

Draft Minutes
Sunart Community Council
7:30pm, Thursday 12th January 2023 Zoom

1. Welcome and Apologies:

- a. Attending: D Anderson (Chair), E Sneddon-Hughes (Treasurer), J Jones (Secretary), J Hilder, J May, V Balnaves-Aitken, J Millar-Craig (Minute Taker), Cllr. K Willis, Imam Ismail (MOWI Farm Manager, Invasion Bay) and seven members of the public.
- b. Apologies: Cllr T MacLennan

2. Acceptance of previous minutes (Inc. amendments)

Proposed: Elaine Sneddon-Hughes Seconded: J May

3. Matters arising not included in the minutes

- a. Police matters – Summary of Points made in an E mail

Theft of Fuel – the public are asked to be aware that this is still a problem and should be on the lookout for unfamiliar people and vehicles ‘lurking about’. All fuel tanks and outbuildings should be kept under lock and key and further safety precautions such as cameras and security lighting be used. If anything/anyone suspicious is spotted, the registration number should be taken and the matter reported to the police.

Weather /Road Conditions - The wide range of road conditions recently has been particularly challenging, and the public are asked to make sure that they check weather reports, plan their journeys and carry food, warm clothing etc. Please drive to the prevailing road conditions.

Road works – care must be taken when passing through road works. Complaints have been made by contractors on the A884 and A861 that cars have been driving too fast through the lights etc to their endangerment. They have been asked to report such incidents.

Speeding – speed checks are to be carried out in the area.

Police Station/ Houses Renovations – these sites are off limits to the public. Police officers can still be contacted via email or 101.

- b. Connections re paths round the village 5b.

A detailed email describing the SCC concerns had been sent to FLS unfortunately, neither representative of FLS was able to attend the meeting. A suggestion that a further meeting be arranged with the proposal of an open, public meeting then be arranged at the Sunart Centre and/or a Zoom meeting. However, as a number of members of the public had specifically attended this meeting their concerns are listed:

- One individual had slipped and damaged her knee while walking in Ariundle and was worried about further decline in the paths. She was advised that FLS does have an Accident Reporting System and that this incident should be reported.
- The lack of consultation round decisions made on reducing the status (and upkeep) of certain paths; what is a key path? etc. e.g. Ardnastang to the village. This person had contacted FLS herself and the decision on Phemie’s Walk was based on that fact that “Phemie’s is not used”. The evidence for this assertion was apparently data collected by electronic beams placed on paths, and by FLS members. The comment that “Phemie’s is not used” was strongly contested by a number of people present i.e. local people who use it and often meet other people; the large numbers of our “local walks” maps that are regularly sold in the Oakwood tourism shop and the Nursery regularly use it.
- The Nursery use the walks a lot for educational, recreational and health and wellbeing purposes. The children are out every day and in all weathers. Therefore, the paths need to be safe.
- Bridges and walkways are vital parts of these very popular walks but current arrangements [that have been in place over the last 2 years] surrounding them were making things even more dangerous e.g., with the fencing being in place for such a long time, people just go over the bridge/path anyway.

- The Sunart Community Council shared some of the progress that had been made so far. Both the Glenfinnan Bridge and the lower one in Ariundle woodland were getting work done. A replacement bridge for the Faerie walk is available but needed to be assembled and installed (and be maintained to safe standard) and the community are seeking some assistance and co-operation, as this work requires suitably skilled people.
 - A local person who uses the paths for running stated that Lochaber Athletic Club would be keen to use the paths for events, etc. This would be good for visitor numbers, however the safe upkeep of the paths and bridges is needed to bring this kind of event to the local area.
 - The point was made that the path from Ardnastang Beach to the village could be made into a safe, useful and fully accessible route for all, rather than people having to walk on the narrow, single track road with no pavement that has a 40mph speed limit.
 - A forward plan was requested from FLS so that the public could factor in when and where work was being done, the plan should also include a period of “quiet” when the public had full access to all areas.
 - Clarification had been sought as to who exactly owned what with regard to the paths etc. It had been indicated that Nature Scotland owns most of Ariundle but that FLS manages it for them. The suggestion was made that it would be useful to know exactly what is in the maintenance contract i.e. who owns what, who was responsible for what and other liability issues.
 - The importance of Ariundle as an example of a rare Celtic Temperate Rainforest and the associated biodiversity was raised by a number of people. The need to protect, maintain and improve these aspects of the local area was stressed.
 - It was pointed out that some footpaths had not been put in by FLS and therefore were not their responsibility.
 - Based on the discussion, it was obvious that a clear and strategic plan for the whole area is needed. This would be best achieved by working with FLS in a Strategic Partnership to enable full and safe access to as many routes as possible, for as many purposes as possible.
- c. West Ardnamurchan Community Council item 5a. had not yet been contacted with feedback on how the Sunart Community Council run meetings. Secretary to contact.
- d. The planned letter to Jenny Gilruth has been drafted and will be discussed at a later date, as the agenda was quite long.

4. Planning Matters – previously circulated

- a. 22/03813/FUL Installation of ground mounted solar array, Land 75M East of Longrigg Manse, Strontian - Noted
- b. 22/05513/FUL Installation of fish farm feeding systems and erection of storage shed- MOWI Ltd

Mr. Imam Ismail, Fish Farm Manager for MOWI, Invasion Bay, addressed the meeting to describe the proposed development. He stated that the intention is to construct an onshore feeding system, which would make the feeding process more efficient and be more environmentally friendly: there will be less diesel used; less noise pollution; less air pollution etc. The current C-cap barge will be removed and a green shed 12m x15 erected. Pipes would run out to the cages. Associated silos, selectors, sluices etc would be installed, so a large area of concrete slab would be needed.

