

Dores and Essich Community Council Chairperson's Report for 2022 -2023

11/07/23

The past year has been very busy for the CC and given ongoing challenges, promises to be even busier in the next 12 months.

Looking back.

Firstly, I'd like to highlight the positive outcomes for the community.

We now have a new water main through village, achieved with a minimum of disruption given it's scope.

The Community trust and Highland Council between them acknowledged the CC's plea about the need to scrape back the edges of the School path and jointly funded this. A great example of what cooperation can bring about and with excellent input from Cllr David Fraser.

Our unanimous decision to award Jamie Forrester our inaugural Citizen of the Year. This generated really excellent newspaper coverage and generated a very positive image of our community. Jamie's selfless actions and spirit carries on and is an example to us all.

I would like to invite any nominations for our next Citizen of the year 2023 – I urge everyone in the Community to think about it.

After a sterling effort by Robin and Gavin, the important line of Buoys marking where motorised craft should restrict their speed when inside, are now in place and should ensure greater safety for swimmers and other loch users, as well as reduce considerably the noise nuisance in the village. Another volunteer task well done and greatly appreciated.

Dores cemetery extension was finally approved on the 5th July and this enables the new road access into the Affordable Homes planned for the Glebe, so things should get moving on this soon.

The redevelopment of Aldourie Castle and Steadings is finally complete. This has left the locality with easily the best Castle in all of Scotland and we can enjoy it's aspect freely due to the cooperation between the CC, the Castle's owners and management and HC's Access Officer Stuart Easthaugh.

Our thanks should also go out to Lavinia for arranging a great day out for those of us when the doors were flung open last week.

Looking presently.

We have a number of fairly serious issues now partially resolved, but needing future cooperation and agreement.

The Public Toilet at the Inn continues to absorb a lot of time and effort into keeping it open and funded. With great help From Cllr David Fraser we were able to overturn HC's decision to withdraw it's comfort Sheme funding and this is now available for a 3 year period.

The Community Trust and ourselves are jointly contributing the shortfall in the meantime, but no longer term agreement beyond the end of August is yet in place. There remains substantial

differences of opinion over the contractual terms between the CC and the Trust.

If resolved, this would give us enough time to seek Government help through it's Tourist infrastructure funding and other avenues in order to have a sustainable alternative able to cope with the sheer number of visitors to the beach at peak times and all year round.

If an agreement can't be reached, we will see the closure of this facility once again and a return to the serious problems which were experienced earlier in the year – we simply cannot allow this to happen.

Unresolved:

The Beach: The issues that everybody is aware of include litter, broken glass, protection of the beach's natural environment, and fires which have become more obvious and pronounced.

Tim Francis HC's Warden has suggested setting up a working group involving the CC, landowners and HC. Let's follow that one up.

IMFDP: The local development plan process could not have been a more dispiriting process with our views completely ignored.

However the Scottish Government has given us 12 months to prepare a Local Place Plan which will become a more powerful consideration before HC's Development plan is decided upon by them.

There is real hope here and we need to get our socks off and find professional help and funding of the approx 10K cost.

Parking: The lack of consensus is delaying any improvement and we are heading towards residents only on the main road. Just what indirect effect this will have is anyone's guess. More public transport can only help.

Traffic: - the upcoming speed limit of 20 mph within Dores is imminent and will surely make the situation safer. The long planned village improvement scheme looks fairly doomed. The promised speed limit of 40 mph through Scaniport appears to have been withdrawn with no credible explanation.

Here at Torbreck we welcome the new cycle path linking the northern end of the cycle path from Dores and the Ness Castle Junction.

However we are still bewildered by the 60mph limit on the Torbreck Farm road as far as the Big burn bridge, this is unbelievable given it's single track and currently used by 5 schoolchildren who cycle to School. This is wholly unacceptable.

ILI: No definite information from them regarding a start date. My opinion remains that they acted in bad faith by offering us a derisory annual payment, and the Scottish Government are also to blame for their toothless approach to Community Benefit from Pump storage.

400kV line through Scaniport: We must continue to fight for undergrounding or the alternative of a subsea cable route.

The Future:

Extended superfast broadband is about to reach the north eastern parts of the CC area with Scaniport and Torbreck now fully fibre cabled.

The UK All Party Parliamentary Group on the Green New Deal

One of the report's recommendations is for a so-called right of local supply, as seen in some other European countries, which would incentivise such systems through improved access to the grid, and assistance with providing power to local people. - We should be investigating this for ourselves.

Tourist tax: If we are to be able to fund tourist infrastructure this should be supported..This is a norm in most other European countries.

Drought: The recent event in Torness and the water level in Loch Ness should remind us that the climate emergency is not just something that's happening elsewhere. You are hereby warned not to sleepwalk into a dangerous future.

Finally

I would like to offer my sincere thanks to all of my fellow CC members for their effort and common sense approach to the challenges and opportunities that we have faced this last year, and those that we will continue to face in the coming years. However more sharing of the load is required!

I would especially like to thank my vice chair Colin for his outstanding efforts and sensible counsel during the past year, without which I would never have been able to cope.

Also to Simon for his continually reliable actions as secretary and keeper of the Community website.

To Nikki for her difficult task of juggling the treasurer's role and a new baby.

To Ella for her counsel and help in handling the donations for the toilet.

To Steve for his help with the donations.

To Anne for her fantastic efforts in continuing as our minutes secretary under trying circumstances given the sheer volume of items we have had to discuss.

To Cllr David Fraser whom has restored my faith in Highland Councillors through his regular meetings, communications, and efforts on our behalf.

Not forgetting Cllr Chris Balance who has stood in when David couldn't and has also been the giver of good and practical advice.

My very best wishes to you all and to the wider community, and my special thanks to those who choose to attend our meetings meetings and keep us on our toes.

Regards

John Martin