

NAIRN WEST & SUBURBAN COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Ordinary Meeting: 7.00pm, Monday 30 May 2022 at Nairn Community & Arts Centre

DRAFT Minutes

Present:

NWSCC members:	Alastair Noble (in the Chair) Alan Hampson Ally MacDonald Joan Noble Brian Stewart Dick Youngson	Others: Donald Wilson (Courier) Hamish Bain (NRCC) Kevin Reid (co-option nominee) Phill Stuart (co-option nominee) Graham Stuart (associate nominee)
(ex-officio)	Cllr Laurie Fraser Cllr Babs Jarvie Cllr Paul Oldham	and approx 8 members of the public

Absent: Lorraine Mallinson

1. Welcome/Introduction

1.1 Alastair Noble (interim Chair) welcomed those present, including Cllr Oldham (Cllrs Fraser and Jarvie joined later). Cllr Michael Green had sent his apologies as he was currently self-isolating. There were no declarations of interest.

1.2 In a revision to the draft agenda, the presentation under item 7 (Local Planning Matters – Fort Reay) was delayed for technical reasons until later in the meeting.

2. Minutes of previous meeting (25 April 2022)

2.1 The draft minutes (previously circulated by email) were approved – proposed by AH, seconded by DY.

3. Matters Arising (not otherwise listed as agenda items)

3.1 A number of current topics, raised at previous meetings and/or the subject of correspondence, were “pending” - in most cases awaiting information and responses from Highland Council. A checklist is attached at Annex.

3.2 There were brief comments/updates on three subjects:

- Delnies development site - it was reported that the latest sale-notice showed a closing date for offers.
- Port of Ardersier- some changes has been made to the road entrance and to the barriers at the beach. It remained unclear which authorities were responsible for monitoring and enforcement, since the Port was subject to regulation by local Highland Council authority and by Scottish and UK Government agencies.
- Parking scheme - concerns were raised about the appearance of further parking restrictions (bays marked for “permit holders”) at the Harbour, with neither consultation nor explanation
- Vaccination arrangements – the latest letter from the CEO of NHS Highland gave some indication that a review and change of policy might be considered.

3.3 Decisions on further CC action are still required on five of the ‘pending’ topics – marked in red in the Annex.

4. Financial report

4.1 In the absence of the Treasurer, the Chair reported that there had been no transactions on the account in the past month and that the bank procedures for change of signatories had still to be completed. Meanwhile the current balance remained at £2219.16.

5. Co-option of new members

5.1 The Chair announced that two local residents had kindly agreed to be co-opted to the Community Council. As required, both names had been notified on the agenda in advance, and both were present at the meeting.

Kevin Reid, of Ruthven Cottage, Delnies was nominated by Alastair Noble, seconded by Joan Noble, and a unanimous vote of CC members present confirmed his co-option.

Phill Stuart, of Deskford Cottages, Nairn was nominated by Dick Youngson, seconded by Brian Stewart. Again, a unanimous vote of members present agreed his co-option.

5.2 The Chair welcomed both new members to the CC.

Action: BS (interim Secretary) to notify and provide details of new co-opted members to Ward Manager.

6. New Associate member (and resignation of existing member)

6.1 Graham Stuart, of 13 Viewfield Street, Nairn, had kindly accepted an invitation to join the CC as an associate member, to assist in particular with the updating of the CC website and to expand and improve use of online channels and social media. He, too, was in attendance and was welcomed.

6.2 In an additional announcement (not previously included in the agenda) the Chair then said he understood that existing member Ally MacDonald had emailed the Ward Manager just before the meeting to notify her decision to resign from the CC because of pressure of work and a forthcoming change in personal circumstances. The Chair expressed appreciation for the contribution Ally had made to the work of the CC. He noted that with six existing full and voting members the CC remained quorate; and that the additional new co-optees and associate member would greatly reinforce the CC's capacity.

7. **Local Planning Matters: Fort Reay** (*NOTE: this item was taken after Items 8 and 9*)

7.1 Andrew Bayne, the consultant/agent for the owner of the site at Fort Reay on Sandown Farm Lane gave a presentation on the proposed application to redevelop the 6-acre site, removing the existing house and building 15 new houses. This was part of the new "pre-application" consultation process, and followed a two-day public exhibition. Details of the pre-application notification are available on the Highland Council website under the reference 22/02240/PAN. An application was likely to be submitted in a few months time, taking account of initial public feedback on the proposal.

7.2 The presentation highlighted the environmental aspects of the plans – the retention of trees, the provision for 'active travel', and the relatively low-density of the development compared to other previous and proposed housing schemes around Nairn.

