillor's report. No report in LM's absence.

Item 10. Correspondence. All correspondence had been circulated by email. Nothing raised from this tonight.

Item 11. New website. (JD). It is hoped that the new site will be ready to go live this coming weekend. Relevant invoices for domain name registration etc should be passed to DG for

payment. **JD/DG Action.**

Item 4/12. LDCI/Any other competent business. (1) LDCI report and discussion. The following report was received from the Chair of LDCI with the request that it be read and Minuted at this meeting. Prior the the reading of the report/discussion, the CC Chair stated that it had come to his attention that there has been much discussion on Facebook regarding the proposal of the Community Asset Transfer by THC to LDCI of land at Ferrycroft for the purpose of establishing an Aires site. It was noted that some LDCI Board members have received emails, some of which were described as unacceptable. He also made it clear that he felt that Facebook is not the place for such comments. The discussion tonight would use reasoned arguments and opinions only. The position of the CC in having to represent the views of the majority in the community was made clear.

LDCI Report

Only one project to report on this month. I will do a full report for next month.

Aires

When we started the Aires project back in November 2020, we wrote to the chair of the Lairg CC asking if he thought this project was a good idea for the LDCI. I have an email response encouraging us to progress the project.

I have spoken about this project at least 3 times at CC meetings.

LDCI was awarded a 'Design Grant' from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund which has allowed us to explore the feasibility of options to develop Overnight Parking Infrastructure in Lairg village. The development of this project would allow visitors to Lairg to responsibly park overnight, dispose of chemical waste, litter, and use fresh water supplies before moving onto their next stop.

LDCI has submitted an application to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. As part of the application LDCI asked for feedback from the community regarding this proposal. An online consultation form was opened on our website on the 16th August and we accepted responses until the 16th September. (The eform survey was publicised on the Lairg Sutherland Facebook page and within the August edition of the Lairg Magazine).

Following recent activity on Facebook, LDCI will reopen the e-form so that those people who didn't participate in the original survey can feed into the process. The feedback form will be available on LDCI's website for people to input their responses on Monday 11th October and will stay open for one month. (There will be a Facebook post to publicise this.)

We would like to receive feedback from as many local people as possible – whether it be positive or negative.

The form will be anonymous but we will request for people to provide their postcode so that we can identify how many respondents are from within the Lairg Community Council area.

LDCI will update the community following the closure of the online consultation on the 11th November. In the meantime, the public are still encouraged to make comments directly to the Highland Council regarding the Community Asset Transfer and the application for Planning Permission should they wish to.

I am happy to take questions on this project via email Chair@lairginitiative.co.uk, but not via social media. The Lairg Sutherland Facebook page is not our page it is a community page and not appropriate for me to use it as a form of communication with anyone who wishes to comment on our project.

This is exactly why I have been asking for a long time for one of the CC members to join my board you would see we what we are doing and be able to offer guidance to myself and my board.

In reply to the statement from the Chair, LMc said that the Lairg Sutherland page on Facebook was set up by LDCI (by MM when on LDCI). If LDCI uses it to communicate with the community this must be a two way street for comments. She stated it is not easy to communicate directly with LDCI, especially for those who do not use the Internet. Others said that in the original information published by LDCI no specific site for the Aires was mentioned. General feeling was that LDCI had failed to liaise sufficiently with the community about the choice of site before proceeding to the pre-Planning stage. There has been no community consultation. Some residents, especially those living near the proposed site, some of whom were present tonight, have grave concerns regarding the future behaviour of campervan owners regarding waste disposal and overspill parking spreading to the football pitch and the wider area at the loch side. AM reiterated fears of the Sailing Club which include the waste disposal issues, strangers around the loch side where the Sailing Club regularly holds meetings with younger children. DM for the Football Club pointed out that older/disabled people regularly park at this site to watch matches from their cars. Possible danger to campervans from stray footballs. AR from Woodend Campsite stated that there are online sites which promote places for campervans to park which could lead to an increase in the numbers attempting to use this one. Issues then arise with campfires, waste disposal etc. SEPA should be concerned regarding the water quality of the loch, especially following a recent case when a child was sent to empty a waster canister directly into the loch. There are other options already available at Falls of Shin, and Woodend Campsite, which has never refused anyone permission to access their facilities for a small fee. Several people proposed the old salt heaps site as being the most appropriate for consideration. JY presented the other side of the argument on behalf of responsible campervan owners. The majority do stay on sites and pay to dispose of waste. The recent comments are offensive to these genuine, responsible people. She does not approve of public money being used to set up this project when local businesses already providing the facilities are left financially unsupported. DW quoted statistics for the use of the facilities at Falls of Shin. Between 8th June and 5th October, there were 272 uses of the waste disposal site at a fee of £3 each (this will rise next year to meet costs). 75 hook-ups were recorded. Many of the waste disposal visits were not overnight stays. These facilities are essential locally, as indicated by the misuse of the public toilets in the local villages which has led to closure until they could be repaired. The Chair brought the discussion to a close stating that he and IT will liaise with LDCI, passing on all the points raised tonight. He reiterated his earlier statement that there should be no verbal or online attacks made on LDCI and that this matter must be dealt with calmly with good communication by all.**AMK/IT Action.**

There were no other AOCB points raised.

Minutes approved 1/12/2021

Item 13. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 1st December at 7.30pm, presumably on Zoom, unless otherwise allowed by THC. tbc.

Item 14. Applications to Lairg Windfarm Community Benefit Fund. At the private session an award of £2,800 was approved to the Lairg Crofters' Show for new storage containers. **MG Action.**

Meeting closed 8.50pm