

Dores and Essich Community Council
Minutes of Community Council Meeting on 13/05/24 at Dores Parish Hall

Members Present : Chairperson J Martin Vice Chairperson Colin McPherson, Treasurer John Mackenzie, Ella Macrae, Claire Stirling, Duncan Manson, Simon Pillatt, Cllr David Fraser,

Members of Community present: Claire Cuthbertson, Fiona King, Iain Cameron

Apologies : Anne Maclaren Minutes Secretary

JM opened the meeting and asked for approval of previous minutes: proposed by CM and seconded by CS

3. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting

3.1 Statkraft Pumped Storage Scheme:

JM asked if anyone in the meeting had noticed any activity in the area by Statkraft: noted that there had been people carrying out survey and scoping work but no issues reported.

JM stated that Statkraft are initiating a traffic survey and that the only outstanding issue was there are currently 5 planning applications which could also affect the cumulative traffic volume and what effect this could have. As of time of meeting he has not heard back from Statkraft.

Cllr DF went on to say that there are a number of schemes in the area due to peak in 2026 and is too big an issue for Highland Council to ignore and they will be convening a 'super liaison' group to address this, not to take anything away from the local liaison groups.

JM said he was disappointed some of the traffic conditions had been dropped in the planning appeal that were a retraction of Highland Councils comments in the original application.

CM noted that a recent meeting had been convened by Kate Forbes MSP in relation to all the schemes and traffic issues that will arise. Cllr DF said that in talks it was suggested that vehicles from each different scheme could be marked or numbered with a scheme-specific code to allow reporting in the event of works vehicles breaching traffic conditions.

3.2 Community Benefit

Discussions are ongoing with Statkraft. A meeting is to be set up with the Development Trust and Grantscape to discuss possible structuring of a body to receive and administer community benefit funding.

3.3 Community Action Plan/ Local Place Plan

CM reported that the Community Action Plan survey was being analysed and should be complete by the end of May. It is proposed that the Local Place Plan work will follow, subject to funding.

3.5 Affordable Housing /Cemetery Extension

There has been no update re. the affordable housing project. Cllr DF said he would find out who is the HC contact following John McHardy's retirement.

CM had received information from HC that the cemetery extension road entrance was out to tender and the HC had committed to carrying out the extension works during 2024.

3.7 Village Parking

An email was received trying to set up a meeting with CC members, Cllr CB and Heather Masterton of HC: agreed that a reply will be sent to HM to setup a meeting in the village to discuss.

JM asked if the intention is still to seek a temporary planning permission for parking in the village. All agreed and JM will seek further information about the process.

3.8 Scaniport Road Safety

CM reported that all the road signs have been installed at the Scaniport 40mph zone. Verges are in process of being cleared and remaining work is to carry out road markings. General consensus is the traffic is travelling slower through Scaniport now. Concern remains about speeding through Dores.

3.9 Dores Beach

CS reported that the CC clean-up on the beach by some members of the community organised by CS was successful and collected about 30 bags of rubbish. The gardening team from Aldourie Estate also attended and helped as there was a lot of scrap metal found on the beach area in the bushes. CS had talked to Tim (the Ranger) who is now being retained but will cover all of the Highlands due to budget cuts. A discussion followed re.the absence of a full time ranger: might it be possible to find funding for a 3 month cover for ranger service for Dores and to approach Statkraft or SSE for help? Agreed that JMac would ask Aldourie if they might act as employer if funding could be found.

Discussion took place re. previous funding application to Great Glen Fund (unsuccessful, but could reapply). JM will also enquire to the Development Trust about funding.

The CC had been informed by a local resident of signs on the beach which had been vandalised: these have since been reinstalled by the ranger.

3.10 Path to School

Noted that the culvert near the school has been repaired. JMac remarked that the whole path is really in a state of disrepair and will probably need renewed: agreed that CM will write to John Taylor at HC.

3.11 Public Toilet

Development Trust funding application made. CC noted negative comments received about the state of the public toilet: JM will contact the Inn to discuss.

3.12 Citizen of the Year award

Actioned by JM: young CS was reported to be delighted with his award.

3.13 Letter to Mrs Jappy

Query raised as to whether a letter had been sent yet? JM apologised that this had not been done and would speak to her when he attended the Coffee Morning.

3.14 Millcroft Flooding

The land is owned by Aldourie Estate and they have agreed to pay for a new drainage ditch which will be monitored whilst it progresses.

3.15 Care Provision in Dores

Cllr DF talked about care in the community. There are a lot of problems with the service provision, one reason is its not well paid making recruitment very difficult. He went on to say too many people end up in long term care home stays. More beneficial for a number of reasons for people to be in their own homes. It has to change and more support for care in the community is a core priority for HC.

