

Applecross Community Council

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www.applecrosscommunity.org.uk

Minutes of Meeting 8th September 2009

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

In attendance: Councillor Audrey Sinclair, Councillor Jean Urquhart, Robbie Bain (Ward Manager) and 4 members of the public

Apologies: PC Joanna MacKinnon

1. Minutes of Previous Meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were accepted, proposed by Janet, seconded by Ali Brown.

Wild Camping: The meeting to discuss wild camping had been arranged and cancelled twice. Janet, Ali Goldthorpe and Ali Brown all expressed interest in attending it. Alison suggested that they should arrange a meeting with Archie themselves. Ali Macleod plans to get the web addresses of the wild camping websites which recommend Applecross Bay as a suitable place for wild camping and write a message from the community council asking wild campers to behave responsibly.

Wester Ross Health Group Meeting: The Health Care Association offered to send Caty MacLennan and Sue Grocock as representatives to the meeting in Achnasheen on 17th September to discuss the idea of forming a Wester Ross Health Group to monitor and influence wider health care provision. Marie Claude Joly had already offered to go to represent the community council and is still keen to do so. They will all ensure that the doctors and other medical staff are kept informed on and consulted about the work of the group, as well as keeping the Community Council up to date.

White lines and Barriers on the Bealach: We at last have new white lines and barriers are currently being installed. Thanks to Audrey for her efforts to get these things sorted out.

2. Financial Report

The balance is £3260.25. The Highland Council annual grant of £1053.07 is now in the account. The only invoice paid was for web hosting at £22.99.

It was agreed to increase the mileage allowance for Community Councillors attending meetings on behalf of the community from 25 pence a mile to 40 pence a mile, to reflect the increase in the price of fuel over the years. The secretary's honorarium will increase from £250 to £300.

3. Correspondence

- Clare Munday, co-ordinator of West Coast Recycling, wrote to thank Applecross residents for supporting the plastics recycling so wholeheartedly, especially Ali Brown and Peter Fraser. Unfortunately the service has had to close, as it was no longer feasible for volunteers to run it and not possible to put it on a more business-like footing. At the moment the nearest place to take plastic is Dingwall, but it is hoped that we will receive blue bins before too long.

- The head teachers of Kinlochewe, Shieldaig, Applecross, Lochcarron and Torridon Primaries sent a copy of a letter written to Highland Council suggesting a peripatetic janitor should be employed to service all the schools in the area, thus saving the time head teachers currently spend organising workmen (often from the East coast) to sort what are often relatively minor problems.
- The Highland Small Communities Housing Trust AGM is taking place in Inverness on 25th September. Ewen will attend.
- The next Ward Forum is in Poolewe on 28th September and the topic is housing. Alison M hopes to attend.
- Highland Council plans to agree a new scheme for Community Councils by 2010 to replace the eight existing schemes. This follows the publication of a Model Scheme by the government which can be accessed at <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Government/local-government/CommunityCouncils>. The review will include three phases of public consultation, the first of which starts this month and which invites suggestions on the area and composition of community councils.
- Highland Council are seeking comments from members of the public on their report on the main issues in the Highland wide Local Development Plan. The report can be accessed on <http://www.highland.gov.uk/developmentplans> . A hard copy is available at the Schoolhouse.
- SNH are holding a consultation on the future of Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve, starting with a meeting at Kinlochewe Village Hall on Tuesday 15th September at 7.00. Management documents are available at www.nnr-scotland.org.uk .

4. Cycle Challenge

Ali Macleod has attended two meetings concerning the Cycle Challenge over the last few weeks, the first was in Kinlochewe and included the organisers, police and the ambulance service. At this it was agreed after heated discussion to hold a further meeting before the September event to discuss how to improve safety for that event. Wider issues will be discussed at yet another meeting in a few weeks time.

The safety meeting took place in Lochcarron eight days before the event. Ali asked for several improvements (larger numbers to be worn by cyclists for ID purposes, more marshals on the coast road, and warning signs at all the most dangerous points on the coast road) but his requests were not met positively by the organisers.

He also attended the Shieldaig Community Council meeting to explain the reasons Applecross Community Council had withdrawn its support. Shieldaig CC is in full support of the event.

150 members of the community in Applecross have been asked their views on the Cycle Challenge.

Ninety of these would like to see the events stopped, and of the thirty who are supportive, only nine were happy with the way the events are run at the moment. Another thirty expressed no strong views on the issue. If anyone who hasn't already been asked wishes to express their views, please speak to any of the Community Councillors.

