COMHAIRLE CHOIMHEARSNACHD SHLEITE

SLEAT COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of Meeting of Sleat Community Council held Talla Deargl on Tuesday 4th November 2014 at 7.30 PM

Present Roddy Murray

Flora Maclean

Margaret Colpus

Rob Ware

Pauline Lyle

In Attendance Una Macleod, Eileen Armstrong, Janet MacDonald, Roger Cottis, Duncan MacInnes, Jonathan MacDonald, John MacDonald, David Ashford, Alistair and Uisdean Nicolson

Apologies Archie Maccalman

**Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting on 7 October 2014 were moved by Flora Maclean and seconded by Margaret Colpus.

**Matters Arising**

Rob Ware gave a brief update on the aquaculture planning applications that are currently live with Highland Council.

**Forestry Commission Scotland**

Roddy Murray introduced John Risby and Donald Macleod from Forestry Commission. Roddy outlined the reasons for asking FCS to attend following on from the events of the project for the CDLT forestry and concerns raised by some residents regarding their own cases. If advance notification had been made then the community would have had more input.

John Risby gave a detailed update on the background of forestry creation projects. Their role is to oversee the process for introduction of new projects and to ensure that communications are made to all involved including the statutory authorities. This process was not robust in the CDLT case and would be reviewed. John gave maps on 20 years of processing forest work in the Sleat area. Nearly all projects have been native woodlands and more than 10% increase in woodland in that time. FCS has been set targets for woodlands by the Scottish Government and nearly all new woodland is being delivered by others and they manage grants for this. They are also responsible for encouraging community ownership of forests and including crofting opportunities. FCS also manage the ongoing care of forests.

John Risby accepted that in the CDLT case the whole project had been badly handled and although the process could not be undone then lessons need to be learned. He agreed that in future any new woodland projects WOULD be communicated to the SCC and this the Council would have a chance to comment. This would be just for Sleat and give 28 days notice of any proposals. This would not be Scotland wide. FCS would ensure that suitable measures would be taken to the SCC. Rob Ware said that HC used to consult but from 2009 resources for that were withdrawn, and felt that it was the failure of the CDLT to communicate to the community that has caused so much local ill-feeling. Pauline Lyle asked why private landowners should have to consult with the community over what they would want to do with their land. Roddy stated that this was about public money being used for private developments and the key issue here is that suddenly plant appeared on the hills, work started and fencing erected without anyone being informed of the work. Sleat has a long history of good community involvement in a range of projects and this simply didn’t happen with CDLT. And individuals were affected, and so it was important that residents’ interested are protected. Roddy re-iterated that it was not the intention to stop the project but to ensure that issues were dealt with. Deer management was one such example so public communication at a much earlier stage could have prevented this debacle.

John Risby repeated that he wants the SCC to be able to be informed on such projects in the future and allow comments to be made. Pauline asked if such a project could be stopped if there was sufficient local opposition or comment, but John outlined again the process whereby a formal objection could be made and this is in legislation. Forestry is deemed to be a significant land use change and so in legislation that there must be consideration of the change including the environmental impact change. Roddy said that the government that asked for 25% of Scotland to be under forestry but this has been revised for a target of 100,000ha in ten years and the status reviewed after that time. In Highlands and Islands there would be 3-4000ha per year targeted. It is down to landowners and organisations to come forward to propose new woodlands. Roddy asked if the CDLT project was part of the Highland Council Forestry Plan and John confirmed that it was. Roddy questioned why the HC would not consult with communities given that such a project as CDLT did massively affect the local community here in Sleat.

John MacDonald asked if the whole site had been planted and Donald Macleod said that he believed this was not the case. John asked why it had all been ploughed when further planting would not take place until 2015. John Risby suggested that it was because plant would be available at the time. Rob Ware asked what the financial process is when an organisation wishes to create woodland. John Risby said there are fixed sums for asset creation and for project management fees which arrives at £x per hectare. This varies between individual sites. The Woodland Creation Scheme concludes in a contract and offer to the landowner. This is checked on site and then the grants are paid. FCS do also pay for maintenance of forests for the first five years. John Risby said that the Deer Management Plan should resolve all issues locally but it appears in this instance that this is not the case. The Applicant is responsible for the DMP.

Duncan MacInnes introduced himself and made a significant personal comment on the CDLT proposals. Duncan asked if FCS are going to return to check on ALL of the work that has been done including issues like the effect on water supplies, blighting of homes, and deer management. Duncan handed his written comments to John Risby. A round of applause was given following Mr MacInnes’ statement to the meeting.

