



COMHAIRLE COIMHEARSNACHD CILL MHÀLAIDH
KILMALLIE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

DRAFT Minutes of meeting held at 19:15 on Monday 19 February 2023 in Kilmallie Community Centre

Present

Kilmallie Community Council

Carol Anne Campbell

Lyn Kilpatrick

Russell Leaper

Gwyn Moses (Chair)

17 members of community

Apologies

Cllr Liz Sagers

1. Declarations of interest

None

2. Approval of minutes

The minutes of the November meeting were approved

3. Treasurer's report/Future funding

The bank balance on 19/02/24 was £9029.10. Of this £5335 is restricted for the Community Fridge/FoodHub/Garden and £1782 for the newsletter. The balance of the unrestricted Community Fund is £1614.

4. Update on Belford Stakeholder Group and Blàr Mòr developments

Belford Stakeholder Group

LK had attended the last meeting of the stakeholder group on 25 January 2024, which followed the NHS Highland (NHS) announcement that all NHS capital projects nationally were being paused following instruction from Scottish Government (SG). This decision will stall Lochaber's new planned rural general hospital for at least a 2 year period, possibly longer. MSP Kate Forbes was in attendance at the start of the meeting briefly to confirm she was heading directly to a meeting with the cabinet minister for health and social care to complain in the strongest possible terms on this universally considered unacceptable situation for the people of Lochaber.

The Outline Business Case (OBC) for the new hospital was scheduled for submission to Scottish Government October 2024. This OBC is what unlocks the strategic capital investment to build the hospital. The work involved has been in progress for a number of years and was nearing completion. There are 2 strands to the OBC 1) the building design on the capital side and 2) the community services & workforce redesign on the revenue side.

In terms of the building design NHS officials confirmed that the OBC requires the project to be developed to RIBA Stage 3. Progress had been made to RIBA Stage 2. Stakeholders and Kate

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Forbes MSP will lobby Scottish Government for resources to complete to RIBA Stage 3 to ensure that the spend to date has not been wasteful such that when/if the decision to reverse the pause on investment is made the Lochaber project is ready to submit.

In terms of the community services workforce redesign, this work will continue to OBC stage within existing NHS resources. This involves 5 redesign projects 1) Living and waiting well, 2) Care at Home service & multidisciplinary support roles development, 3) Single Point of Access, 4) Frailty Services, 5) Intermediate Care. These projects are underway and will continue.

Kilmallie CC and members of the community noted extreme disappointment at the further delays to the new hospital and that pressure needs to be put on Scottish Government to rethink their policy. A Community Day of Action is being planned by the stakeholder group for Saturday 16 March 2024.

Blar Mhor Developments

RL reported on a meeting of the Blàr Mòr liaison group held on 15 February. There had been concerns that Phase 2 of the housing development might be built on land that could subsequently be needed for the hospital. This resulted in a planning condition that the land immediately adjacent to the planned hospital site would not be developed for three years. Given the delays to the finalisation of the hospital design Highland Council has agreed to extend this to five years to avoid possible conflicts. The planned bus link joining the Camaghael road to the Blàr housing has been further delayed. The funding available had to be spent by December 2023 which did not happen and now Transport Scotland have put any further funding on hold. Thus it is uncertain whether the link will be built.

The bus link is critical for residents of the Blàr housing who otherwise have difficult access to bus stops. At the time of planning permission being granted in 2022 for phase 2, Highland Council had stated that the bus link had been agreed. There was disappointment at the lack of progress with the bus link particularly in view of the claims made to obtain planning permission.

A resident of the Blàr housing raised concerns about social isolation for many living on the development. Key concerns were the distance to facilities and the lack of access to public transport, particularly the distance and road crossings needed to get to the nearest bus stop. Some residents are unwilling to go out after dark and noted a high police and ambulance presence that are indicative of people struggling to cope and needing support. An example was also given of a £24 taxi fare to collect a prescription from the pharmacy in Caol. The residents' experience contrasts with the claims in the planning applications regarding the bus stops and the proximity of local amenities. It was agreed that Kilmallie CC should offer to host a meeting for Blàr residents to help people living on the development to get to know each other and also to raise these concerns through the liaison group.

5. National Park Bid

The Scottish Government has committed to the designation of at least one new National Park by 2026 and that any new National Park should be designated in response to local community demand. They have invited communities and organisations to develop and submit formal nominations for their area to become Scotland's next National Park. Scotland currently has two National Parks, the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, established in 2002 and Cairngorms National Park, which was established in 2003 and extended in 2010.

