



## CREICH COMMUNITY COUNCIL

### Minutes of meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2018 at 7.30pm in Bonar Bridge Hall

**Present:** Pete Campbell, Chair (PC), Ron Boothroyd, Vice Chair (RB), Russell Taylor, Treasurer (RT), John White (JW), Norman MacDonald (NM), Russell Smith (RS), Alexandar Campion (AC), Marcus Munro (MM)

**Apologies:** Brian Coghill (BC), Peter Orrell

**Invited guest:** Martin Norup Thomsen (MNT)

**Police Scotland:** None present; report received by email

**Also attending:** Highland Councillor Kirsteen Currie (KC), Nigel Baird (NB)

**Secretary:** Mary Goulder (MG)

**Item 1. Welcome/Apologies (as above)/Police report.** Chair Pete Campbell opened the meeting, welcoming all present. The police report had been received by email. It consisted of eight incidents in the last month: one death, one alarm call, one road traffic incident, one bail check, one community safety/community liaison, one child protection enquiry, one nuisance call and one other Force request. PC Thomson had also asked that the CC make the public aware of recent thefts of fuel in Sutherland. Owners should be extra vigilant and check their fuel tanks regularly. Following the report from the public last month that a fixed penalty had been issued for a parking infringement in Bonar, KC advised that she has checked with Sgt Peter Allan and there is no record of such a penalty being issued recently. KC has been advised that the police will not act on parking at the junction unless an obstruction is caused, or an accident occurs. She is in touch with Shane Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, THC, to discuss whether any other actions can be taken to improve safety at the junction. White lining may be possible during the summer. KC will monitor and report to CC.

**KC Action.**

**Item 2. Presentation by Martin Norup Thomsen.** Martin thanked the CC for allowing him the time to bring this project to public attention. He is based in the Trust offices at The Barn, Ardgay, to work on producing new locality plans as part of the wider Community Engagement Project across Sutherland. Started by the Sutherland Community Partnership this project aims to engage with residents throughout the county using questionnaires with follow up workshops to ascertain the needs and services wanted by the public. The project began working in Golspie last summer, is currently in progress in Brora and will then move on to Creich and other areas. Residents are asked in the questionnaires to rate the services currently available and to offer solutions, comments etc. After these are analysed, follow up workshops will be arranged to delve deeper into the issues and what solutions may be found. It is hoped that the contributors will be from a wide range of people including such groups as the elderly, those with dementia or learning difficulties, young mental health clients, as well as the more able in our society. Transport may be provided to help some attend workshops. The whole community should be represented which will give a wide base to seek funding to act on any worthwhile solutions and ideas. MNT and his colleagues will be happy to hear from individuals, groups or local organisations at any time in their offices at The Barn. In the face of some scepticism tonight, KC reported that the Golspie project has proved very successful. One outcome has been the running of an accredited course for pupils at Golspie High School who may now go on to work in local service agencies as a result. A transport group has been set up which is very active and positive. Discussion covered the views that all the work done in collating information around the county may come to nothing if there is no public money to take projects forward. Most of them would require huge amounts of money to put in place. Difficulties in getting people involved were also a concern. However, MNT stated that currently funding is forthcoming all over Sutherland, although no details were given at this point. This agenda item was time limited and MNT thanked the CC once again for inviting him to attend and reiterated that anyone wishing further information should contact him directly.

**Item 3. Minutes of January meeting/matters arising.** The minutes of the January meeting were approved as a true and accurate record; proposed: Russell Smith; seconded Ron Boothroyd. No matters arising were raised.

**Item 3. Regular updates:**

- (i) **Planning & licensing.** (RS) Nothing relevant this month. RS advised that the Loch Buidhe timetable indicated the site demobilisation is due in September 2018. Two transformers are in place; there is a possibility that two more may be installed. SSE

was asked for an analysis of the economic benefit to the local area, but the information supplied fell short in any real details. Some spin off has been noted locally for accommodation providers and local shops.

- (ii) TEC Services.** (1) Roadside bushes on the Altas road at The Old Post Office corner and on the A837 by the bridge at Ceol Mor are obscuring sight lines. (2) Waste bin at the Log Cabin, Rosehall, has once again not been emptied. It is thought the routine was interrupted during the recent bad weather, but this should be reinstated as soon as possible. (3) Weather damage on the Altas road has produced deep potholes at the Tapachy road end. (4) Bridges on the Struie road (B9173) are continually being damaged by heavy lorries. These bridges are of historic value and should be properly maintained and repaired in keeping with their original condition. If weight restrictions or other measures cannot be applied, simple single-way sections could be set up by the painting of priority arrows and perhaps a few signs.

All points noted by KC. **KC Action.** (5) Log lorries are once again running in convoys on the A839 Rosehall to Lairg road causing heavy damage to the road surface on almost the whole stretch of road. Details of the company vehicles will be passed to the Forestry Commission to contact the contractors. Balcas drivers were commended for their road courtesy and not travelling in convoy. **MG Action.**

- (iii) Financial report.** (RT) Treasurer's account balance stands at £296.47 with the Rock by Sea account standing at £7,188.20. THC has announced the cut to CC budgets of around 50%. This will reduce this CC's annual grant to £550, due to be paid following the submission of the accounts after the AGM in June. The cuts appear to fly in the face of the Scottish Government Community Empowerment Act which is designed to give power to communities to administer local budgets for local projects. Community Councils will not be able to operate without sufficient funding for administration and support to local projects. Chair called for a major agenda item on finances at next month's meeting when details of annual expenditure will be available. The agenda will be curtailed to allow time for this item. **RT/MG Action.**

- (iii) Police matters.** (NM) Nothing to add to report at Item 1.

