

Lairg Community Council

Minutes of meeting held on Zoom on Wednesday 15th September 2021 at 7.30pm

Present: Acting Chair Jamie Dick, (JD), Andrew Mackay, Treasurer (AMK), 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: Kaye Hurrion, LDCI Chair (KH), Donna Gilchrist, Matthew and Naomi Brooks, Achany (MB). Alasdair Marshall (AM), David Watson, Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust manager (DW)

Police Scotland: Report received by email

Minutes Secretary: Mary Goulder (MG)

Item 1. Welcome/apologies (as above)/Police report. Acting Chair opened the meeting. Police report noted twenty-six incidents in the last two months: 4 road traffic matters, 3 external agency requests, 3 neighbour disputes, 2 concerns for persons, 2 assist members of the public, 2 planned deer shoots, 1 careless driving, 1 road traffic collision, 1 fixed penalty for speeding, 1 domestic incident, 1 threatening and abusive behaviour, 1 lost property, 1 alarm activation, 1 animals call, 1 vandalism, and 1 attempted house breaking.

Item 2. Adoption of Minutes of June meeting. The Minutes of the June meeting were proposed by Andrew Mackay; seconded by Sandy Allison. **Non-agenda item Matthew Brooks, Glen Cottage, Achany Project.** MB attended to update the CC regarding his progress with his proposed plans for the project which is awaiting approval of the sale of the land by Forestry Land Scotland (FLS) to him. A brief statement from the CC has been requested by FLS to indicate that the CC has no objections in principle to the change of ownership proceeding. Discussion covered that there is a policy in place regarding such sales of small parcels of land. FLS has now stated that a phone call from the CC to their director who is handling the matter will suffice. A private vote regarding the sale achieved a majority having no objection in principle. Chair was appointed by the CC members present to make this call.

Item 5. 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. Cllr Deirdre Mackay had informed JY that a public consultation was to be held in September but no date has been released. **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. AM awaiting news from IT regarding enquiries as to who owns this land. THC has advised that it does not own the land but a THC drawing of the site indicates that it does. KH will check with Alison Magee who was and THC councillor when the jetty was erected. A deed plan shows it. Local information is that it was built for the then County Council. **IT/KH Action.** (6) Water levels in Loch Shin. AM reported very low water levels recently and wondered if SSE can be asked to control this more evenly. The Sailing Club rescue vehicle is vulnerable to damage from rocks when the levels are at this recently low level. AMK advised that the Angling Club has had this issue over many years but SSE has full control and has not been open to discussion in the past.

Item 4. LDCI update. (KH) The report covered seven current projects. (1) Care & Wellbeing. Processing the Memorandum of Agreement with Albyn Housing. (2) Church Hill Wood. New updated information boards have been installed. (3) Ferrycroft playpark. Confirmation received that THC does own the playpark. Discussions ongoing by local councillors and others with Scottish Government regarding the SNP manifesto pledge to allocate £60m to playparks across Scotland. LDCI is investigating other national sources of funding with a view to the improvements including facilities/equipment for the disabled. LDCI is considering talks with SSE regarding the possible use of the Legacy money available being directed towards the playpark project. KH wished to ask Cllr Munro about a recent press article which stated the West and Central Sutherland has not yet identified playparks which could benefit from £100,000 allocated from the Best Placed Investment Fund. **LM Action.** (4) Helping Hands. LDCI continues to support eleven families by delivering supplies from the Food Larder. The HHF heating and white goods grant is still in operation. Applications expected to rise in number as the weather turns colder. (5) Health Walking Group. Aimed at those in the community who would like a gentle walk but have no one to walk with. Group leaders have received training, local publicity will be undertaken with the first walk expected in the next few weeks. (6) Cemetery clean up days. SA and JY were thanked for support and equipment for the last date arranged. Turn out was appreciated but low in numbers. Wider publicity for future events will be considered. (7) Aires. This is at the pre-planning stage and has opened several avenues of communication for locals to express views on the project, resulting so far in over 110 replies with 9 negative ones. KH awaits confirmation of a meeting date with IT to conduct a site visit. **IT Action.** A final point was the request that a representative of the CC should be on the Board of LDCI to help with understanding of the work, progress and difficulties being undertaken. **Agenda item.**

Item 5. Financial report. (DG) The balance in the Treasurer's account stands at £3,650.79. the admin grant of £521.66 from THC was received in July. Outgoing payments since June were to THC £122.50 for rates on the bird hide and £203.36 to Faclan Word Service. 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. **AMK/IT/JY Action.**

Item 6. Planning applications. Nil of note.

Item 7. Bird hide. (SA) SA and IT will send a brief report to SSE outlining the work which needs to be done. JY reported that the SSE liaison meetings are not happening. She asked that IT follow this up and also raise the issue of assistance with work at the bird hide. **SA/IT Action.**

Item 8. Windfarms. (IT) AMK advised that road works for the Dalnessie windfarm are happening at Altnaharra, quiet at Dalnessie.

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 intends to work on the site this month. **JD Action.**

Item 12. Any other competent business. (1) AMK noted the vast amount of overgrown bushes and trees around the loch side. Suggested drawing down funds to clear/cut back as appropriate, hiring a machine if required. Lairg in Bloom committee is also concerned. Views of the loch will soon be obliterated in places. The land around the dam is kept clear but land ownership of the lochside is unknown. Questioned if the Ward Discretionary Fund might be accessed to assist with any costs. JY said there were two people cutting back some of the

growth this week. **JY/LM Action.** (2) DW attended to update the CC regarding concerns in Lairg about the Falls of Shin café/attraction. As the previous operators of the café went into liquidation, that and the following legal issues made it impossible to reopen the café in spite of some expressions of interest. This year the issues in attracting staff and the ongoing uncertainty of Covid became obvious. It was decided the café will not be open in 2021, apart from occasional use for community meetings/events. The burger van in the car park is open almost every day. This venture has given a local young person the opportunity to establish her catering business and this facility should be in place till October. It is hoped then to open the procurement process seeking an operator for the café for 2021 and the longer term. In the meantime the outdoor facilities have been improved, including pathways, and the installation of the electric charging points and chemical waste disposal point.

Item 13. Date and time of next meeting. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 6th October at 7.30pm, presumably on Zoom tbc.

Item 14. Applications to Lairg Windfarm Community Benefit Fund. Email decision which approved £1,700 to Lairg Gala Week was ratified.

Meeting closed 8.55pm