Lewis Pate presented the work of the Lochaber National Park Working Group (NPWG) in developing a nomination for a National Park in Lochaber. Over the last six months, the team of

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volunteers in the NPWG has held 27 consultation events attended by around 600 people and also received over 900 responses to an online questionnaire. A key motivation for the bid was trying to find a better way to secure investment and resources for ongoing activities such as the work of the Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP). Lochaber has many important natural landscapes which deserve National Park status, including the high mountains around Ben Nevis and Glencoe but also the Atlantic rain forest, coastal ecosystems and remnant pine woods. The NPWG believe that the benefits of a National Park could include a properly funded ranger service, improved footpaths, off-road cycle networks and strategic management of visitors. National Park authorities have a significant role in the planning process but otherwise have limited regulatory powers. However, Lewis highlighted the ability to bring people together and also to secure additional funding for community projects. For example, the Cairngorms National Park has just been granted £42 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund. He also noted that one of the proposed aims of any new National Park in Scotland is to promote the sustainable economic, social and cultural development and wellbeing of the area's communities and that this aim could help to source community grant funding for the Park area.

The response to the consultations has been mixed, with roughly similar numbers for and against the concept of a National Park. If the nomination for Lochaber is accepted by the Scottish Government then the next stage would be an independent consultation managed by Scottish Government. The consultation would seek input on all aspects including the specific aims and objectives, how the Park would be managed, and the area that would be included in the Park. Following this consultation and once a definite proposal had been developed, the NPWG expect that this would be put to a vote of all residents within the area.

The discussion started on whether a National Park was a good use of public money. There was general agreement on many of the problems facing the area and strong disappointment about the recent withdrawal of Scottish Government funding for key local projects, particularly the new hospital, but also other initiatives including the Bus Partnership. Some people viewed any new National Park in Scotland as a waste of money and believed this should be spent on other things. Others noted the decision by Scottish Government to designate a new National Park and the associated investment in the area that could come with this. They were concerned that if Lochaber did not put in a bid then the resources would just go elsewhere.

Several problems facing the area were highlighted, including traffic congestion due to greater numbers of vehicles than the road network can cope with, lack of affordable housing, inconsiderate parking and littering at beauty spots. The debate centred on whether a National Park would help with these problems or make things worse. Some key concerns were that a National Park could result in an increase in house prices and visitor numbers in excess of what the area can cope with. Others noted the potential for a National Park authority to manage tourism better in a way that has less impact on and more benefits to the local community. Securing long term funding for the Ranger service was seen as a benefit by some, particularly in view of the experiences of NLP who struggle to secure funding and can only employ people on a short term basis. Others questioned the value of Rangers at all, particularly because they have limited enforcement powers.

6. Local Place Plans

Local Place Plans (LPPs) are intended to be a way of allowing communities to submit ideas and proposals for their area that can be taken into consideration while the next Local Development Plan for their area is being prepared. Planning Aid Scotland have produced a guide to LPPs <https://www.pas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/PAS-LPP-Guide-Overview.pdf> and it was noted that Kinlochleven and Ardgour had both developed such plans. Some funding to assist with

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the plans may be available from the Community Regeneration Fund and there is a deadline of 27 September if plans are going to be considered in the review of the Local Development Plan. It was agreed to follow up on any ideas put forward for Kilmallie. A LPP would not necessarily need to include all the diverse areas within Kilmallie and could potentially be focussed on smaller areas.

7. Kilmallie Christmas lights

Paul Brian (Chair of Kilmallie Christmas lights) described the work involved in raising money for the lights and maintaining the displays. He noted the work of a dedicated team of volunteers and support from many local businesses. However, the team are getting older and looking for new volunteers and help.

The meeting thanked Paul, Dougie and the rest of the Christmas lights group for the impressive displays and all the work that they do, and encouraged others to volunteer.

8. Kilmallie Community Company

Kilmallie Community Company is looking for additional directors and a place is reserved for Kilmallie Community Council. GM volunteered to take on this role on behalf of the Community Council.

9. Climate change – community contribution to achieving climate change related targets

CAC reported that the Community Fridge and Food Hub were still operating well and saving about 1 tonne of food a month making a contribution to reducing climate change impacts.

10. A830 speed limits

There is still confusion over signage for the new 20 and 30mph speed limits on the A830 and we had raised this with Transport Scotland. There were also concerns that the 20mph limit was largely being ignored because of no enforcement by the police.

11. Date of next meeting

The next meeting will be on Monday 25 March. It will be a hybrid meeting in Kilmallie Community Centre.