- (v) Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust.** (PC) The AGM was quite well attended; all projects ongoing. The Falls of Shin building has been nominated for a tourism award and both Falls of Shin and The Barn designs have gained nominations for local architect Catriona Hill. The results of these awards will be known later in the year.

- (vi) Rosehall.** (JW) Rosehall taxis scheme will be further discussed during the financial item next month. **Agenda item.** KC suggested this could be put to the transport group on the Sutherland Community Partnership.

- (vii) Invershin.** (PC) Nil of note.

- (viii) Highland Councillor's report.** KC expressed her great disappointment over THC budget approved this month. She did not vote in favour of it. The Capital spend has still to be agreed but it is not expected to reveal any expenditure in Sutherland. KC feels many of the cuts seem ill-thought out. Chair asked why people would wish to be involved in the projects as outlined earlier by MNT if there is to be no support from THC for basic services.

- (ix) Broadband in Kyle of Sutherland.** (RB) Work is progressing well. The Struie mast is operational and tested with good results. Agreements are being made for the placement of other masts. Some difficulties gaining permissions from Forestry Commission due to delays with the legalities; KC will liaise with RB as she may be able to help (also with the same issues for Rosehall and District Action Group's take-over of care of the Rosehall Trails). It is hoped to begin taking orders for new Broadband customers within the next couple of months. **KC/RB Action.**

**Item 5. Plaque for Sandy Chalmers update.** Costs should be available in the next few days. Specifications have been agreed. Quote for the fixings is also due.

**Item 6. Village Officer/Garden area at end of bridge in Bonar.** KC has found out that Caithness funds the village officers from contributions from the various CCs and also the Ward Discretionary Budget. As all such funds are to be cut, this will no longer be possible. Item to be included in the financial discussions next month. **Agenda item.**

**Item 7. Craggan Dhu woodland.** A representative of Forestry Commission has stated that the restocking will be enforced with a deadline of 30<sup>th</sup> June, in spite of the CC making clear the case against it. KC will liaise with FCS and have a decision in writing sent to CC. **KC Action.**

**Item 8. Floral displays ideas for Bonar.** Some other local CC areas have separate committees to deal with the floral displays. Bonar is in need of something similar. The appearance of the village is a disgrace. Chair will enquire of the Gala Week Committee if it might form a sub-group to take this on. Others to bring suggestions to next month's meeting at which a decision should be reached. AC agreed to make posters seeking volunteers, individuals, groups or businesses to get involved.

Posters will be distributed locally. **PC/AC/All Action. Agenda item.**

**Item 9. Seats/speed limit on stretch between Bonar and Ardgay.** CC will consider sharing costs of new seats with Ardgay CC once costs are known. Speed limit decision awaited from THC.

**Item 10. Windfarm updates. Meall Buidhe.** RB gave notice of a meeting to be held in Rosehall on 2<sup>nd</sup> March to gauge opinions of residents in Rosehall and Altas and to decide on any further action. Local opinion so far seems to be against the 'Ring of Steel' surrounding the villages. KC stated there are several areas in the region which would actually like a windfarm development in order to gain some community benefit. **Coriolis Energy** is proposing a windfarm between Lairg and Bonar Bridge and has asked to make a presentation to the CC. They will be asked to submit a summary of such a presentation to save time in duplicating information already well known regarding planning and construction. The summary will be considered prior to an invitation being issued. **MG Action.**

**Item 11. Website update.** The site is up to date.

**Item 12. Correspondence.** All correspondence had been circulated by email. (1) Scottish Government Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund. RS will look at this. (2) Recycling point. Email received from Waste Management Officer that plans are in place to move the recycling bins to beyond the textile recycling bin. This news was well received as the move will improve road safety at The Hub. (3) Letter of complaint regarding the lack of path access to the newer section of Creich Cemetery. KC has taken this forward as THC has a legal obligation to provide open access by means of a suitable footpath.

**Item 13. Any other competent business.** (1) Complaints received that the Bank of Scotland mobile bank failed to appear today due to a vehicle breakdown. A notice to this effect was on display inside the Post Office but there was no information outside. Without a vehicle there was no service in Lairg either and it later transpired that the ATM in Tain was also out of action. Several customers were very inconvenienced by this non-attendance. Some could transact their business in the Post Office but not all. Such poor service is unacceptable having removed the permanent branch. A back-up vehicle should be available to cover, and customers should be notified electronically. This situation has left customers with no local banking service for a period of thirteen days and twenty-three hours. CC will submit a strong complaint to Bank of Scotland. **MG Action.** (2) AC put forward a suggestion to consider restructuring of the applications procedure for the Training & Development Fund. He also proposed a quarterly meeting of representatives of all three local CCs to improve communication, understanding and proactive support. He was asked to send his suggestions to the Creich members for consideration at the next meeting. **AC Action.** (3) MM and AC both noted inefficiencies by North Highland Forestry within their wild life management programme. There are qualified operators locally to whom this work could be distributed to the advantage of the local economy. RB added that strimming and path work which was previously done by local sub-contractors is now allocated using a list system which means this work no longer comes to the local contractors. It was agreed to invite North Highland Forestry to attend the May meeting. **MG Action.**

**Item 14. Date, time and place of next meeting.** The next meeting will be held at 7.30pm on Tuesday, 20<sup>th</sup> March in Invershin Hall. Secretary to book the room. **MG Action.**

**Item 15. Private session. Beinn Tharsuinn community benefit/Rock by Sea Fund applications/SSE & E.ON Community Fund. BTWF.** At a private session following the main meeting a Beinn Tharsuinn application by Invergordon Academy was rejected. **RbS.** Application by Wild Highland Drinks Co for funding for four to attend relevant courses was approved with £250 per person awarded. MG will advise all concerned. **MG Action.**

Meeting closed 10pm.