**Minutes of a Meeting of the Shieldaig Community Association**

held at 7pm on Thursday 9th January 2020 in the Shieldaig Village Hall

**Present:**

Pauline Stephenson, Viv Rollo, Jim Alexander, Andy Moyes, Fiona Moyes, John McGregor, Nick McNeil, Peter Fenton, Emily Harris, Tom Tindale and Janene Waudby. Apologies for absence were received from Mya Aronica. Also in attendance were Bryan and Judy Anderson, Ann Barton, Kalie Wilkinson, Ann Maxwell, Rod Gillanders and Elaine Holmes, Mairi Milton, Dougie Calcott, Roger and Irene xxx and Eunice Cameron.

**Introduction:**

Pauline noted a quorum was present. It was noted that the principal item of business was the public toilets. Pauline invited Kalie to summarise the background on the matter.

**Toilets:**

Kalie reported that the public toilets had been locked by the Highland Council as they had been allowed to fall into a state of disrepair, such that the Highland Council now considered them beyond economic repair. As a result, Kalie had kindly liaised with the Highland Council and had also held a meeting with representatives of the Kinlochewe community, which had recently acquired their public toilets. Kalie summarised the options as follows:

* Accept the toilets are permanently closed so that no public facilities are available in the village for visitors, forcing them to use the hotel, Nannys or to drive onwards to Torridon; or
* Lease the toilets from the Highland Council for a nominal sum (e.g. £1) pending their acquisition by the Shieldaig Community Association, also for a nominal sum.

Kalie noted that an estimate of costs had been circulated to the meeting, which summarised the Highland Council’s running costs for the year 2018/19 (approximately £9,000). It was noted that the Kinlochewe community’s experience was that the Highland Council’s expenditure was far in excess of what the toilets actually cost to run. It was noted that Kalie’s research had concluded that annual running costs should not exceed £6000, and that this would be reduced by the Highland Council’s “comfort grant” of £1200 a year. The remaining costs of approximately £4500 would have to be met from donations or from fundraising/sponsorship. It was noted that the Kinlochewe community had more than covered their running costs with donations and other contributions, although it was recognised that their facilities are located on a busier road. It was agreed that acquiring and running the toilets was in practical terms “doable” but it was noted that it would always be a burden on the community. Alice McLennan expressed some practical doubts about the extent of the burden given the size of the community.

Pauline then asked for a vote on whether the members present believe Community Association should proceed to run and acquire the toilets. On a show of hands, all but one supported the motion.

It was noted that notwithstanding the wide consensus, all prudent efforts would be made to minimise the extent of the financial burden and maximise the benefit to the community, as follows:

* The Community Council and Highland Council would fund an aggregate £2500 which would cover the urgent repairs.
* Whereas the Community Association’s own funds are healthy, donations and other funding should be sought to ensure that, as far as possible, the toilets are self-financing. Accordingly, an application would be made for a grant from the Lottery fund (Jim agreed to do this) and Ann Barton agreed in due course to write to potential donors (such as tour companies) requesting donations/sponsorship.
* In the first instance, only strictly necessary work would be undertaken to make the toilets watertight and safe (principally repairing the leaking roof). Andy Moyes and Nick McNeil would arrange the works party to do this. It was noted that Jewsons sometimes make materials available at a discount for community projects.
* The toilets should be brightened with paint and perhaps some flower boxes placed outside, to make them as attractive as possible with minimal expenditure.
* Banners and signs should be arranged into to encourage people to visit and donate, including signs at the entrances to the village.
* Pauline would ask her brother to make another strong box for donations (it being noted that the old campsite box which he had made was in the community shed). Money collections could be made daily by the cleaner. It was briefly considered if a coin operated door lock was preferable to donations, but it was noted that visitors easily bypass the lock by holding the door open.
* Screening for the nearby bins could also be considered.
* Janene would liaise with the Highland Council and would seek to acquire the car parking area in addition to the toilet block itself (it being noted that Mary Street residents have access over that car park). If the Community Association could also buy the car park, which had been recommended by Robbie Bain, then this would give the Community Association an asset with potentially more options in the future. For example, it was noted that the Community Association was in the early stages of attempting to buy the Village Hall. If that acquisition went ahead, then the community could later consider building a new toilet block on the hall (which only has one toilet currently) and then utilise the land around the existing public toilets for something else, such as setting up a small serviced launderette which could employ someone in the community. It was noted that it was not known if acquiring the car park was a possibility at this stage because the Highland Council had not so far been able to confirm if they even own it.
* Tom Tindale also suggested that the interior of the toilet cubicles could be used for paid advertising space.

It was agreed that the Community Association would proceed on this basis.

**Community Shed/Guttering:**

It was noted that the newest community shed was showing signs of damp inside which was likely caused by the lack of guttering. It was agreed that guttering should be urgently arranged. Mr Calcott kindly offered to donate guttering and John McGregor agreed to measure and arrange its installation.

**Housing**:

It was noted that Francois Raulier had kindly prepared an extensive paper on the Community’s options for affordable housing. Kalie and Francois had also had meetings with the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust. Francois and Kalie had confirmed that each of them was prepared to take the proposals forward to the next stage, for which a working party was also needed. Emily Harris, Viv Rollo and John McGregor volunteered to join Francois and Kalie. It was agreed they should meet to work up some proposals to be put to the community for consultation regarding development of the land to the south of Baile Shuas (it being noted that this land would need decrofting and that the proposals would take time).

**Close of Meeting:**

There being no further business, the meeting closed.

Chairman