

RHU AND SHANDON COMMUNITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 14TH 2024 AT 7PM
RHU AND SHANDON COMMUNITY CENTRE
REPORTS PACK

Item 4a POLICE SCOTLAND REPORT

In Summary:

Between the dates of 13/1/24 and 05/02/24 the number of Incidents and Crime Reports respectively are 23 and 2 (suspect this should be 1)

There have been no calls or crimes recorded in relation to Serious and Organised Crime.

There has been one theft by housebreaking reported which is currently an ongoing enquiry. There have been several calls re weather conditions and the impact they have had on road traffic such as fallen trees blocking the road.

Item 8: Forestry Report

a. Provided by JMcG

An informal meeting was held on Monday 27th January 2024 in Rhu Community Hall
Present: Laura Freeland, Jean Cook, Arnold Bretman and John McGall and resident guests Audrey Baird, Fiona Baker and Rob Stuart.
Apologies were received from Alistair Moore, Jeannette Loram and David Lang.

The meeting was arranged to discuss

- 1) A letter of response to Scottish Forestry (SF)
- 2) R&SCC holding a presentational meeting with the community to discuss Timber Haulage and Forestry matters.

Letter of Response

On 17th December 23 we sent a letter to Scottish Forestry asking them to revisit their decision not to require an Environmental Impact Assessment for the new commercial woodland creation at Letrault & Stuckenduff. We received a letter of reply on 21st December and it was felt this letter required to be addressed.

An excellent itemised draft response was prepared and submitted for our consideration and following extensive discussion several suggestions and submissions were put forward for inclusion in the official draft letter. .

Proposed Community Meeting

In discussion it was noted that at a meeting held by R&SCC on 6th September 2022 , attended by ATTG, SF and SW who represents the land owner Gresham House (GH) ., At its conclusion, it was mutually agreed "The local community have legitimate concerns with the current haulage route and every effort will be made to secure a new route that does not make use of village roads"

As a result GH applied for and received government Strategic Timber Transport Plan Preparation Grant funding via SF to facilitate a process of consultation with Luss Estates. The money is used to assist with scoping the viability and costs of an alternative route – a new

route can only be built if it is legally possible which would require obtaining servitude rights and legal agreement. This process is still on-going and due to conclude by end of March 2024. Our Community Council are committed to ensuring residents are kept abreast of what is happening with regard to timber haulage and new forestry creation in and above Rhu and Shandon. At December CC meeting we agreed to hold a Community Meeting in the coming weeks but in light the current situation, where a new access road may be agreed, it was decided this meeting should be postponed meantime and reviewed when a decision has been announced.

It was recognised if agreement to create a new route is not reached there will undoubtedly be a need to fully inform the community and consider whether any other appropriate action should be taken.

It was noted new Transport (Scotland) Act legislation was introduced on 12th December 2023 making it an offence to park on footpaths, meaning drivers can be fined up to £100 .under Decriminalised Parking Enforcement. This will force many residents, who may currently park on footpaths, to park on narrow roads which may impact the pass through capabilities of larger vehicles and lead to greater congestion and obstruction on village roads.

Consideration was made about making a submission to the Petitions Committee at the Scottish Parliament through our MSP. Advice from residents who have already experienced using the Petitions Committee system claimed it was a good thing to do but, it is extremely labour intensive and an onerous burden which took 3 years to complete. We were advised the process is not that difficult but you really have to be able to commit to seeing this through to the end, finding the time and commitment is not easy so you have to be sure before you start. You can look at the 'Petitions' website to see the process.

It was also recognised these forestry and timber haulage matters are so extensive and complex it is difficult to know where to begin and where to end, or determine how much information can reasonably be absorbed.

Several people thought the way forward should be engaging with the youth of today who are far more aware of environmental issues than perhaps the older generation. This could include for example highlighting the planting of invasive species that adversely impact local animal and bird habitats and the use of insecticides that can pollute burns, rivers and lochs used by many families with children for fishing, swimming and other water activities.

Reaching out to schools could help educate children and their families about these local issues and, as happened previously with the school litter campaign, raise greater community awareness and support.

If holding a public community meeting about road safety and timber haulage issues has to be considered it can be carried out separately but perhaps include a discussion of the wider background of large companies becoming involved in land ownership and forestry plantations to offset carbon footprints for purely financial gain often at taxpayer expense. Newspapers and social media will also play a part in publicising these matters.

From Mike Page(MP) at Scottish Woodlands on 6th February in response to the request for an update

- The main areas of larch were felled and removed before Christmas. MP was up in the forest last week and the last of that timber has been removed. There are a number of smaller blocks of larch that a team of chainsaw workers are felling last week and this week, but these won't result in timber haulage.
- Planting at L&S has started- the lower fields above Letrault Farm are planted and the ground preparation on the rest of the site continues apace. All work on the site should be completed by late spring.

