

Minutes (unapproved) of meeting of the Applecross Community Council

held on 14th March 2006 in the Community Hall at 7.30pm

Present: Murdo Finlayson, Ishbel Ferguson, Ruairdh Cameron, Jonathan Hedges, Gerry McPartlin

Councillor Ewen MacKinnon

Four members of the public

Elections

Following the resignation of the **chairman** the Secretary **invited** Councillor Ewan MacKinnon to take the Chair and oversee the election of a new Chairman, following which Murdo Finlayson was elected; proposed by Ruairdh Cameron and seconded by Ishbel Ferguson. Councillor MacKinnon then relinquished the Chair and the meeting proceeded.

Councillor MacKinnon and the new Chairman then expressed their appreciation of Annie MacDonald's efforts on behalf of the Community Council.

The Chairman sought nominations for co-option to the vacancy created in the Council and Tim Williams was proposed by Jonathan Hedges, seconded by Gerry McPartlin. There being no other nominations, Tim Williams was co-opted and asked to join the Community Council and participate in the meeting.

Treasurer's Report: balance £1437.83

Approval of and matters arising from previous minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 14th February were approved. Proposed by Ishbel Ferguson and seconded by Ruairdh Cameron.

Public Toilets: from the end of this month, the cleaning of the toilets will again be carried out by a contractor working on behalf of Highland Council.

Paper Recycling: it was noted that the bin was still not in place. This is to be investigated.

Clachan Church: the cleaning day will be Sat 25th March at 2.00pm. Volunteers to help will be greatly appreciated. Cleaning equipment and materials will be provided.

Out of Hours Medical Cover: The Community Health Partnership (CHP) cancelled the meeting with the community representatives, planned for 22 February. They have yet to suggest another date.

Agenda

Report on meeting "Employment in Wester Ross": this was organised by Lochcarron and District Business Association and chaired by Dr David Murray.

In his introduction, Councillor Ewen MacKinnon talked of the decline in major employment opportunities in the area. In recent times, these had been industries such as forestry, Kishorn Yard and fish farming. Despite this, unemployment in Wester Ross is low, due to the fact that people choose to leave the area to find work. The effect of this is falling numbers in schools and a proportionally older population.

The purpose of the meeting was to highlight the concern about this growing trend and develop strategies to combat this, in order to promote healthy, sustainable communities.

There were speakers from several organisations and businesses. Some of the main points were:

Colin Simpson of Highland Council talked of recognising the importance of tourism and the need to offer a quality product due to competition. However it was noted that this should not be at the expense of local development as visitors value a 'working community'. Short breaks are a growth area, as well as using events or new activities to attract visitors. Concern was noted that the jobs provided by tourism were generally seasonal.

Bob Kindness of the Seafield Centre discussed the restocking of the River Carron and how fish numbers were now improving. He talked of rise in the popularity of the sport and identified teaching fishing as a growth area, as well of the continuing benefits of fishing bringing visitors to the area.

Sandra Holmes of the Scottish Land Fund talked of grants for funding local community projects, using the example of an island community, buying and then running a local shop that was threatened with closure.

John Tomlinson of the Recruit Project talked of grants and support being available for businesses to develop seasonal jobs into a full time posts and encouraging them to extend their season.

Lesley Lindley of Skye Foodline explained how the funding of a van to provide links between producers and customers had stimulated small-scale agricultural production. The project now hopes to be self-funding.

After the speakers there was an opportunity for questions and concerns from the audience. Some of the following points were made:

The negative effect on employment in the area due to insufficient affordable housing was noted, the large amount of tradesmen from outside the area working locally being used as an example. Councillor MacKinnon felt that some progress had been made on this, by the building of affordable homes and further schemes were being considered.

Balancing the needs of those who want growth and development in communities with those who do not.

The potential opportunities from the development of Kishorn Yard.

The need for projects to be encouraged from a local level. **Report on**

Wester Ross Joint Community Council meeting

The implications of the boundary changes in the Wester Ross Wards were discussed.

The Wards are to be merged, with the area being enlarged to encompass Lochalsh and Strathpeffer, and will be represented jointly by four, instead of the previously five individual councillors. Concern was noted at the possible politicisation of the process, as candidates would need the support of a political party in order to canvas the entire area and that the larger areas of population would have more influence in elections. It is also proposed to reduce the number of Service Points from 32 to 20.

It was generally felt that these changes were a retrograde step for rural communities such as ourselves. Joint CC's are to write to Sandy Cameron expressing their concerns and dissatisfaction.

The effect of the changes on the funding of Community Councils was undefined and clarification was going to be sought; in particular the impact on the current discretionary budgets of individual Councillors.

Proposed Marine National Park: the feeling of the meeting was that information was decidedly scarce and that given the plethora of existing designations was there a case for yet another one.

Main problems identified were 1) What exactly it would be. 2) How would the areas be defined? 3) What would the benefits be? 4) What restrictions would be involved?

There are also proposals to change the local enterprise council from RACE to HIE.

Any other business

Planning applications:

Amendment to previous application at Upper Toscaig. An interest was declared by a Community Councillor, who then left the meeting while the application was being discussed. The application was noted.

Applecross Inn. Application noted.

Next meeting: Tues 12th April 7.30pm Applecross Community Hall including the AGM

Agenda items to the secretary by Mon 3rd April