

**APPROVED Minutes of the AKCC Meeting held in Avoch Pavilion at 7.50 pm on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024, following the AGM.**

**Present:**

**Members:** Derek MacIver, Chair (DM), Tim Phillips (TP), Hamish MacLean (HM), Stuart Bruce (SB), Rosie Brunton (RB), Fraser Brunton, Minutes (FB), Drew Mann (DMn), Caroline Lindsay (CL), Nicolaas du Preez (NdP)

**In attendance:** Cllr Sarah Atkin (SA), Andy McLeman (AMc, Avoch Amenities Association), Alistair Adie (AA), Debbie du Preez (DdP).

Lizzie Campbell (LC, Rosehaugh Estates) and Trudi Clarke (TC, Cromarty Firth Fisheries Board) attended from 8.00 – 8.30 pm to talk about the elimination of invasive species, notably Himalayan Balsam, which is prevalent in the AKCC area.

**Apologies:** Jenni Carmichael (No.19) (JC), Archie Brindle (AB), Kathy Taylor (KT)

**1. Welcome and apologies**

**Action**

DM welcomed everyone to the meeting, including Sarah Atkin, who was attending her last AKCC meeting. DM also welcomed Andy McLeman, Chair of Avoch Amenities Association (AAA), who was attending as part of the reciprocal arrangements aimed at developing closer links between the two organisations. Apologies were received from Jenni Carmichael (JC), Archie Brindle (AB) and Kathy Taylor (KT).

**2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

The draft minutes of the AKCC meeting held on 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were proposed by TP and seconded by DM as an accurate record.

**3. Matters outstanding from the Minutes of 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

It had been agreed that reviewing progress with actions arising from previous meetings would be a standing agenda item. FB thanked members for providing updates on their individual actions in advance of the meeting and circulated the updated 'Register of Actions Arising' for information. Since most of the 30 actions had been completed, he reported by exception on the progress made. By exception:

**3.1 Item 3c(ii)/290424:** Brae Steps. Mike Armitage had advised that he was unable to undertake the necessary repair work and that quotations should be obtained from building contractors. SB kindly said that he would take that forward. TP confirmed the previous agreement that the work could be funded using the Village Officer Funds

**SB to obtain quotations**

**3.2 Item 7.1/290424:** DM was still working on local farmers' contact details, which was to be added to the Register of Local Businesses.

**DM providing list of farmers**

**3.3 Item 9/290424:** SB attended the 'Coffee with a Copper' meeting held at No.19 on 10<sup>th</sup> May and raised AKCC's concerns about speeding in the village.

**3.4 Item 3b(iii)/290424:** Standard Policy and Procedure for Managing Planning Applications - FB had circulated the papers for this item, which was discussed under the agenda item on Planning Applications.

**3.5 Item 5/290424:** Sharing Shed – DMn confirmed that Avoch Amenities Association (AAA) owned the land adjacent to the Sharing

**FB to write to AAA seeking**

Shed. It was agreed with AMc that AKCC would write to AAA, seeking agreement to locate additional storage adjacent to the Sharing Shed.

**permission to locate storage.**

**3.6 Item 8.1/290424:** AKCC Website – It was agreed that CL, TP and FB would meet to plan the next steps required to create the AKCC Website and report back at the next meeting of AKCC. CL said that suitable photographs, text and other material were required to populate the site. It was noted that the cost of maintaining the website was about £10-£12 per month. RB said that any photos, etc could be sent to her.

**CL, TP & FB to meet and report back. Please send any photos, etc to RB**

#### 4. **Scottish Invasive Species Initiative (SISI)**

Lizzie Campbell (LC, Rosehaugh Estates) and Trudi Clarke (TC, SISI) gave an excellent presentation about Himalayan Balsam, which was an invasive species invading the Avoch and Killen area. TC and LC said that the affected area, which was confined to the banks of the burn, extended down from the Killen area, through Rosehaugh Estate and was now present in the burn in Avoch. Although it was not hazardous to humans or pets, there was particular concern because it spreads wildly, potentially undermining the banks of the burn and damaging our environment. For further information about Himalayan Balsam and other invasive species, please see [www.invasivespecies.scot](http://www.invasivespecies.scot). TC and

**AA to be the contact for the volunteer sessions being planned for removing the Himalayan Balsam invading parts of the Avoch and Killen area**

**Himalayan balsam**  
*Impatiens glandulifera*



Annual plant up to 2.5 m tall, with pink-purple (or white) hooded flowers from July-October.

