

Durness Community Council Meeting Minutes

Monday 7-00pm 5th February 2024

In the Village Hall

1. Attendance

Chair Don Cambell (DC)
Vice Chair Scott MacPherson (SM)
Secretary Ron Tucker (RT)
Ewan MacRae (EM)
Barbara Sutherland (BS)
Anita Wilson (AW)
Councillor Hugh Morrison (HM) Ex-Officio

Prior to the start of the meeting Barbara (BS) wished to thank the CC for the lovely bouquet of flowers sent to her following her recent bereavement

2. Apologies

None received.

3. Minutes of the last meeting 3 Oct 2023

Passed - Proposed by BS, seconded by DC.

Minutes from the Inaugural CC meeting held on 1st November 2023 passed - proposed by SM seconded by EM.

4. Matters Arising

As Easter falls on the 1st April, the next meeting of the CC will be 8th April.

5. Co-opt members to council.

Anita Wilson proposed as co-opted member (Minutes Secretary)

Ron Tucker proposed as a co-opted member (Secretary)

Both unanimously voted in.

6. Smoo cave road and car park

There was general discussion and concerns raised as to where buses are able and allowed to park in order to drop off passengers for the Smoo Cave. To date, no guidance has been given from the Highland Council. Suggestions were made as to the Highland Council providing designated drop off points and whether a height restriction for camper vans would be appropriate.

Consideration needs to be given to parking in relation to access to the fire hydrant.

Action – to write to the council to ask for proper designation on the road -maybe fire hydrant no parking (HM)

Action to write to the landowner as well (HM)

Action to write to David Boyd (H M)

Further suggestion was that the village hall car park could be utilised. EM noted that the hall committee are working on it and have it in hand.

7. Position of minute secretary and treasurer

Ron proposed that he would take on the day to day responsibilities of Secretary and Anita would take the Minutes of the meetings

The post of Treasurer is still to be filled. The post is central to the running of the CC with a responsibility for managing day to day money, writing cheques etc. However, the share of larger amounts of money generated from various wind-farms will be managed by the Northwest Sutherland Trust. **On the Agenda for the next meeting.**

8. Fire Hydrants.

The problem of pressure and maintenance of fire hydrants has been brought up at various levels but HM noted that nothing been done as yet. It is very important for the safety of everyone that they should be being tested and that this needs to be done as soon as possible.

Action - Scottish water to be contacted (HM)

9. Defibrillators.

The golf club have ordered theirs and have ordered 2 for the village. They need a power source and to be fitted by an electrician. They also need a stone wall for placement. Suggestions for placement are 1 at the shop (possibly on the toilet wall) and 1 at Balnakeil craft village (AW to ask Martina). The Fire Brigade will be responsible for managing all of them. Laid have a defibrillator but its condition and location is not currently known.

Robbie Mackay joined the meeting and voiced the following concerns.

- a) The introduction by the Highland Council of paid spaces for Camper vans at the old tourist building is causing considerable trouble. There has been a notable increase in litter, waste (including human) and a lack of respect for the surrounding environment including private land and nearby residences. The case was made that there is already a large campsite close by and a number of motorhome stop-overs around the village. A request to remove this facility was taken up by HM.

Action – to write to the Highland Council to explain the situation and request that this is de-designated (HM)

b) A new replacement community noticeboard placed on his building would be fine if someone from the council looks after it. RT volunteered.

Action – to cost the replacement of a new notice (RT)

c) The Defibrillator at the shop needs to be relocated. The current one is dangerously near to the petrol pumps.

10. MOD

The next exercise should take place over 4 or 5 days at the end of February – ships only.

11. N.H.S.

It was noted that there are still no midwives in Sutherland – this is far from ideal. Someone has been appointed as the new driver for patient transport – no further details have been given.

12. Police Matters (Police Constable Allan Cameron N0784)

Nothing to report.

13. Roads in general progress

It was noted that many roads have deteriorated because of the extreme weather this winter. On the Capeside a lot of work has been washed away. There are ongoing discussions on how to proceed (HM)

14. Reports.

1. *Durness Community Group*

The Playpark have reached their financial target for the playpark. The plans are currently being approved. Congratulations are in order to Yvonne MacRae and the team for all their efforts!

There is an online survey going on now to share views on local services such as library, transport, countryside rangers etc as the Highland Council seeks to reduce its financial deficit. People are urged to fill it in.

Arrangements to complete the Local Place Plan (due to be completed by September 2024) is on the **agenda for the next meeting**. It can be done in partnership with the Durness Community Group. Other possible contributors/supports could be Fiona Richardson (suggested by HM) and Louise Senior

2. *Geopark*

We have received a full report. We agreed in principle to contribute financially to one of the Geopark's walking guide. **On the Agenda for the next meeting**

3. *Treasurer*

There is currently £9827.79. Money is still to be allocated for the defibrillators and for some work on the memorial.

4. Wind farms

a) Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund and funding in general.

Sallachy – ongoing

Bettyhill phase 2 planning permission has been granted.

Altnaharra has paid out their first tranche of money. £5000 will go to each CC for direct use. A meeting of the North and West Sutherland Trust (DGF is the CC representative) designated that future money will be divided between the 5 councils. Applications for project funding and the criteria for applications will be made available soon. Each CC is responsible for managing applications with the N & WST being responsible for overall scrutiny. Could a development officer be brought in as part of this funding? (HM)

Thanks, were unanimously expressed to the Chairperson for his tireless work in bringing this to fruition.

15. Highland Council

Budget is the main topic just now and how to cut debts. Of note is the fact that the provision of bins is to change. This means reducing the size of the black bin and the increase to 2 blue bins to encourage greater recycling.

16. Planning

Kris Scott's planning application has been approved. Surface water in and around his buildings and grounds is becoming an issue.

17. Any other business. Christmas lights remain on the agenda for next time. A small committee drawn from CC and others will be formed and have a separate bank account (or line item on the CC accounts)

Action - Hugh to continue to take this forward. To be on the **agenda for the next meeting.**

18. Date of next meeting.

4th March 7.00 pm

These minutes approved on