**Notes of the Ward Five Joint Community Council meeting**

**held on Thursday 7 September 2017 in Lochcarron Village Hall**

**Community Council members present:** Kenny Maclean & Bob Moir (Garve & District CC), Helen Murchison BEM, Emma McCallum, Alec Cormack & John Macpherson (Lochcarron CC), Anne Macrae, Maggie Smith & Andrew Peacock (Torridon & Kinlochewe CC), Claire Munday & Kalie Wilkinson (Shieldaig CC), Leah Mackay & Janice Nixon (Dornie & District CC), Kenny Thomson (Gairloch CC from 7.00pm until 8.30pm), Tim Sowood & Adrienne Sowood (Lochalsh CC) and Tim Daplyn (Applecross CC from 7.30pm until 9.30pm).

**Also present:** Robbie Bain (Ward Manager), Cllr Derek Macleod (from 7.00pm until 8.30pm) and Cllr Dr Ian Cockburn (from 8.10pm until 9.30pm).

**Apologies:** Jennifer Haslam, Eliza Leslie Melville, Caroline Gamble, Moragh Wylie & Joe Stewart (Garve & District CC), Norma Ross & Pam Courcha (Contin CC), Fay Mackenzie (Dornie & District CC), Amy Macdonald (Wester Lochewe CC), Ann Macleod (Coigach CC) and Cllr’s Kate Stephen & Isabelle Campbell.

Kenny Maclean once again chaired the Joint Community Council meeting hosted by the Highland Council and opened the meeting at 7.00pm. He welcomed everyone and remarked how good it was to see so many Community Councils represented once again. He explained the Commission on Highland Democracy had been invited but had not sent a representative or apologies.

As Cllr Macleod was only elected in May, Kenny give Cllr Macleod a few minutes to talk about himself and his work since the election. Cllr Macleod explained that he had received many correspondences from this area since the election, especially regarding Network Rail’s plans to work on the railway line near Plockton during the busy summer tourist season. He had found Rob Shorthouse at Network Rail very helpful and works are now planned for late October. The distance between places within Ward Five should be noted. 165 miles North to South, 80 miles East to West. 18/20 active Community Councils (Lochbroom CC hope to reform later this month, Stromeferry & Achmore CC still in abeyance). Capital investment has 134 projects but only two are in this Ward. The City & Region deal is not regional, for instance Wi-Fi rollout recently announced does not cover the area from Portree up to Ullapool. This tourist area should be included in the rollout. Cllr Macleod will continue to work on these and other issues and has enjoyed the job so far. Kenny thanked him for his update.

The meeting then turned to road capacity issues – are the roads network up to the job? The lack of parking spaces in Kyle was raised. The carpark can be full before 8.30am in the morning meaning those working have difficulty getting to work as well as those attending appointments. It was reported the Co-op and swimming pool carparks are also full because of the lack of spaces in the Village. Future retail and housing plans would not help the problem. The Laundry facilities in Kyle are used by visitors from Motorhomes and boats at the Pontoon. It was believed local B&B’s also use the facilities adding further pressures on the carpark around the Laundry. Wind turbines being moved though Kyle Village during the day are only adding to the problem. Motorhomes parking across two or three parking bays due to a lack of parking spaces for them doesn’t help the situation. Cllr Macleod confirmed he has received many correspondences on this issue. It was expressed that we encourage tourists, but don’t provide facilities such as chemical/public toilets. In other countries services are provided. Achnasheen toilets are much relied upon by many a traveller, tourist and hillwalker. The rubbish in roadside bins was also raised, especially at the viewpoint at Glen Docherty. Cllr Macleod has already asked for a bigger 1100L bin to be installed at the Glen Docherty viewpoint and that an audit should be done of which bins are not being used. This will hopefully free up bins to be relocated to areas with more demand. Self-Catering properties using roadside bins doesn’t help matters either as they won’t pay the commercial rates. The capacity of the bin lorries is also a factor when it comes to roadside bins however, it was agreed the bin men are excellent and no blame should be put on them. In Garve, a bin lorry comes into the Village just to empty two bins … why aren’t these bins emptied when the household bins are emptied? Robbie noted the query. Gairloch Community Council are proposing purchasing their public toilets and installing Chemical toilet facilities and an electric car charging point but, these facilities cost money to install and maintain. In Applecross, their public toilets have been operated by the community for a number of years. Fundraising is done but with the donation box being stolen, that doesn’t help matters. Putting facilities together was suggested which might help them pay for instance, encouraging Scottish Water to provide public/chemical toilets when improving their own network. Disabled access must also be considered. It was noted that everyone needs to act responsibly. Nobody wants to see chemical toilets being emptied beside the road. The grass verges are meant to be cut once a year and sightlines and corners should be cut right back. There are places this has not been happening over the last couple of years. Exact locations are to be emailed to Robbie. The lack of information about road closures was also raised. It was suggested the Police take more control and insist matrix signs are utilised. AA/RAC take a lot of their information from the Traffic Scotland website <https://trafficscotland.org> so more local updates should be allowed on that site. Fay Mackenzie’s (Dornie & District CC) email was read out regarding traffic issues in June following an accident. At Garve, when the turbines were being delivered to the Corriemoillie Windfarm, Traffic Scotland would not allow their matrix signs to be utilised. The Police would not allow turbine transport at nights when roads were quieter. Mistakes regarding PR were made during the recent closure of the A832 at Corriemoillie/Lochluichart and lessons will be learned. Robbie has already raised issues regarding this point. The road was reopened within 24hours of the flooding and thanks to all involved were noted. Another question was regarding Travellers – they park in carparks and open spaces, what rights to they actually have? The Highland Council have to give them 28 days’ notice to move on but first a housing officer visits, do the children need schooling etc … Bins are provided as it’s easier if the rubbish is in bins. The meeting then turned to the ongoing problems with the Stromeferry bypass. The Bypass opened in 1969 with the first rock fall occurring shortly afterwards. This has continued to be the case ever since. The final STAG proposal about to be sent to the Scottish Government suggests a road through Glen Udalain OR a bypass around Lochcarron, then a crossing of some description at Strome. Concern was raised about the proposal of trams/cars on the bypass. Cllr Macleod confirmed that this additional report has raised further questions as the railway would be reclassified at a “light” railway meaning no more steam/excursion/freight trains if the tram proposal were to go ahead. Even if a new road was built, the Highland Council would still be responsible for the existing road as access was needed for the railway. Rhoda Grant MSP is trying to get the Uig-Gorstan road reclassified as a Trunk road. This would mean the Scottish Government would then be responsible for maintenance rather than the Highland Council. It was suggested another public meeting is needed, it’s been a few years since the last one which was attended by over 100 people in Lochcarron. The Balnacra road will cost around £5million, the bypass round £140million. The A832 slattadale road will be considered during the budget review, possibly at a meeting in December. The poor state of the single-track roads in the area especially the Bealach Na Ba to Applecross was raised as well as the poor driving standards. People driving on verges instead of using passing places is not helping matters. NC500 should do more to educate their members. Tesco will shortly be distributing leaflets in conjunction with NC500. Photos will be sent to Robbie by local Community Council reps of the various “bad” sections of roads in the Ward. Can a speed limit be put at Auchtertyre on the A87 trunk road? Best to refer this to the Police in the first instance. Our local roads act like trunk roads so they should be thought of and treated the same way. It was suggested NC500 and Scottish camping associations could donate funds to help pay for facilities out of their membership monies. Robbie and Councillors will take the points raised to the relevant departments/agencies and the Police.