- Smothers native plants. Dies back in winter leaving exposed river banks prone to erosion.
- Spreads by seeds which are thrown 7 m from the plant by an explosive seed capsule.
- Shallow roots, easily removed by hand pulling.

 Do not pull or disturb after mid/late July when seed pods are ripe and exploding.

LC said the plant seemed to be spreading downwards from the Killen area, although that was still being investigated. TC and LC were making a map to show the extent of the affected area. It was agreed that dates would be publicised when volunteers could help to remove plants from the affected areas. AA said he was willing to be a contact. It was noted that after mid/late July the plants should not be disturbed because the seed pods were ripe and burst open.

## 5. **AKCC Action Plan Update**

FB said that substantial progress had been made with the four workstreams included in the AKCC Action Plan; viz (1) Key Projects, (2) Supporting the Community, (3) Improving Communication with the Community and Local Businesses; and (4) Developing the new Council and its Members. He said that all the actions identified in the Plan were either progressing or had been completed. No comments about the Action Plan had been received. It was agreed that the Action Plan would be reviewed and discussed at the next meeting.

**FB to review  
Action Plan  
and report  
back at next  
Meeting**

## 6. **Recurring Community Council Matters**

**6a Finance Update** – TP presented the following Finance Update at the AGM, which is included here for the record. The accounts for the year ending on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, had been verified as a correct record by Iain D Shepherd, Chartered Accountant.

At year end, on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024, the funds held were £3124, which was approximately £300 less than the £3405 held on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023.

Two grants had been received from the Highland Council, totalling £3055, which included the annual grant of £1055 and a further £2000 for the comfort scheme and discretionary grant.

Crowdfunding and local businesses had raised £1352 for the ongoing cost of the Avoch Public Toilets. These grants and funds were much appreciated, as was the £481 and vouchers donated by Scotmid and the £70 raised in stall receipts at Avoch Fun Day.

The main sources of expenditure were the £3280 needed to support the Public Toilets, £1121 for the Sharing Shed and £323 for general expenses.

### **6b Planning Issues**

**6b(i)** FB said that the ongoing application to build a house on Cemetery Brae, Avoch **21/02630/PIP** was still under consideration on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2024. It was noted that AKCC had submitted comments in February 2024, as part of Highland Council's statutory consultation process.

**6b(ii)** FB said that only one relevant planning application (**24/01561/FUL**) in the AKCC area had been flagged by RB since the last meeting. The application for the property at Wester Templands Farmhouse, Fortrose IV10 8RA, involved replacement of an existing extension. The Planning Department had confirmed that in addition to IV9, the AKCC area included some IV8 and IV10 postcodes.

**6b(iii)** FB referred to the draft AKCC Policy and Procedure documents for dealing with Planning Applications to Highland Council, which had been prepared by TP and FB and circulated for comment. As no comments or objections had been received, the documents were approved and would be posted for reference on the AKCC website in due course.

**6b(iv)** It was reported that Rosehaugh Estates own the enclosed grassed area opposite the Lazy Corner in Avoch and the strip of land adjacent to the Avoch Public Toilets.

### **6c Community Concerns Arising**

**6c(i)** Continuing concern had been expressed about the speed of vehicles passing through Avoch, particularly on School Brae. Although the need for a pedestrian crossing at the Fortrose end of the village had been

raised with SA, DdP said there was strong feeling amongst parents and others that there should be a pedestrian crossing on School Brae.

It was also noted that the lights on the pedestrian crossing next to Scotmid were not working and that there had been some near misses. SB had been in contact with the Highland Council Road Safety Team. He said that the Police had agreed to carry out some speed monitoring.

It was agreed that vehicle speed management and the provision of appropriate pedestrian crossings required a systematic approach, which would need support of the local councillor as well as AKCC.