- The next phase of felling at H&T isn't scheduled yet. Its timing will depend on several factors including timber price, number of harvesting jobs taking place on sister properties and the needs of the client. As soon as MP knows more he will let R&SCC know.
- The area of Phase 1 harvesting in Highlandmans and Torr (mostly to the east of the property) was all replanted in 2020. The recent felling of the larch and associated areas was under Phase 2 of the approved forest plan. These areas haven't been replanted yet- this will likely take place in winter 2024/25.

The negotiations for the new access route out towards Bannachra dump are continuing and MP will keep us updated as progress is made.

MP said that it would be useful to have our feedback on how the recent timber haulage went from the community's point of view. MP asked that we discuss this at the meeting on 14th Feb and send him a summary?

- b. TPO for Aldownwick Glen and Torr Wood
No reply from Planning

- c. Management Plan for Torr Farm

Update from SF. The owner is looking to engage an independent Forestry individual. The final copy is in train. It is more than a year since we were told that the Management Plan was expected by the end of January 2023.

- d. Additional Forest Item

Blairnairn Woodlands is part of Luss Estates. RDS Forestry are the agents for Luss Estates. In February 2023 we responded to the plans for Blairnairn and asked has sent the Archaeology, habitat and bird reports. On December 21st, RD Forestry responded and send the reports. It was in a time limited link which expired before I opened it. Another link was sent and these files are now posted on our website along with the information sent earlier and our response.

In October 2023 RD Forestry published the long term Forest Plan for Luss Estates. It does not contain details of Blairnairn because only woodlands over 10 years old are included in the Long Term Plan Details of this and our response is posted on our website.

We need to consider a response to RDS Forestry

ITEM 9 OTHER MATTERS:

- a. Christmas Lights Switch on 2024

From Alastair Moore

The village green Christmas Tree lights were switched off on Thursday 4th January and the tree was removed and disposed of on Thursday 11th January.

A fault arising within the Christmas Lights monitored over the 35 days in use established intermitting illumination and adeptly identified to be repairable rather than a jaw dropping cost for a new set of commercial outdoor rated lights, knocking a whole on the CC bank account.

I had scheduled for this week an electronics specialist with Christmas lighting technology proficiency and prime testing tools. We were taking benefit of Rhu Village hall with unrestricted floor space for laying out, inspection, and testing of internal wire strands, wire sheathing, the control box, the multiple transformers, extension cords, and power strips. Any necessary repairs would be undertaken on the day, and all free of charge to the CC.

However, John was adamant in taking control of the 230 metre long lighting set at home.

Thanks for the lovely festive messages and for the positive reviews on the Christmas Lights Switch On Event.

- c. Broadband in Rhu and Shandon. Residents in the new flats in Blaivadach House have reported inadequate Broadband. Open Reach has been approached to give an update on the Rollout of "Fibre to cabinet" in Rhu.
- d. Rubbish Bin at the end of Ferry Road. At the last Beach Clean it was depressing to see how many cans, bottles and crisp packets were in the scrub in the area of the seat. The problem with placing a litter bin, is that it would very likely be blown around. Also as the rubbish collection lorry backs down Ferry Road, we would have to persuade the Council to back a little further down the road.

Another seat will be placed at the end of the road, paid for by a resident in memory of his parents. The resident has offered to change the bags, carrying the full one to the waste bin at the A814 end of the road. We should discuss this. It presupposes that we can acquire and secure a litter bin.

Item 10: **CONSULTATIONS.**

- a. Democracy Matters: Closing date 28th February 2024.
- b. Draft Customer Involvement Strategy from ACHA: Closing date 19th February 2024
- c. Budget Simulator for HSCP: Closing date 10th March 2024

Links to all the consultations are provided on our website

ITEM 10: TREASURER'S REPORT:

Balance on last Statement	£ 4943.18
Paid out since last summary	£82.45
Paid in since last summary	£80
Still to be deposited to Xmas Light fund	£100.75
Still to be paid out for Beano Disco Group	£100
Balance	£4943.92

Of this the Christmas lights fund stands at £830.74

ITEM 15: MEMBERS REPORTS:

Provided by Jeannette Loram

- As you know in Shandon we have an ongoing issue with flooding exacerbated by the railway line and the lack of maintenance of the ditches and embankment. Tim Henderson has collated all the issues he and I have reported to Network Rail via their online reporting system and has sent it off to the Office of Rail and Road as we

don't appear to be getting anywhere with Network rail. I have copies of everything that Tim has sent in case the XO of the base is interested as it does involve their land.

- Kirk Brae is largely rubble at the top of the road due to these flooding issues. For years the council have patched it up very poorly - the patches last until the next bin lorry comes up! Maurice Corry is coming to see Tim Henderson today and look at the state of the road and it would be good if Maurice Corry could report to us at the meeting. The road needs to be repaired properly but I think the council should be aware that they are going to keep incurring costs due to the flooding which is not being dealt with by network rail or the MOD and of course any more issues resulting from the forestry.