A 10-minute recess was then called so those in attendance could get more refreshments and get to know one another better. It was noted that it was nice to put faces to names!

At 8.40pm, the meeting resumed and consideration was then given to the Community Council’s working relationship with the Highland Council. It was suggested a list of useful contacts within the Highland Council would be helpful to Community Councils. This list could be reviewed and updated at Ward business meetings of the Councillors and Robbie. The suggestion was noted but such a list could become out of date very quickly, people retire/leave. Feedback works in both directions. Some present felt Community Councils had become “talking shops” and “laughable” in their communities as they appear never to get things done. The lack of responses from Highland Council Officials has made being a Community Council member pointless at times. Kenny noted that he had received more feedback on this topic while organising this meeting that the capacity of the road network. It was suggested that if all Community Councils sent their minutes to Kenny, he would send them out to all Community Councils as he had the contact details for organising these meetings. He would also send the minutes to Robbie and all four Ward Councillors so that everyone was aware of the various issues in the Ward and Community Councils could help each other. Also, issues that need raising with the Highland Council can be raised directly by calling the Highland Council’s Call Centre on 01349 886606, by visiting a Service Point or via [www.highland.gov.uk/report](http://www.highland.gov.uk/report) The Highland Council also appreciate photos showing the actual problem. In all cases, you will be given a reference number. The reference number then gives Robbie and the Councillors something to chase if issues aren’t resolved. The reference number could be noted in each Community Councils minutes so their communities could then see issues have been reported and are being chased.

Kenny then asked for any other business. A question was raised about housing allocation. There is one policy that all housing associations and the Highland Council follow. The policy has been laid down in law so there can’t be “queue jumping” or Councillors allocating houses off their own back. Certain criteria must be met and points are awarded if an individual has lived in an area for some time. More details and how to apply for a house are available on the Highland Council website – [www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council\_housing/244/apply\_for\_a\_house](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/925/council_housing/244/apply_for_a_house) The Highland Council hope to build 2,500 more council houses. Some houses have already been built in this Ward, hopefully more to come. Right to buy has now ended.

Robbie noted there is a Scottish Government consultation regarding crofting. The Scottish Government is committed to reviewing the modernisation of crofting law within this Parliamentary session. This consultation seeks views of crofters and those with an interest, on the pathway of any potential new legislation to reform crofting law. Views are also sought on how to possibly improve several fundamental aspects of crofting, particularly if present legislation impacts upon them.

<https://consult.scotland.gov.uk/agriculture-and-rural-communities/crofting-consultation-2017> The deadline for responses is Monday 20 November 2017.

Dates for the 2018 Joint Community Council meeting of May, June and September have been suggested. Kenny will contact Community Councils nearer the time. It was suggested an annual get together can only enhance everyone’s knowledge.

Kenny closed the meeting at 9.30pm by thanking everyone for taking the time to attend, especially those who had travelled some distance to join us. Thanks to Anne Macrae for supplying notes from last year’s Joint Community Council meeting, to Robbie Bain and the Highland Council for hosting the meeting, to the Waterside Café in Lochcarron for supplying the refreshments and to Lochcarron Village Hall. It was hoped that by continuing to work together on common issues, progress can be made.