

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 27th February 2017 at 8.00pm in Scourie Village Hall

**Present:** - Mr Donald Fisher - Chair, Mr Neil MacDonald - Vice-Chair, Mr Alistair Mackay - Treasurer, Mrs Julie Allen - Secretary, Mr Julian Pearce, Cllr. Hugh Morrison, Mrs V Crowsley - Minutes

**Apologies:** - Mr Angus Mackay and Mr George Leligdowicz. The Chairman, with great regret informed the meeting of the resignation of Angus MacKay with immediate effect, stating that Angus has been a most valuable and knowledgeable member of the Committee and will be sorely missed. He expressed his deep gratitude to Angus for the contribution and hard work undertaken on behalf of the community.

**Minutes of the previous meeting:** - Following an agreed minor amendment, approval was proposed by Julian Pearce and seconded by Alastair MacKay.

**Matters arising:** - None

**Police Business:** - PC George Silcock reported on 4 matters

- There has been no response to the malicious vandalism to a Scourie property. There are currently no suspects for this incident.
- A house break-in occurred in Durness in the early hours of 8th February whereby numerous items were taken. The offenders stayed in a nearby B&B and were apprehended by police the same day. They have subsequently admitted to numerous crimes both in the Durness area and elsewhere in the country.
- During the last reporting period there have been a number of sightings of suspicious persons and vehicles in the North West Sutherland area. These are likely to be opportunist thieves and the police would like to encourage vigilance and reporting of any such incidents.
- There is a new police officer in Lochinver; he is PC Matt Stringer.

**Highland Council -**

- *Planning Applications:* - Permission is being sought by EE for a new transmission mast at Achfary.
- *Crash barrier repairs:* - Repairs have commenced; wooden posts are being replaced by metal ones and new panels inserted as required.

**Consultation on the Future of the Scottish Planning System:** - It was generally felt that the plethora of emails emanating from the Scottish Govt. via the various departments of T.H.C. are in general difficult to understand with excessive use of in-house jargon and agency speak. Readers are overwhelmed by the amount of irrelevant material they are expected to review to extract any pertinent information that may or may not be present. In respect of the Planning System it was agreed to apply "a watching brief" and respond only to relevant information.

**Association of 6 N&W Community Councils:** - The first meeting was held in January in Scourie, the next being scheduled in March.

- *The Ranger Service:* - Support for the Service was again unanimously given at the meeting. Since the meeting and with further input from Cllr. Morrison and his colleagues the Service has been safeguarded for the foreseeable future, albeit with a reduction of 2 further members of staff. S&DCC expressed their thanks to Cllr Morrison and his colleagues for their input.

- *Scottish Ambulance Service, Patient transport:* - Julie reported on the meeting in Lochinver about the ongoing local problems with this service. It was chaired by David Slater with representation from a very wide area. The tone was set by people reporting their personal experiences of the service. Pauline Howie O.B.E. (Chief Executive S.A.S.) was there to learn of the difficulties encountered and it became clear at the meeting that the service is shambolic and failing in the NW area. Graham Phillips (Sutherland County Committee and District Partnership) is to look into possible resolutions, perhaps linking community transport schemes with both the National Health and Scottish Ambulance Services. Pauline Howie undertook improve matters and to hold another public meeting this time next year to update communities on the progress made. S&DCC felt it would be helpful to review the minutes when available.

**Maldie Burn Community Fund:** - The treasurer confirmed that the Scourie News is to run an advert for funding applications. To qualify, the projects must be running in the Scourie & District Area. Submissions will be considered at S&DCC's April and October meetings.

**Scourie Community Development Co. Ltd: -**

- *Geo Centre:* - Neil reported that the Shelley Collection has been secured. He described in brief the way forward, which involves a huge amount of work and decision making about the building and the facilities it might provide. He stated that it is likely to be 5 years in completion. A general discussion then took place on the potential amenities that could be housed within the centre and the benefits of these to visitors and local communities.
- *Broadband:* - Superfast fibre-optic broadband is now available in Scourie and user speed tests are very good. However it was reported that BT are unacceptably slow in connecting households who apply for the service. Donald Fisher, in his official capacity, agreed to try to seek an explanation from BT as to why connections are delayed. Hugh reported that the Scottish Govt. has pledged to provide all premises with cable/fibre broadband by 2021, which means that within 4 years all properties will see these improvements.

**North West Highlands Geopark Ltd:** - The AGM took place in February but further information was unavailable. Alastair reported that Jean MacKay has agreed to represent S&DCC interests at Geopark meetings and subsequently report updates to S&DCC. The committee expressed its thanks to Jean for volunteering in this respect and invited her to attend the next meeting.

**NC500:** - Hugh reported that public conveniences in Tarbet and Scourie will continue to be maintained. In addition, he continues to press T.H.C. to repaint the white lines and road markings to prevent accidents and assist foreign drivers.

**Website:** - No further information was available.

**Noticeboard:** - The much needed ventilation/drainage holes have not yet been drilled, notices are soaking up water trapped at the base and quickly become illegible. It is hoped this can be rectified very soon.

**Proposed Care Home at Lairg:** - S&DCC has been asked for a letter of support by Lairg Community Council for a proposed community run care home. It was unanimously agreed to compose and send the letter.

**Handa Island Footpath Works:** - There are plans to extend the footpath network on the Island and Dr Balfour requested a letter of support to assist the Scottish Wildlife Trust in securing funds for the project. This has been undertaken by the Chairman.

**A.O.C.B.**

- Julie has contacted Ullapool Leisure Centre requesting alterations to its activity timetable to allow children from outlying areas to access after-school events, at present these are scheduled early in the evening and do not allow sufficient travelling time to get there. As a result Highlife card-holders are unable to use the resources they have paid for. The Centre agreed to look into it and contact the Schools' Co-ordinator for this area. Julie will report on progress at future meetings.
- Julian repeated his request for run-offs to be cleared to prevent water pooling on the roads. He highlighted that offlets inaccessible to mechanical diggers are being ignored (e.g. beneath crash barriers). Hugh will chase this again.
- Drawing pins falling from the noticeboard and lying in the car park are a concern as they could lead to punctures etc, it was suggested that the magnetic panel from the old board be inserted into the new one to resolve this issue. A decision was deferred.

The meeting closed at 21:30

**The next meeting is at 8.00pm on Monday 27th March in Scourie Village Hall**

Action 1	Amend January's minutes and circulate	Vee
Action 2	Contact David Slater for copy minutes	Donald
Action 3	Invite Jean to March meeting	Alastair
Action 4	Ascertain date for noticeboard maintenance	Donald
Action 5	Contact BT re broadband connections	Donald
Action 6	Issue letter of support to Lairg Comm. Ccl.	Donald
Action 7	Monitor for updates of the Leisure Centre timetable	Julie
Action 8	Request verge run offs to be cleared.	Cllr. Morrison