

Lairg & District Community Initiatives Board Meeting

2PM – Thursday 17th June 2021

Lairg Community Hall

Agenda

Apologies: Norman McLeod, Dr Rosie Reid

In attendance: Kaye Hurrion (KH), Robert Johnstone(RJ), Annette Parrott (AP), Chris Powell (CP), Alison Magee(AM), Jan Blackwell (JB), Catrina Mackenzie (CM)
Kirstin Langlois (Project Officer) KL

Item	Action
<p>1. Approve Minutes/ Matters arising that are not on the agenda</p> <p>The minutes were proposed by RJ and seconded by AP.</p>	
<p>2. Ferrycroft Play Park</p> <p>KH explained that there has been lots of back-and-forth communication between LDCI and the Highland Council (HC) regarding who owns the Ferrycroft playpark, because it appears to not be showing on the HC 'map room' as its land.</p> <p>KH thanked AM for assisting with the project and being a great help regarding the history of the Ferrycroft playpark.</p> <p>AM reported that she always believed that the site was in the ownership of, and developed by, Sutherland District Council in the early 1990s. (She was councillor for Lairg at that time, and District Council Leader.) The site was developed using District Council funds, mainly capital, with some additional outside financial and in-kind support, namely:</p> <p>The Visitor Centre - contribution from EU Objective 1 funding. The Sports Changing Rooms - substantial financial contribution from Lairg Rovers FC community fundraising. The Jetty - installed by the Army.</p> <p>The other amenities, i.e. the access roads and car park, improvements to the football pitch, the play equipment, picnic tables, planting and landscaping, were funded by the District Council. The works were designed and managed in-house by the Council's Architect and Design Dept based in Dornoch. AM felt that the Council - or indeed any local authority – would not have carried out such an ambitious scheme, the</p>	

costs of which were 100s of thousands of pounds, at that time on land it did not own. All the assets, including the land, would have transferred automatically to the incoming Highland Council at local government reorganisation in 1996. Everything, including the play equipment, which was state-of-the-art at the time, was still being maintained by the Highland Council when AM stood down as councillor for Central Sutherland in April 2007. THC inherited it and HC and HLF between them have maintained it for 25 years.

The board discussed the Scottish Government manifesto promises regarding play parks and will see if this can help our Umbrella group at all. Therefore, the board agreed that it would make sense to pause and wait to see what the Scottish Government plan to do. KH mentioned that Louise Skinner (from the playpark subgroup) has been given a rough ballpark figure of between £40-50,000 from one of the play equipment suppliers.

Actions:

AM will follow up KH's email to MSP Maree Todd to ask about how the funds mentioned in the SNP manifesto will be distributed.

AM to contact Phil Tomalin (ward manager) in 4 weeks to follow up regarding the land ownership if we have not heard from him in the interim.

AM
AM

3. Care and well-being project

(KH) reported that Susan Clark had forwarded an email update from Colin Callum of Albyn Housing, who now seems to be our main contact at Albyn Housing, (although Morag Beers is still involved).

Colin Callum reported that "the updated fee proposals have been received and accepted. Billing is now underway, and it will be ready for tender by the end of July/beginning August. Albyn have received some draft information/advice from their solicitor regarding agreement/memorandum of understanding to move things forward so will send this through for review once received."

RJ explained that Albyn had originally tendered for four flats but they are having to rejig their tender prospectus because they will now build eight. They are working on the Memorandum of understanding.

RJ added that it will probably be the end of October by the time the tenders come back. In the paper exercise that Albyn did the costs came back very high (because the land is not flat) – it is difficult for them to get funding for the project because of those costs. By building all 8 together it reduces the cost. The spec and layout we all agreed are still the same.

In the first instance we need to find out cost of the houses, then find out how it will be funded – then look at finer detail. This would be where LDCI will stipulate that the other four houses must go to people from within a certain geographical area.

We are being told by the Scottish Govt to bear with Albyn in order to get funding (possibly from both rural housing and urban housing funds). There might be aspects – of give and take between ourselves and Albyn Housing.

