

Friday 9 March 2012

Nairn Common Good Fund

On Monday 5 March 2012 The Highland Council's four Nairn Ward members and Council officials met with the three Nairn Community Councils (Nairn River, Nairn West and Nairn Suburban) in what was a very well attended meeting to discuss the management of Nairn Common Good Fund.

The meeting was chaired by the Convener of The Highland Council, Councillor Sandy Park, who made it clear from the outset that he and his Council colleagues in Nairn were keen to use the opportunity to fully explain the Council's role with the Common Good Fund and then to draw a line under matters and look to the future.

The Council's Corporate Manager, William Gilfillan, in an hour long presentation, took everyone through the Council's policy on Common Good Funds and in particular the history of decision-making associated with two major pieces of Nairn business, namely, building of the new Nairn Community Centre and sale of Sandown Lands for development. In his presentation he clearly showed how, when and why Council decisions had been taken on these matters. He further indicated that the Council had taken separate independent Legal Counsel's advice and shared this in detail.

Mr Gilfillan went on to explain that the Council had a duty to engage and consult with communities through community planning. Whilst the Council currently does this through, for example, Nairn Ward Forum and the Nairnshire Partnership, there was a clear interest in Nairn in how the Common Good Fund was run and managed by the Council.

Regarding future management of the Common Good Fund, Mr Gilfillan was clear that this function would remain with The Highland Council. Independent Legal Counsel's opinion backed this up stating "it would not be competent for the local authority to delegate its responsibility for administration and control of a common good fund and in particular not competent for it to do so to a Community Council".

Louise Clark, Nairn Ward Manager, then gave a short presentation on how the day to day running of Nairn Common Good was delivered and managed by her in Nairn. There followed a question and answer session.

In looking to the future, Councillor Sandy Park, Convener of The Highland Council, said he and his Councillor colleagues in Nairn believed a positive way forward would be for the four new Members elected in May to meet with a representative from each of the three Nairn Community Councils on a regular basis. He stated this would help to both better inform communities about the management of the Common Good and Councillors about the views of people in Nairn.

Tommy Hogg, Chairman, Nairn River Community Council said: "We have no real issues with the Council's management of Nairn Common Good Fund and will be