**COMHAIRLE CHOIMHEARSNACHD SHLEITE**

**SLEAT COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

Minutes of a Meeting of Sleat Community Council held at Ardvasar Hall 4th April 2023

Present:

Rob Ware

Tim Shone

Veana Cleland

Flora Maclean

Kate Duffus

Andy Williamson

Apologies: Gordon Matheson, Anita Myatt, Donnie Nicolson

**In Attendance:**

Roddy Murray, David McLeish, Alexandra Williams, John Weir, David Ashford, and Councillor Ruraidh Stewart

**Welcome/Declaration of Interests/Recording of the Meeting**

The chair Tim Shone welcomed everyone to the meeting and introduced the members of the community council. He added that the meeting will be recorded for the purpose of minute taking and will be destroyed afterwards. There were no declarations of interest.

**Item 1 Minutes arising from the February Meeting (N.B. March Meeting cancelled due weather)**

Rob outlined the Skye and Raasay Committee Meeting held on 30th January including roads, local place development plans and regeneration awards. Councillor Stewart recommended that community council members watch these quarterly sessions as frequently as possible. He emphasised that Elected Members are strongly demanding further funding for roads repair. There was a short but spirited discussion on the economic effects of the very poor condition of Skye’s roads as well as damage to vehicles. Update from Donnie MacLeod on Kinloch *‘Kinloch A851 – Overlay or plane and inlay works are to be promoted to Skye Members as additional works dependent on additional funding being realised. We will prompt for inclusion and Members will need to prioritise against other competing road needs escalating across Skye and Raasay. Cllr Stewart & Finlayson both aware.’*

Tim expressed concern at the speeding that is taking place along the Sleat road from Toravaig to Armadale and Rob outlined recent roads policing activity in Skye. A speed check has recently been carried out at the primary school. The extended 40mph scheme, road signage and marking are expected to be completed this month.

David Ashford reminded about climate change and the benefits of reducing speed limits when driving.

Flora Maclean approved the minutes and Veana Cleland seconded.

**Item 2 Ferries and Public Transport**

Rob updated that CalMac is operating with one vessel until 15th May, but capacity is expected to meet demand for the period. The Information Sign at Broadford is now operational but with some software issues. The Armadale Pier development is almost complete, and the car park will be opened this week. In due course, 2 EV points and a motorhome waste disposal point will be introduced. CalMac’s new reservations and ticket system has now been delayed to 16th May. There was a following discussion on the new information sign at the Sleat road end and these comments will be passed to CalMac.

**Item 3 Roads and Planning**

Highland Council are going to sweep the pavement from Ferrindonald down to Armadale Castle, following complaints from a local resident. Prior to the next meeting SCC will again seek updates on the road’s issues at Kinloch Farm and the pavement extension at the gallery close to Armadale Stores as well as resurfacing the 851 Armadale Pier approach road from Studio Ceramics.

There have been no planning applications in March and no further developments have taken place in respect of the site at Upper Teangue. The motorhome site with 5 berths and waste disposal point is almost complete and the clay pigeon shoot site has been approved. There has been much discussion about the Scottish Government’s consultation on Highly Protected Marine Areas which has been extended to 18th April.

**Item 4 Tourism/Council Team/Non-Domestic Rates**

Applications for Short Term Lets licences has been extended to 30th September and as of 31st March around 400 have been approved. 1,200 are in process out of an estimated 10,000 in Highland. For those still not commenced the applications it is strongly advised that people book tradesmen to ensure work can be carried out in good time. Rateable values of properties have been reviewed and there are significant increases. Owners of self-catering accommodation are required to reapply to claim Small Business Bonus Scheme and if insufficient criteria has not been supplied by applicants some properties will revert to Council Tax. Councillor Stewart updated on some of the views of Councillors about STLs and felt that some operators may pull out of the sector. The scheme must be cost neutral, and Rob said there is a massive disparity between local authorities in licence fees. Licences will run for three years from date of approval. There have been complaints that HCs scheme is that there is no SAVE facility, and this will be pursued via SkyeConnect.

Tim added that he is very concerned at the proposals for the consideration of HPMAs and we will debate the topic at the May meeting. Roddy Murray added the concerns of communities in the Western Isles particularly for the vital fishing sector.

**Item 5 Succession Planning Sleat Community Council**

Rob reminded that all the community councils in Skye and Raasay will be dissolved in October and that in January 2024 a new council will be established if there are enough numbers. We are allowed 8 people and if there are more than 8 applicants then all people on the electoral roll would be invited to vote for the preferred 8. He added that there will need to be a significant campaign to attract new candidates as it is likely that several of the existing councillors will stand down in October. 3 office bearers will be required in Chair, Secretary and Treasurer and there are opportunities for youth members and associate members. If sufficient numbers are found then there is also an opportunity to appoint a Vice-Chair. There are three councils in Skye that have yet to be formed and the availability of paid jobs in community trusts has meant that people who might have become SCC members are taking paid employment. There is a lot of work required to maintain the website, Facebook, and Twitter. Rob added that he thought there needs to be a review and that SCC has very little attendance at meetings. Tim said that this has been mostly older people on the community council because they have the time to do this. We had one meeting in Tarskavaig when nobody turned up. Andy Williamson said that it’s not always necessary to attend meetings because the communications channels are good. We must work with the systems at present and that community councils are the voice of the community.