A number of points/questions were raised, mostly round the waters being an MPA, SAC:

- The waters are protected, was permission sought for this work?
- It was stated that the pipes at the water’s surface were to be tethered to chains tied to concrete blocks. These blocks would be dropped to the seabed. Had an analysis of the seabed been done to gauge the impact of the blocks?
Mr Ismail stated he was unable to answer this and agreed to check with the MOWI Environmental Team and get back to SCC as soon as possible.
- Had the possibility of greater use of renewable energy been looked into?
There apparently was already a hybrid generator but no use was being made of wind power. Mr Ismail would look into this.
- Had an impact assessment been done e.g. EIA, around issues such as concrete runoff when laying the concrete?
- During the meeting a community councillor checked the Highland Council planning website which showed both the SEPA and Nature Scot responses.

Mr Ismail asked for a copy of the points raised and he would report back.
It is noted that this latest planning application this is not an increase in size of fish farm, rather its moving the infrastructure onshore, which makes it less intrusive.

5. Correspondence

- a. Grant Application for Ardnamurchan High School - the cheque had been given for French Cinema trip but this had been cancelled. It was decided that the money could be put towards the London Trip instead. Clarification is needed as to the current status of this trip and the monies involved.
- b. FLS Drimnatorran LMP Consultation – email from member of the public – included in the discussion in 3b.
- c. Resilience Issues – Polloch- an email had been received from the Coordinator of the Resilience Group regarding the condition of the road to Polloch in freezing weather and how this affects the vulnerability of that community. Thanks were due to the local Highland Council team who work hard gritting and treating roads to keep them as passable as possible. However, there may be times when this task could be very difficult. The Coordinator suggested that plastic bins rather than just in piles at the side of the road would help keep salt/ grit mix from freezing solid. Also, that salt without gravel would be better spread on bends to reduce slippage. Good drainage at the sides of the road is required and improved signage would help alert drivers to possible adverse road conditions. (The Glenfinnan bridge also needs to be repaired to allow access for Emergency vehicles to Polloch when the road is unusable).
A number of emails had also been received asking whose responsibility it was to treat roads etc.
Sunart Community Council Secretary will pass the concerns and suggestions on to the local depot manager. Also, the Resilience Group might include in their Information leaflet that Polloch residents plan ahead and establish what arrangements they may need to make to see them through times when the village is 'cut-off'. The observation was made that most Polloch residents may do this already.
- d. Resilience Briefings – The Sunart Community Council receives weekly Resilience Briefings from two sources and this is a duplication. The briefing note will not be placed on our website, as the information is available on the Highland Council website. On the occasion of something specific that affects the local area, then this should be forwarded to the Resilience Group Coordinator.
- e. THC Access Rangers Annual Report 2022 – this was deemed to be an interesting document which reflected the extent Ardnamurchan and the surrounding areas were affected by issues such as informal camping, litter, outdoor toileting problems and inconsiderate parking. The Highland Council Ranger Service is a very valuable part of tackling these problems. It is good to note that locally, we are not a 'hotspot' for these issues. The full report is available on the Highland Council website.
- f. IONOS Domain Renewal – it was suggested that this account was paid from the SCC account. This was agreed.

6. Treasurer's Report

Current Account: £10,707.91p Reserve Account: £3,106.82

There had been no payments this month.

With J Hilder due to retire as a Community Councillor, he will be to be removed as an account signatory. This process is in hand, and a new card and a new signatory will be appointed.

Because this process is in hand and he and the Treasurer have been working on this with the bank his retirement from the Community Council is deferred until the new signatory is in place; hopefully by the February meeting. The signatories will be Denise Anderson, Elaine Sneddon - Hughes and Vicki Balnaves – Aitken; this item was proposed and approved.

Further to this, it was explained that to 'co-opt members' details need to to be put on the next agenda.

7. Any other business

- a. A member of the public raised the issue of an ash tree at the back of her house suffering from dieback and needing to be taken down. It is not FLS 'land' but she is not sure whose it is. J Hilder will get in touch with Highland Council to follow up again on the problem of dead trees in the area on both Highland Council and community land.
- b. A member of the public had enquired about the current status of Dail Mhor House. It has had to close over Christmas due to staff shortages. The staff had been temporarily redeployed in Fort William as the two patients receiving respite care had moved out of respite and no admissions were planned until the Spring. New staff have been appointed, and, following training and the usual background checks, it is hoped that the centre will be able to open again soon – end of February / beginning of March. These respite beds are a very important part of the local care facilities.
- c. It had been noted that the Strontian bottle bank (amongst others) was again totally full and in need of emptying. J Hilder had been on the Highland Council Facebook site where they apologised for the inconvenience, as this had been caused by a vehicle break down and the additional seasonal increase in bottles. The public were asked not to leave bottles until the banks have been emptied.
- d. Litter was increasing again in and around the village but especially along the riverbank. V Balnaves Aitken offered to involve the Primary in a litter pick.
- e. J Hilder is currently running the Community Council's Facebook page. This needs to be handed on. E Sneddon Hughes and V Balnaves Aitken to look into running it jointly.
- f. Item for next agenda, the co-option of J Millar-Craig to the Community Council is announced.

At the end of the meeting the Chair asked that the members of the public who attended be encouraged to come along more regularly, and perhaps become more involved. The Secretary will send them an email with meeting dates. Local people, of course, are also very welcome and encourage to attend community council meetings.

8. Date of next meeting – Thursday 9th February 2023 at 7:30pm, Sunart Centre, Strontian