AM raised concern that if they want to change the designs radically, they might need to have variations variations to the planning consent. JB questioned how LDCI will be able to reserve housing for local people and asked how and when we might communicate any issues to the community. KH replied that we don't want update the community until we have all the information fully confirmed.

RJ mentioned that LDCI will be responsible for the landscaping of the land. He recently walked the site with Iain Thompson who has taken over as Chair of Community Council. HC requires that the landscaper has a tree qualification. Robert has sent Bruce Taylor (an arborist) the layout, but he asked if anyone knew of any other tree surgeons.

The Walled Garden is a separate project as part of the next phase.

4. Church Hill Woods

KL reported that the signage has taken much longer than expected to arrive. At the end of May, the supplier (Acorn signs) had advised that the materials had just arrived for making the frames and that the posts material supply was a bit slow. They advised that following manufacturing the signs should be ready for installation in mid-June. KL was chasing up.

In the meantime, the community payback team have completed a site visit and are preparing to come and treat the carvings with preservative and tidy up the area, cut the grass etc (which they will hopefully continue to do on a regular basis). LDCI need to provide the equipment and seal off the path on the days that they will be there. KL to publicise on Facebook and create poster to explain why path is closed. Some time ago LDCI received funding from Sustrans Art Roots project which had initially been earmarked for the tree carvings on the other side of the Loch opposite the garage - We have been authorised by the funders that we can spend the monies at the Church Hill woods location instead. So after consulting with Amanda Wagstaff (Cycling UK representative) – she advised that a bike repair station (with pump & tools) would be a useful asset for cyclists along the route. We have been quoted £1746.00 for this with delivery. There will also be installation costs as we need to fix it into concrete. We will ask the

KL

<p>council if it could go on the pavement outside – or we’d need to lay a bit of concrete on the woods side of the fence.</p>	<p>KL</p>
<p>5. Station Path</p> <p>KL said that there was nothing to update. On the Sustrans website it says: As the Places for Everyone fund is oversubscribed, we cannot currently accept any new applications for funding. We will review this position in September 2021. KL has emailed Bo Hickey for an update and will report back.</p>	<p>KL</p>
<p>6. Aires Project</p> <p>KL & RJ updated that LDCI has just been awarded an RTIF design grant of £5000 to explore the feasibility of developing an Aires in Lairg. We have also received £1000 of match funding from NHI that can go towards the total budget of £10,219 – just for the design phase. LDCI can also provide match funding using time that is owed by KoSDT for the Project Management costs.</p> <p>We initially stated that we wanted to develop just a waste disposal site but we received feedback from THC when we submitted the application indicating that the project would be more likely to receive funding if there were also electric hook ups offered, given the costs associated with the project.</p> <p>LDCI had proposed two potential sites to Scottish Water (on the land behind the Coach House and by the Ferrycroft Visitor Centre adjacent to the football pitch). Ferrycroft looks like it might be the most suitable place for the Aires. However, we don’t own this land and we will need to apply for a community asset transfer.</p> <p>Scottish Water has advised that both the locations that we looked at could be considered in principle. However, before the project can go ahead, LDCI will need to complete a formal Pre-Development Enquiry (PDE) to Scottish Water to confirm whether they can connect to the Scottish Water network, so need to engage the services of Structural & Services engineering consultant to submit a connection application, including design drawings and to provide a more accurate costing of the groundworks for the project. Planning permission will be required for the site.</p> <p>The Stage 2 application must be submitted by 10 September 2021. It is highly unlikely that we will have the asset transfer completed by this time but as long as we have submitted a planning application by the</p>	

time of the Stage 2 deadline and are able to provide evidence to support this with the Stage 2 submission it is acceptable. RJ mentioned that we may need to try and set up an agreement with the Community Council to secure funds to cover the costs of providing the facility in the future. Although a nominal fee could be charged to users.

There was some concern from AM regarding using public funding for something which she believed should belong to the private sector. KH explained that we had contacted Dunroamin Caravan site who have confirmed that they will not open for touring caravans this year.

