

Applecross Community Council

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Minutes of Meeting 14th October 2009

Present: Ali Brown, Ewen Gillies, Ali Goldthorpe, Janet MacDonald, Tim Williams, Ali Macleod, Alison Macleod

In attendance: 1 member of the public

Apologies: Audrey Sinclair, PC Joanna MacKinnon

1) Minutes of previous meeting & matters arising

Rev Tim Daplyn asked for the minutes of the last meeting to be changed, removing the sentence "These bodies look on events like the Bealach Mor as purely commercial and potentially dangerous" as he felt it was inappropriate for him to appear to represent the views of the cycling organisations. It was agreed to remove this sentence.

The minutes were then proposed by Ewen and seconded by Ali Brown.

Wester Ross Health Group Meeting: Caty MacLennan (on behalf of the Health Care Association) and Marie Claude Joly represented Applecross at this meeting.

Highland Small Communities Housing Trust: Ewen attended the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust AGM. They don't have a lot of money but they do have land.

Water Leak: Alison M phoned Scottish Water concerning water lying around a patch on the road outside the FP Manse where a previous leak had been sorted. She was told it was unlikely to be a leak, but that it would be checked.

Post Meeting Note: Scottish Water has checked the area, and reported that the lying water is the result of a ditch needing attention on the other side of the road, and not a problem with their system. Responsibility for the water and sewage in Applecross has now been passed over to Scottish Water staff in Portree, who are keen to provide as good a service as they can and encourage the Community Council to contact them with any concerns.

2) Financial Report

Opening Balance £3206-25
Closing Balance £3206-25
No Pay ins
No Pay outs
No interest

3) Correspondence

a) Highland Council has sent a report on "A Guide to the Planning System in Scotland" which can be accessed on www.eplanning.scotland.gov.uk

b) Highland Council sent a map of the Applecross Community Council ward, as the first part of the CC review discussed last month. The map reflects the first part of the appendix which is included in the CC constitution, but neither are correct, as they show Cuaig and Fearnamore in the Shieldaig ward. However the second sentence of the constitution says Fearnamore is included. The electoral roll for Applecross includes voters in Fearnamore and Cuaig. Alison M has contacted the organisers of the review to let them know that the map is not correct. Alison will get in touch with Robbie Bain to see if it will be necessary to hold a special general meeting to change the appendix.

Post Meeting Note: Robbie suggests that the best idea would be to attach a copy of the map, once it is corrected (assuming Shieldaig CC agrees), to the constitution, and leave the appendix out. A special general meeting will therefore not be required.

c) Switching to digital- the Community Council has been asked to help to increase awareness of the change over to digital TV. Alison M will return the form asking for more literature to distribute.

4)Applecross Post Office

The Post Office Service was resumed in Applecross on Monday 12/10/09 and on its first day it had twenty one customers. Ali & Seonag would like to thank everyone for their support and the Community Council would like to encourage everyone to use the service in the hope that the Post Office Limited will agree that longer opening hours are justified. However Charles Kennedy had written to pass on information he had received from the Royal Mail Group which stated that it would require to see at least a doubling of the “current customer session figures of 115 per week”. Mr Kennedy wants to hear the response of the Community Council and Applecross residents to this before he pursues it any further. All agreed that the figure of 115 customer sessions a week at the Post Office (almost seven and hour) was not a credible one and that it would not be realistic to expect the community to be able to double it. Alison M will write to Mr Kennedy stating this. Audrey Sinclair wishes the Post Office all the best.

Post office Hours will be:

Monday	9.00am -12.00pm
Wednesday	1.00pm - 4.00pm
Thursday	9.00am -12.00pm
Friday	9.00am- 12.00pm

5)Housing

Ali and Alison M went to the Ward Forum in Poolewe where the topic was housing and representatives of the HSCHT, Highland Council and Albyn Housing attended. All spoke of the huge difficulties faced in providing sufficient affordable housing to meet demand. HC’s Tracey Urray reported that there were 519 on the housing register for Wester Ross last year, and only 19 houses became vacant over the year. Wester Ross has the biggest gap in the Highlands between house prices and wages earned by local people, meaning that there is even more need than in most areas for affordable housing. The population of Wester Ross is projected to grow by 15% by 2031, which will create even more demand. The recent reduction in government spending on housing means there are huge challenges ahead for all those involved in providing affordable housing.

The housing list is run on a needs based system. Houses are allocated according to the needs of those on the list, not the length of time they have been on the list. Highland Councillors are never involved in decisions about allocating housing.

Albyn Housing takes a slightly different look at housing allocation; although needs are still important, they are also able to take the need to live in a community into account.

Highland Council is able to take privately owned housing on and manage, maintain and let them on behalf of the owners. The rent levels will not compete on a weekly basis with what could be made from letting properties as holiday houses, but the fact that rent is paid year round would partially make up for that.

Morven Taylor of HSCHT has information on a number of potential housing sites referred to her by the Community Council here, and is assessing them to see which are likely to be the most affordable to develop and the likeliest to get planning permission. A housing surgery was held here about two years ago, which clearly established need, but this needs to be repeated to bring it up to date, and to include people who are in adequate rented housing already, but would like the chance to find out about moving on to ownership or partial ownership of affordable housing, so that we can accurately assess what kind of housing is needed here. A burden would be imposed on such housing to ensure it remains in the affordable sector if sold.

6)Public Toilets

The Community Council would like to keep the public toilets open again over this winter. Last year £700.00 was given from the Highland Councillors’ discretionary budget. Ewen will apply for discretionary funding. Alison M will contact Anna to check that she wishes to carry on as cleaner.

7)Broadband Problems

Although broadband problems are frustrating, the Community Council reluctantly decided that they were unlikely to have any influence on the situation. Alison M had spoken to BT Headquarters but, although they apologised, they seem to have no intention of doing anything to improve the service to this area.

8)ALPS

Ali M attended the most recent ALPS meeting where details of many of the projects planned for year one were discussed. There was a lot of concern about the large amount of interpretative boards planned for the area by the development officer and it was agreed that the number suggested would be reduced considerably. The community will have influence over the type and amount of interpretation used during the final three year phase of the scheme, when the projects will be implemented.

Many of the projects for years two and three are not worked up in any detail. Work to be done to the woodlands up the glen is particularly vague. Although if successful, ALPS would bring nearly £2 million to Applecross, the potential impact on the community of the projects does not seem to reflect that, though it is clear that some of the projects, particularly those run by the Historical Society and Archaeological Society, as well as the restoration of Clachan Church and a new south deer fence, will be very welcome.

With the submission of this bid due on 2nd November, there was still a lot of work to be done and funding to be raised.

The next ALPS meeting to discuss how the implementation of the project will be managed will be held on the 19th of November.

9)A.O.B

Ewen had heard that the Bealach may not be gritted over the winter months. Ewen is going to get in touch with Brian Stout for more information. The next Ward Forum on 14th November at Marybank is focussing on TEC services, and would be worth attending to find out more about the winter road maintenance budget.

Date of next meeting is 10th November @ 7.30pm