Tim Daplyn, who has a lot of experience as a cyclist competing at a high level, explained that serious cyclists don't approve of this type of event, which is unlicensed and outside the remit of the International Cycling Federation or the International Cycling Union. At events under the control of these organisations

cyclists are always identifiable and can be disqualified during the race by a marshal or member of the police for any misdemeanour. The cyclists are not insured by the organisers, but are advised to take out their own insurance. Tim pointed out that this may not stand up in court, furthermore, a cyclist injured in such an event may seek to sue not only the organisers, but also the Council and Community Councils which had agreed to the events going ahead.

Community Councillors agreed that as it was clear that the majority of the community would like to see the events ended, and the organisers did not seem interested in working with the community in a positive way, they should make it clear that they would like to see the events stopped, especially in light of the information Tim had just given.

Robbie pointed out that Highland Council would have to try to accommodate both sides, and to listen to the views of the other Community Councils affected. Discussions on the future of the events will continue over the next few months until 1st December when the organisers would start accepting entrants for next years events, if it was agreed that they would be allowed to continue.

Alison M will write to Highland Council to explain the problems in full so that the Councillors and others are well informed when the time comes to make the decision. She will ask the local doctors and the fire brigade to give their views in writing too.

5. Applecross Post Office

Many people made the effort to write in during the consultation to ask for the hours to be increased. As a result the Post Office has offered to add two hours to the ten stated in the consultation. Ali Brown has been told that if after a few months there is evidence that the service is being well used, the hours may be increased further. The new service will start on Monday, 12th October, and will be open Monday 9-12, Wednesday 1-4, Thursday 9-12 and Friday 9-12. The Community Council thanks all who wrote in during the consultation and urges the community to make good use of the Post Office in the hope that we will be offered more hours before long.

6. ALPS

Alison M attended two more steering group meetings since the last CC meeting.

Progress is being made in drawing up the details of the projects, especially those which will take place in the first year of the project.

Major funding applications have been made, or are about to be made, to the ERDF, SRDP and LEADER. There is still quite a funding gap but the Development Officer is approaching various trusts etc for assistance. The HLF mentor who visited recently remarked that of the many Landscape Partnership Schemes she had visited, ALPS was having the most difficult time attracting match funding.

The application has to be submitted by 2nd November, by which time all the match funding for the first year of the project should have been identified and applied for. The result will be known by the beginning of April, and if successful, ALPS will be given permission to go ahead 6-8 weeks after that.

There is a large element of training to be included in the project, including training in dry-stone dyking (the trainees would be offered employment opportunities later on in the project), path laying, land

management, heritage and archaeological skills, use of chainsaws to build log cabins, silviculture, interpretation skills etc. Members of the steering group expressed concern that due to the very small population in Applecross and the limited spare time people have, there may not be a very good take up of some of these training opportunities. It seems strange that there has been no consultation with the community as a whole about training needs or wishes at any stage. It was also suggested that it would be worthwhile finding out if anybody locally (possibly a school leaver, or someone planning to leave school in the next 2 or 3 years and keen to find training and work that would give them a chance of staying in the area) would be interested in a year long accredited course which would enhance future employment potential. A questionnaire is to be sent out to Applecross residents before the application is submitted to find out what training people would be interested in.

Concern was expressed both at the steering group meeting and the community council meeting about the lack of information provided by ALPS for the community. Very few members of the community know much about it as a result. The plan is to put up an ALPS notice board soon which will give up to date information, and to hold a public meeting at about the time of the submission, and an open day in the spring if the HLF funding is awarded.

7. Renewable Energy

Applecross Community Company has been working with Community Energy Scotland to progress a feasibility study on potential hydro projects on eight rivers in Applecross. The Applecross Trust and grazings committees have agreed in principal to these studies going ahead.

Ali M attended a CES conference in Stirling recently which provided a huge amount of information and useful contacts. The problem for Applecross (as with many communities in the North West who are hoping to develop renewable energy projects to earn an income for their community) is that the local grid is in very poor condition, while there is not sufficient capacity further away from Applecross to carry the electricity south. The Community Company can submit an application to SSE to have the system upgraded, and apply for SRDP funding so as to be able to contribute towards the costs. This would have benefits for the whole community as the electrical system would have more capacity and be much more reliable.

The process will be time consuming and complicated and will not happen quickly, but the income even a relatively small hydro scheme could bring to the community would be very useful in improving community owned assets and providing community services. The community would be balloted to ensure the majority is happy for such a development to go ahead.

8. AOB

BT Development: BT's most recent development is felt to be particularly ugly. We will write to ask if anything could be done to improve its appearance.

Water Leak: Water is escaping from a patch on the road at the FP Manse. This is an area where repair work had been carried out before. Alison will let Scottish Water know.

Date of Next Meeting: Tuesday 13th October. The AGM will take place first, starting at 7.30. Ali Goldthorpe will take over as secretary at that meeting for the next six months.