John Risby suggested that these comments could be followed up with the CDLT if the Community Council wished to report these. Susie Southall raised her personal issue with Donald Macleod regarding the planting close to her land and disagreed with FCS over their view and ‘did not take any comment in their assessment’. Rob Ware also mentioned that the CDLT’s agent was asked for comment and the response was that there was no chance of any reversal of planting for a buffer zone for Ms Southall’s land as the Applicant would be penalised by FCS for not fulfilling the planned planting. Roddy asked if there was any opportunity to revisit this issue. Donald Macleod said yes there would be and he had not realised that this had not been resolved satisfactorily. Rob Ware asked if there was truth in the statement that the landowner would be penalised for a buffer zone and Donald Macleod said that there was grounds to vary the contract if it was agreed that a resident had been adversely affected.

John Risby said that the landowner would not be paid a full grant if, for example, only half a hectare was planted when the plan stated one. Rob Ware suggested that on the grounds of good community relations it was something that FCS could do and vary the contract. This would not be a significant loss to the landowner. Roddy suggested that all interested parties should come together to attempt to reach a mutual agreement to resolve individual issues and this was endorsed by both representatives of FCS present. John said that he would follow up on the water supply and deer issues, but the project could not be undone. He further stated that it was incumbent on FCS to ensure that such a project and its management would, in future, be handled better by an improved dialogue and communications process.

Eileen Armstrong asked what, if any, there are plans for further forestry projects in Sleat. John Risby concurred that this would be in the Highland Council Forestry Plan. Donald Macleod said that there is no management plan for the Brae Ord Forest but this would come in good time before any harvesting proposal was applied for. Felling is also subject to the same processes within FCS, and Brae Ord would be in about 10 years. Not all felled forests would be replanted but generally after that event there would be a revised scheme to replant but probably to a different design and species scheme.

Jonathan MacDonald asked what sanctions could be imposed if CDLT had not followed procedures. John Risby suggested that FCS would take measures if the planting plan had not been adhered to but re-iterated that he is concerned at the process that has taken place. Donald Macleod said that the various parts of the contract are all examined carefully and grants can be withheld. John Risby said he couldn’t see any sanctions around the communications process and Roddy Murray suggested that the contract could be reviewed and SCC will now move this forward. Donald Macleod said that this could apply where some grants had not yet been paid.

Roger Cottis referred to the Environmental Impact Assessment for the project and asked if otters and eagles were taken into account. Donald Macleod confirmed this but only for eagles and not otters. Roger suggested that planting has taken place too close to burns and this needs to be reviewed. Roger would pass his information to Donald Macleod.

Margaret Colpus asked if parking charges were to be introduced at Kinloch area following the introduction of charges elsewhere. Note this was checked by FCS who have subsequently confirmed that there are no plans to bring in parking charges in Sleat.

Duncan MacInnes raised a further issue about the archaeological survey that was done and asked if this was just for a record as the planting had been done and possibly a number of valuable historic sites had now been ploughed over. Donald Macleod said that he wasn’t aware that the AS had not been adhered to. Duncan MacInnes said that there was much haze about all of this project especially in archaeological terms.

David Ashford felt that the CDLT had treated the community with contempt as to how this had been handled.

Rob Ware said that he had heard from SNH about a Management Plan for Collie Tokavaig and this was a good example of public communication.

Janet MacDonald asked if the dealings had been with the CDLT Agent and Trustees but Roddy said that communication between them and SCC was virtually non-existent and that the CDLT GM was now leaving post. He further stated about the importance of CDLT to the local community in terms of employment, economy and many others. Roddy applauded a much improved process of communication from FCS and the SCC will take forward the points raised tonight.

Roddy thanked John and Donald for attending and appreciated their input.

The meeting then returned to the agenda.

**Sleat Transport Forum**

Roddy outlined the proposals for the new Sleat Transport Forum and its formation involving a number of key players, SCC, SCT, FEI, CDLT, CDI and SMO. The first meeting to form the group will be held on 3rd December. Roddy asked for approval from the Councillors to set this group up and this was agreed. Volunteers for the group would be welcome.

**Roads and Planning**

The school signs have now been fixed due to signal transmission issues. The glass for the shelter has been delivered and is due to be fixed soon. This has been a lamentable issue. Other issues are kept in focus with the Roads team at HC. Rob updated about a new planning application for the Isle Ornsay lighthouse to convert the property for b and B use.

**A87 Speed Restrictions**

The Community Council has received three comments from the public and Rob Ware will write to Transport Scotland with these issues. Roger Cottis mentioned about deer in these areas and so there may be some benefit.

**Correspondence**

A letter has been received from HC of an open meeting at Portree to learn more about the new Community Services team. This will be held on 26th November. Roddy also mentioned that Councillor Millar has now been stripped of his office. The Council has also received a letter regarding the ‘fairness’of the recent Health Service Public Consultation which believes it to be appropriate and accurate.

**AOCB**

We were advised that the timetables had been thrown in the bin by Stagecoach because they didn’t realise these were for the winter schedule. The schedules are now in the shelters. Alistair and Uisdean Nicolson raised an issue of flooding at the Teangue WTW road. Rob will write to Joanna Peebles and do a site visit to see what has happened.

The meeting closed at 2110.

Next Meeting 2nd December at Seomar Cruinneachaidh 1930

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