**AOCB**

Chair Tim Shone advised that he had had an uninvited visit at his house on 3rd April with no advance notice from a Sleat resident who presented him with a hand-written letter. This followed an earlier visit to Tim’s house three weeks earlier when he turned up for the first time. Tim said that he did not know this man. On the second visit the man wanted to speak of the contents of his letter in respect of the SCC Facebook page and he was complaining about the page being ‘opinionated’ and ‘that factual and impartial ought to be the criteria’. Tim said that the following day after being presented with the letter he looked at the SCC Facebook page in depth, not at content, but looking for any items which the letter could refer to. Tim added that he went back a long way and couldn’t find anything that could be deemed ‘opinionated’.

Tim added that he would not go into further detail of the third paragraph as the writer of the letter referred to Police Scotland in that final paragraph. Tim advised those present that because there is a reference to Police Scotland, he has today sent the letter to officers at Kyle Police station. He is awaiting a reply and added ‘that what has been written is meaningless, as the writer’s main point about the Facebook site being opinionated, as he couldn’t find anything to indicate that.’ Flora Maclean said that the person was insinuating that the SCC site was opinionated.’ Tim added that what he has been seeing **is** factual and impartial. Andy Williamson agreed with Tim on that point. Kate Duffus asked if any examples that were inaccurate had been cited but Tim said that the writer said specific details are on request. He added unless the writer is looking at ***another*** SCC Facebook page, he is confident that there are no posts being perceived as opinionated. Andy Williamson said that if the writer complains of biased posts, then he should have provided examples. John Weir said if the writer is so interested in the SCC Facebook page why doesn’t he come to the meetings. Tim added that as far as we are aware that person has never attended an SCC meeting. John Weir said that perhaps this man is trying to cause trouble. Flora Maclean said that if the man had taken the trouble to go to your house and hand over the letter then why didn’t he comes to tonight’s meeting? Tim said that twice now the man has turned up at his house with no warning, he didn’t know or heard of the man until he introduced himself. Tim added that we may have to deal with this with help from the police. Tim was asked what the reference to the police crime number was and responded that the man believed that a member of the community council is not a fit and proper person to hold that office. John Weir said that the person appears never to have been to a community council meeting but deems a member of this community council is not a fit and proper person to hold office. A further comment is relevant here as all this reference to FB content comes from a man who is on record stating that he does not do social media, and never will.

There followed a short discussion on the variety of comments that are posted on Facebook that SCC has no control over. Rob added that there is a huge amount of information that comes in from numerous sources and quoted, as an example, the changes that Highland Council are proposing for refuse collection from 2024. Early notification of this change is useful information to publish online. The Deposit Return Scheme was also discussed at this time. Flora said that a unit for DRS at Armadale Stores is likely to cost £10k.

Rob asked about the threat to funding of posts at Sleat Community Trust. Flora said that this is still being discussed internally and externally.

SkyeConnect have issued a policy paper on windfarms on Skye, although not directly related to the latest development at Breakish. This has been circulated widely but does focus on the tourism element and less on the ecological impact. Ruraidh Stewart that windfarms are now not deemed as local issues but are determined by Scottish Ministers. The replacement transmission project is still be discussed and may be subject to a public enquiry. Andy Williamson asked if windfarm developments are assessed individually or cumulatively. Ruraidh Stewart outlined the Council’s position and approach in supporting or objecting to projects such as the SSEN Skye Reinforcement Project.

**Public Discussion**

Alexandra Williams offered her thoughts on getting greater engagement from the community in respect of becoming a better Sleat Community Council. Volunteers in such organisations do get fatigue although Sleat has long been known as a vibrant community with much success many years. Kate Duffus (as a new member) came along to meetings to meet new people and to learn about what is going on the community. Changes to meetings format could be considered and David Ashford shared his views and Rob reaffirmed that SCC still hasn’t got a database. Andy Williamson suggested that CC members might some promotion of what we do and what we are good at. This would be good to attract new members for an incoming community council.

Rob updated on the recent Skye and Lochalsh Environment Forum’s Annual Members meeting with fantastic presentations on marine litter and NatureScot’s ‘Species on the Edge’ initiative. See [www.slef.org.uk](http://www.slef.org.uk)

David Ashford asked about replacing a notice board at Camuscross. Rob suggested that we could ask the Men’s Shed in Broadford and use the Ward Discretionary Fund for funding. In hand with MS.

The meeting closed at 2120, next meeting at Sleat Free Church on 2nd May at 1930.