Neighbouring communities have care provided by Sunflower. They are willing to look at providing this service in our community but the barrier is lack of people to do the job. Sunflower say you need commercial car insurance for employees using their own vehicles to travel to the village as it's work related: this is also an issue.

Cllr DF said that NHS Highland is not in a position to offer this service

JM said there had been no response to the poster appeal for people interested in working in the care provision in the village.

IC suggested JM speak to Lorien Cameron-Ross as she may have some relevant experience.

CS who has extensive experience in care provision gave an insight that attracting/ retaining care workers in our area is hard due to the fact due to shortage of candidates (down to wages and it being a vocation) and anyone coming into the area will be overwhelmed as they will have their existing care commitments.

Cllr DF said there was a budget cut in care home provision but a £20 million budget for provision of care at home in an attempt to shift the provision from regional to local. The challenge is to recruit carers.

Cllr DF discussed the concept of SDS (Self Directed Support) for providing care in the community at a local level. HC could pay for this but if staff can't be found then it's not a solution. Whereas in the past you could employ a family member this is no longer the case.

JM enquired if SDS could be applied for from Inverness. Cllr DF agreed to investigate further.

3.16 Visit Inverness Loch Ness/ Changeworks

Visit Inverness Loch Ness to be invited to attend the upcoming meeting (possibly after AGM) to discuss tourism, parking etc.

Changeworks helps people with information about making houses more thermally efficient: invite to September meeting.

3.17 Torr Gardens Steps

Confirmed that these have now been repaired by HC.

3.18 Dores Inn Playpark

Playpark is overgrown as is the play area. JM will discuss further with Dores Inn as landowner.

3.19 SSEN Beaulieu to Peterhead HV Proposals

CM confirmed that he had submitted comments to SSEN indicating preference for cable routing to north of Cullaird (through the woods). Noted that a further presentation is due to take place in the Hall. Ongoing.

4. Police report

No report received. Understood this is now delivered via 'Community Beats' newsletter (next issue imminent).

5. Planning

CM reported that there was only one application registered in our area since the last meeting (a stand alone seasonal housing unit at Duntelchaig) but that there were no matters of concern for CC.

The impending planning application to extend the SSEN substation at Knocknagael was discussed: JM to check status.

6. Treasurer's Report

Since last report CC now has £7264.50 in bank, nothing outstanding.

JM requested extract from accounts to show the cost and revenue of public toilet.

EM has paid the money received in donations for use of the toilet into the bank.

IC enquired what the Etape donation will be used for. JM confirmed an earlier agreement that half would go to the Hall Committee, the remainder retained in CC funds.

EM enquired about the payment for the prescription charges. There has been a delay recently due to change of treasurer and bank authorisation taking an inordinate time. SP will re-forward recent email.

Agreed that EM may purchase plants for the planets in the village.

7. Correspondence

7.1 A letter had been received about the buoys in the bay, requesting relocation. At time of installation the CC decided on balance to have them installed where they were due to years of previous issues with boats, jet skis and risk to beach users. Whilst having some sympathy with the request, it was resolved that the buoys should remain in their current position.

8. Any Other Business

8.1 The verges on Dores road need clearing. CC also asked about the car park next to the Church: since recent flooding it's in a mess, with verges strewn in stone and fences fallen over. Can the HC attend to this? Cllr DF agreed to check responsibility but suggested we raise it when meeting Heather Masterson about parking issues.

8.2 IC asked about the billboard on the green between Strath Gardens and Torr Gardens. It is understood that it was a sign made by the kids at the school when the Scottish Water project was in progress. It was suggested to write to Gavin Steele to request removal but IC offered to have it removed if no objection (none made).

8.3 EM asked if a new notice board can be bought if the existing one is falling apart. All agreed and DM to look into costings.

8.4 EM also raised the issue of camper vans emptying chemical toilets into the Loch and parking outside the houses on bottom road overnight since Easter. CM commented that this is a Highland-wide problem for which no immediate solution seemed to be available.

8.5 Concern had been raised regarding dogs not on a leash causing disturbance in the Inn car park and on the beach and a request was made for signs to be posted. It was suggested that the Dog Warden be consulted for advice on suitable wording: CS agreed to follow up.

8.6 CS went on to suggest a box (phone box?) be sited on the land where the sign is between Strath and Torr Gardens for a community library. Cllr DF agreed that this had worked in other rural communities but to be aware of location so that books don't get vandalised. Consensus of CC was that it was a good idea and should be followed up.

9. The meeting closed at 9.35.

Date of next meeting and AGM 15th July 2024