

Minutes
Sunart Community Council
7:30pm, Thursday 14th March 2024 Village Hall

1. Welcome and Apologies:

Attending: J Jones (Chair), A Gainsford (Treasurer), J Millar-Craig (Secretary), C Hunter, A Hermann, P Adams, M Stewart and three members of the public.

Apologies: J Green, A MacDonald (Councillor), K Willis (Councillor) and T MacLennan (Councillor)

2. Acceptance of previous minutes 26th February 2024

Proposer: A Gainsford Seconded: C Hunter

3. Matters arising not included in the minutes

- a. Police matters – PC Angie had communicated by email, that an unknown person had been felling trees in Phemie’s Wood. The public are asked to inform the police if they know anything of this matter.
- b. The Inaugural Meeting of the Community Council had been held via Teams. Some concerns re using this method of communication were expressed and suggested that this method be avoided. The Chair noted these comments and explained that video meetings are standard practice for the Highland Council and it is something that the Community Council also use; it was used exclusively during the Covid restrictions and lockdown.
- c. 6a. Sunart Community Council email addresses still to be set up for council members. D Mann needs to know personal emails first. JJ to action. By using email it is a quick and easy method of communicating with members. M Stewart will get information via C Hunter.
- d. 6b. It was agreed that the SCC Zoom account to be maintained. The account is currently paid by J Hilder who is owed £143.88.
- e. Resilience Line – currently paid for by M Hilder. D Anderson has recompensed her using money collected from selling second handbooks donated to SCC. Details and any residual money will be passed to A Gainsford
- f. 6c. ‘Clean Up Day’ is 24th March 2024. Jetty has been done. D Anderson agreed to organise the bin bags and gloves etc. The timing of this event was discussed as it clashes with the time of the local church service. However, after discussion it was agreed as a low tide is needed and time of 10.30am to remain and people can collect gloves and bins bags from the village centre carpark.
- g. 6e. Signatories of the new bank account to be A Gainsford, J Jones, J Millar-Craig. Online banking will be used wherever possible. A Gainsford is meeting E Sneddon-Hughes to discuss the bank account and for a handover. Previous signatories will be removed from the account
- h. Defibrillators / phone boxes. Polloch phone box has been refurbished. It is not known if the light in phone box in the village is working. J Jones will check on this.
- i. The SCC Facebook page is to be maintained by J Green, A Hermann and P Adams.
- j. Faeries Walk Bridge- permission is needed from FLS to erect the bridge (the components of which are already in Community Council ownership). A contractor will need to be sourced and appointed to erect it. J Jones will write to the Sunart Community Company and D Robertson at FLS to progress things.
- k. Ariundle Nature Reserve – considerable concern was expressed with regard to the proposed timber extraction from the ‘Drimnatorran’ Forest, which apparently will necessitate the construction of a full-sized forest road. This will cause much disruption to the area and will significantly change the nature of the forest. JJ to action and discuss with FLS to find out more information.
- l. 6d. Crisis Payments – Currently the Community Council owes the Community Company their share of the costs. J Jones to action a follow up.

4. Planning Matters – previously circulated

- a. None

5. Correspondence

- a. Zurich Insurance renewal – the Community Council is insured through Zurich. It was agreed to insure with them again and £97.20 will be due by April 1st 2024 **Action A Gainsford**
- b. Stakeholder Consultation – Forestry. J Jones had tried to access this item but the links didn't seem to work. It was suggested he to speak to J MacIntire.
- c. Bowman's Skip Hire – the Community Council owns three wheelie bins within the village and use Bowman's rather than Highland Council to empty them. The cost of this service had increased. Noted.
- d. Support the New Belford – There is to be a march in support of the new Belford on 16th March starting at The Parade in Fort Willam. The Scottish Government had placed an embargo on progressing with its construction. The media is to be there. SCC supports this action and the need for a new hospital to be built
- e. Mod Aird Nam Murchan – J Jones had been approached by Fergus Stokes, secretary of the local Mod, seeking financial support from SCC. Tuition, adjudication etc had been covered by a grant, which is now no longer available. £3000 is needed to cover these vital aspects of providing addition tuition for those children who are not in Gaelic Medium schools, and a large proportion of the children affected will be in the Ardgour and Sunart areas. It was suggested that they first submit a funding request to the Sunart Community Benefit Fund (SCBF), which closes on 31st March. J Jones to inform F Stokes and make a formal request to SCBF by completing the online form.
- f. Highland Council Nature Restoration Fund – the Community Council can apply for a grant for activities such as the clearance of rhododendrons. JJ has forwarded the information to Eilidh-Ann Philips of the Community Company Paths Group. It may be a too late to put in an application for this year but it was suggested every thing is put into place now for next year i.e. to seek two quotes for the work etc. as the time frame for these applications is always very tight.
It was asked if the construction of the community owned Bridge (discussed earlier) would come under this grant. J Jones will investigate.
- g. Sunart Networks and Commswest – Andrew Sinclair of Sunart Networks and Commswest, would like to host an Open Day event for local people looking at improving broadband fibre connection in and around the village. It was agreed that Andrew be invited to the next meeting to give a presentation and to include a map, to give a clear indication of exact the area/s which would be covered by this service. Secretary to include on the April agenda; Chair to invite Andrew to the meeting.