**6c(ii)** AA asked for an update about the proposed church sale. RB said that she was representing AKCC on the associated working group. There was general discussion about the sale and proposed future use of the building. RB said that she would keep members informed of progress.

**RB to keep AKCC informed of progress**

**6c(iv)** JC had asked if the wooden fence between the gardens and the road next to the Avoch Chippy could be painted and a gate installed allowing access by visitors into the gardens. *'SB had discussed the matter with JC and planned to contact Mike Armitage for advice about how to proceed with the work, which could be funded by AKCC monies.'*

**SB to report back**

*As amended 6<sup>th</sup> August 2024*

**6c(v) Reopening Avoch Public Toilets** – DM reported that AKCC and Avoch Amenities Association (AAA) had held a joint public meeting in the Pavilion on 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2024 to discuss the possible reopening of the public toilets. As AMc had been unable to be present, DMn had represented AAA.

It had been agreed that reopening the toilets would benefit both the community and its visitors. It was also agreed that a Project Lead and Working Group were required to develop an Action Plan and recruit interested parties.

There had been considerable discussion about the issues, the need to engage with relevant stakeholders, learn from other community councils and identify suitable funding.

It was noted that a ground survey was required to establish the condition of the drainage from the building and the extent of the necessary remedial works. Arrangements for a site visit were ongoing.

The need for capital and revenue funding was discussed. It was noted that Comfort Funding, which had been used previously to support recurring costs, had been allocated to No.19 but could be reviewed.

There was discussion about generating income by charging an entry fee. Although using an Honesty Box had not generated much income, others elsewhere had used a bank card based digital entry system successfully. It had been agreed this should be considered.

A short life working group (SLWG) had been set up, which DM, TP and RB would attend on behalf of AKCC.

**6d Police Liaison**

Nothing was raised in addition to the concerns about the speed of traffic passing through Avoch, noted under Item 6c(i) above.

**6e Correspondence**

RB summarised the information contained in SA's email dated 19<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

**6e(i)** SA confirmed that she had spoken with Russell Mackenzie and Debbie Sutton. SA said that she would like to see the toilets for herself and was arranging a site visit, at which the drainage issues could be discussed.

**6e(ii)** SA said that Highland Council does not own the land containing the overgrown trees adjacent to the Old Mill Road footpath and wondered if the Men's Shed might take this on as a project.

**6e(iii)** SA understood that drainage work had been undertaken to mitigate the flooding problem in the school fields and that this was being monitored. There was a possibility that an all-weather surface could be created in part of the larger field. DdP said that the waterlogged condition of the smaller field was still causing concern.

**6e(iv)** SA had contacted the Road Safety officer regarding the school crossing. There had been discussion as to whether the school and or the education authority are in loco parentis when children leave the care of their parents enroute to school. During discussion, DMn understood that was not the case. SA said that she would request legal clarification of the position regarding liability.

**SA to clarify responsibility for children enroute to school.**

**6e(v)** RB had received a request for AKCC's support for creation of a passing rail loop on the Northern Rail line to Wick, which would improve travel times and connections to rail users. It was agreed that AKCC supported creation of the loop.

**7. Avoch Amenities Association (AAA) update**

AMc said that the Cocktail Day/Football event had raised approximately £2,800 and had been well attended. The Avoch Rowing Regatta and Community Dance would be held on 17<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

**8. Black Isle Community Council (BICC) Update**

DM said that the BICC meeting was very worthwhile and that it provided a good forum for discussion with members of the other Community Councils.

**9. Black Isle Place Plan (BIPP) Update**

DM said that AKCC needed to be aware that the BIPP was gaining momentum and that there could be funding opportunities available in due course. The next meeting was on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2024. DMn and TP planned to attend.

**10. Assets owned and managed by AKCC - Maintenance and Records**

SB reported that he was making progress but was having problems accessing the asset photographs, etc on the AKCC network drive. It was agreed that RB would provide the necessary access.

**RB to provide SB with access**

**11. AOCB**

SA acknowledged the considerable progress made by AKCC during 2024. DM thanked her on behalf of AKCC for all her support and wished her all the best for the future.

**12. Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 5<sup>th</sup> August 2024 at 7.30 pm in Avoch Pavilion