Woodend is accepting waste from people who are not staying with them, however, there is still evidence that there are some motorhome users who are not being responsible (as seen recently with a motorhome using a tap in Lairg Cemetery to fill up.)

KL added that the (RTIF) scheme is specifically there to help mitigate tourism pinch points.

KH added that if the funders decide that the project does not represent value for money then at least LDCI can say to the community that we have explored the project.

7. Helping Hand Fund

KL reported that there was not much to update in terms of numbers of people who have received a grant since our last meeting, but we have submitted the report to the Ward Discretionary Fund who provided us with the funding for the Mail drop and Leaflets. We reported that: 11 queries were made to the Lairg Helping Hand fund following the maildrop.

The Lairg Helping Hand Fund will run until March 2022 or until the funds run out (whichever is sooner). We have £6250 available which will allow us to distribute up to 25 grants over the next year.

Even if people do not need financial support at the moment – this ‘door drop’ has raised awareness of the fund, and if people’s circumstances change when the government interventions end– they will know where to come to for support.

We will run the advert in the next issue of the Magazine – to alert people who may have received a grant before that they may now be eligible again.

Food Larder

KH explained that NM had been collecting the food packages from the KoSDT community larder in Ardgay to and distribute to Lairg clients. Now she has taken over. She proposed to the board that they could use some of the Robertson Trust Helping Hand fund money to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables on weeks when there is none available in the packages. The board agreed to this, however RJ

<p>mentioned that he would have to work out how to report this financially for the accountants/ funders.</p> <p>There was discussion about how much the volunteer drivers who are delivering any food larder packages should be able to claim for milage – because it can use up quite a lot of petrol. In the end 22p per mile was agreed.</p>	<p>RJ</p>
<p>8. Glen Cottage Achany proposal:</p> <p>KH explained that she has been approached by Matthew Brooks who lives at Glen Cottage by Falls of Shin. He is hoping to purchase some land (next to Falls of Shin) from Forestry Scotland through the ‘right to buy’ and he has plans to build 17 log cabins that he will market as holiday rentals. He has asked the Lairg Community Council to write him a letter of support and he is requesting that LDCI do the same. KH asked if the directors agreed to this. CP wondered how it might impact other accommodation providers in the area because of the number of units proposed. AM felt that before writing a letter of support LDCI needed to find out who the letter of support is intended for? Is it for the planning application?</p> <p>Action KH to forward original email with proposal and to contact Matthew Brooks for clarification.</p>	<p>KH</p>
<p>9. A O B:</p> <p>Date for Litter pick Due to Covid restrictions KH said they will restrict the litter pick to just board members this year. She will email a proposed date. She will also liaise with Sandy Alison and Fraser McNeil regarding the cemetery.</p> <p>Tea Towel KH explained that the facilities manager for Ferrycroft Visitor Centre had been in touch to ask if LDCI had created the Lairg tea towel for sale there. There is only one left. There was a discussion about whether it might be worth designing a new one as a way of raising funds. She had looked at printing costs and they are £1.50 per tea towel, and these can be sold for about £4-£5. It was agreed that it is worth looking into – but we will need to think about the type of design we would like and who could design it.</p> <p>Walk & Talk sessions KL asked if the board thought that it might be worth holding a pilot social walking session – similar to the activities that are being run in the Kyle of Sutherland and in Golspie as they seem to be quite popular. The walks are usually easy so that people of all abilities can join and at the end refreshments are provided. This could be provided</p>	<p>KH</p> <p>KL</p>

at Ferrycroft centre. There was discussion about where the walks could be held other than at Ferrycroft.

Action – KL to find out what is involved regarding government restrictions/ insurance etc.

Conflict of Interest

AP asked if it was deemed to be a conflict of interest if any of the board directors had objections to the building of new windfarms, and whether they should leave the committee. The board discussed this and agreed that it would not be a conflict of interest, but if there was a specific situation where a windfarm had to be discussed any board member could sit out of the discussion.