6. Treasurer's Report

AG and ESH are to meet on Monday to make contact with RBS and to look at the hand over of materials, information etc.

Deposit Account: £3150 Current Account: £10, 800

A Gainsford is having difficulty accessing the accounts, to check the balances.

Payments to be made prior to the year end, 31.3.2024:

- D Mann – website etc amount – TBA
- J Hilder – Zoom £143.88+ amount to year end
- Sunart Community Company – Crisis payments £420 – JJ has invoice
- M Hilder – Sunart Resilience Hotline – amount TBA

7. Any other business

- a. Back the Belford New Build – Rally and March on 16.3.2024. The Parade Fort William 11.00am. See item 5d.
- b. Community Council Donation towards new Defibrillator for Polloch (carried over from September 2023) See item 3h.
- c. The remaining items on Hand Over List: Resilience Hot Line, Annual Grant to Sunart Community Company, Ariundle Nature Reserve, Phone Boxes and Defibrillator. See items covered in item 5.
- d. Annual General Meeting, Arainn Shuaineirt, Sunart Centre Wed. 13th March, 7.00pm – D Anderson had been at this meeting. C Hunter has offered to attend the meetings and be the Sunart Community Council Representative on this body. J Jones will speak to J Green.
- e. Dail Mhor – an update on the state of play with Dal Mhor was requested. P Adams declared an interest in this item, as she is employed by the NHS and took no part in the discussion. C Hunter had received a letter from a member of the public outlining concerns re the closure of this facility and how it is affecting both her family and the wider community. She requested that a move be made to get the local Community Councils to work together to resolve the issue of lack of care in the area. Discussions included looking at the community building and running a care home - as had been the case with the Primary School. It was agreed that J Millar-Craig should write a letter to the other Community Councils on this issue. *(C Hunter has subsequently been given permission by the member of public that their letter may be used as a basis in the communication to the other Community Councils).*
- f. Acharacle Community Council (ACC) – letter of ‘no confidence’ in Highland Council, petition to purchase diesel ferry – Acharacle Community Council had shared with all community councils on the joint group, a ‘formal notification of vote of no confidence’ that they had sent to Highland Council. In it, they expressed their dissatisfaction with Highland Council and state that the communities want the solution of a new diesel ferry to be purchased and to be in service in 18 months. They are also organising a petition. There is a Corran Ferry Steering Group meeting on 25th March. There now seems to be proposals from Highland Council with regard to possible money sources with which to fund a new ferry. Sunart Community Council will wait for the outcome of this meeting.
- g. ACC – “No to Lochaber National Park” – Acharacle Community Council had sent an email asking whether each CC had received an email advertising a community information evening on 27th September 2023. Sunart Community Council had received this email. Sunart Community Council waiting for more information on this item. It is understood that at this stage this is just an idea. However, should Lochaber be identified as a potential national park, there will then be further information and full public consultation process
- h. Meeting dates and Agenda – at the next meeting discussion is to be held concerning changing the day of the council meeting so that it would better enable all members to attend.
- i. Bank signatories - addressed earlier.
- j. Parking Charges Ariundle – a member of the public brought to the attention of the meeting the new notices regarding parking charges which had appeared at Ariundle. It had been announced in Jan/Feb. 2023 that parking charges were to be introduced and notices had gone up. However, new notices had now gone up and advisory slips had been placed on parked cars regarding costs of 1 hour = £1 and all day = £3. Concern was expressed about the charges and how they would affect local users. JJ to speak to D Robertson FLS. JMC to draft a letter asking for a reasonably priced annual ‘local permit’ for residents to be made available. This should be along similar lines to the parking Charges at the Nevis Range car park i.e. local residents on proof of residence can register a vehicle and park a one-off charge of £10 p.a.

Date of next meeting – Thursday 11th April 2024 at 7:30pm, Strontian Village Hall