7.3 A number of points were raised in discussion. Among them were

- *access and traffic issues:* Sandown Farm Lane was a single track road. There were concerns over the intersection with the A96, especially if development took place before the bypass was delivered. There were questions over the unadopted road(s) at the northern end of the lane (Fairways/Altonburn). The route was already a "rat-run". 15 houses on a single-property site would generate significant additional traffic especially if the residents were commuters. Mr Bayne said that options for traffic management and improving the safety of the road would be looked at, but noted that the developer could only be expected to contribute proportionately (eg via S75 agreements) to significant enhancement of roads, junctions and other infrastructure outwith the site itself.
- *drainage/sewage.* The site was poorly drained and the Alton Burn susceptible to flooding. In addition the drainage/sewage network in the area was already "red-flagged" by the SDIA as being near to, or over capacity. Although Scottish Water had an obligation to respond to development proposals, it was pointed out that there was no provision for the Nairn network in their current capital expenditure plans. Mr Bayne described the planning constraints on discharges into the burn, the provision for a SUDS basin on the site, and the design arrangements to improve drainage and absorption on the site itself.
- *affordable housing.* It was noted that there was no provision for delivery of the 25% affordable housing quota on site. Mr Bayne indicated that the aim was to make a financial contribution towards the provision of affordable housing elsewhere – possibly in the town centre. This was met with some scepticism, given the past and recent evidence of the way in which off-site affordable housing (eg Riverside/Maggot) had been managed elsewhere and the Highland Council practice of channelling developer contributions away from the locality concerned.

- *scale and design*. The developer/owner of another property in the vicinity noted that the plans envisaged several large detached houses (4 bedrooms). She warned that in the past the Council had sought to limit the size of new builds and had insisted on no more than 3 bedrooms.
- “*infrastructure first*”. The presentation about this specific development had followed discussion under Items 8 and 9 of the IMFLDP and the A96 Bypass. It was pointed out that those discussions had underlined the crucial importance of ‘infrastructure first’. Although this Fort Reay proposal was for a low-density development and a fairly modest number of additional houses, it was very clear that there were major issues over access, traffic volume, road capacity and intersections, drainage, sewage, and flood-risk. Consistency of approach was important: adequate infrastructure was essential whether the proposed development was small or large scale.

7.4 As the discussion concluded several people commented that although a number of serious concerns had been raised, the presentation had been informative and the opportunity to comment in this pre-application consultation was very welcome.

8. The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan (IMFLDP)

8.1 There was general consensus that the recent well-attended public meeting at the Newton Hotel had been a useful occasion for the local community to express views on the proposed plan.

8.2 In discussion various specific queries were raised – about the procedure for securing consent to any development of the Common Good land at Sandown, about the latest reports regarding parking permits on Common Good Land at the harbour, and about the priority to be given to town centre regeneration. The need for a community-driven Local Place Plan was again mentioned.

8.3 This prompted a general reminder that Highland Council was committed to pursuing and adopting their current proposed IMFLDP, and that no alternative was on the table. It was therefore vitally important that the residents of Nairn should examine, and submit detailed comments on, the policies and development sites set out in that plan, and had to do so before the 17 June deadline. Given the widespread feeling that the online portal for submission of comments was hard to follow and not user-friendly, attention was drawn to the availability on the Nairn River CC website of a simplified guide to the process. For those who had no internet access there were options to request printed copies of the proposed plan from the Council, or to see the documents at Nairn Library.

Action: It was agreed that a draft of the collective views of NW&SCC on the proposed plan would be circulated (action: JN) for comment before submission to the Highland Council.

9. The A96 bypass

9.1 The Chair gave a brief account of the meetings with the Transport Minister, which had been reported in the media. He had also spoken to Drew Hendry MP. Local representatives had emphasised the crucial importance of the bypass for the future of the town and the local economy. The Minister had provided no new information on the timeframe for delivery, and had not been able to say anything about funding-allocations [the Scottish Government is to make a spending review and financial strategy statement on 31 May].

9.2 It was not known whether the BID had taken any action to follow up the Ministerial visit. But given the uncertainty over the availability of funding, and the certainty that the costs of A96 dualling project would exceed current estimates, Nairn River CC in consultation with local businesses, had written to the Minister to explore the option of a revised and redesigned single-carriageway bypass using the same route but, it was hoped, at lower cost.

9.3 It was agreed that NW&SCC should take no further action at this stage, pending the publication of the Scottish Government's funding allocations and spending plans.

10. Dialogue with other Highland CCs

10.1 Joan Noble provided an update on the responses from other CCs to her email about the Council's policy on allocation of Developer Contributions (DCs) to HighLife Highland projects and activities, often to communities and locations away from the developments concerned, and without any local consultation. The overall reaction from other CCs had been deep disquiet and in some case "outrage".

10.2 This DCs issue had thus become an additional element in the agenda for dialogue with other CCs around the region which both Nairn CCs had been seeking to promote. Those communities which had Common Good assets had already expressed willingness to collaborate in efforts to reform and re-localise CG management. Some towns which – like Nairn – were faced with the imposition of parking-fee-schemes were keen to compare notes and discuss how to respond. There was also the wider issue of "fair shares" and the imbalances in leisure & recreational spend across the region.

Action: Nairn River CC were exploring possible dates for a further Zoom meeting with other CCs around Highland region, possibly in mid-June. [any other action being planned?]

11. Questions from the public/Comments from Councillors

11.1 There were none.

12. AOCB

12.1 No other matters were raised.

13. Next meeting

13.1 Next meeting will be the AGM, at 7.00pm on Monday 27 June, in Nairn Community & Arts Centre.