

SEIL AND EASDALE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

MINUTES OF PUBLIC MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 26th JANUARY 2016 Seil Island Hall

PRESENT: Cllrs Elaine Robertson and Roddy McCuish, PC Jeremy Moore, Iona MacPhail, Seumas Anderson, Charles Struthers, John Gordon, Graeme Bruce, Anne Marie Robin, Alan MacFadyen, Chris Dugdale, Julie Ferris and 14 members of the public

APOLOGIES: There were none

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Anne Marie Robin and John Gordon as property owners in proximity to the proposed Scottish Water development; Seumas Anderson as a landowner potentially affected by the proposal.

The Chair asked if any other member of the Community Council had an interest to declare relating to items on the Agenda. No one did.

MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24th November 2015 were agreed as an accurate record; proposed by Ruth Odling, seconded by Ann Reid.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING NEEDS – IONA MACPHAIL, REGIONAL MANAGER, ACHA

The Chair welcomed Iona MacPhail, Regional Manager of Argyll Community Housing Association (ACHA), to the meeting.

Iona gave an outline of the work of ACHA, which was formed as the result of a stock transfer from the Council ten years ago, when tenants had voted to become a Housing Association. ACHA's initial investment had been to bring the existing stock up to modern standards. As there had been a significant number of right to buy sales of council stock throughout Oban Lorn & Isles, ACHA was now involved in a programme of new build housing, funded by Government grant and mortgages which were serviced by rental income.

ACHA provides mainstream, amenity and sheltered housing, although demand for the latter is declining. Tenants can share and succeed to the tenancy, enabling people to stay in their family home. There are approximately 2,500 ACHA properties on the mainland and islands but only 22 such houses south of Oban between Kilmore and Luing. There is currently no land available to ACHA on Seil. The waiting list is 74 for Balvicar and 71 for Clachan Seil. However, Iona explained that with online registration it is very easy for people to tick any part of the country that seems attractive, and a truer number is reflected by first choice: currently 4 for Balvicar and 2 for Clachan Seil.

ACHA was now engaging with local communities to get their views on rural housing needs.

Feedback from those present was that this is a very desirable area with high land and property prices, and very little private rental stock. Any that does become available is quickly snapped up at rents beyond the reach of most young people. New builds and

current housing stock often become second homes or holiday lets. This contributes to an increasingly out of balance population, with a high proportion of retired people and seasonal visitors.

The need for a joined up approach was stressed, with affordable housing only one part of the infrastructure required to attract and keep young families. Also essential are good transport links and employment opportunities. This was critical given that these days both partners are generally seeking employment. Possible cuts to all local services including health, transport, libraries and schools were further factors that would work against a balanced community.

Of particular concern was the lack of affordable housing for the young people whose families live here. Iona confirmed that there is no weighting given for local links. There was also concern expressed that it is enshrined in Scottish law that tenants may sub-let, and that there is no means testing of either income or assets. 50% of the allocation must go to homeless people. Cllr McCuish felt that legislation should be changed to give priority to local people and key workers.

As things stand, some people with local links do not put their names on the list because they think there is no hope of moving back. Iona explained that ACHA requires robust evidence of need so that it can apply for grants to purchase land, and left posters encouraging everyone who needs affordable housing in the area to apply. ACHA purchase land at the District Valuer cost; Iona would email the Secretary with further information on land valuation in different areas and building costs.

In conclusion, Iona could take away that there certainly is a need for affordable housing in this area. The next step would be to quantify that need. To that end the posters would be distributed, and Iona offered to hold a session here to talk through applications or any related issues.

The Chair thanked Iona for such a useful and interesting presentation, and for her offer to hold a "surgery" in the Hall if required. Iona then left the meeting.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF 24th NOVEMBER 2015

Boundary Commission Proposals

Graeme reported that the Boundary Commission had agreed to send us a copy of their recommendations at the same time as they were submitted to the Scottish Government – probably in May. Graeme congratulated everyone who had made a submission; Cllr Robertson confirmed that there had been more representations from Argyll & Bute than all the other regions put together.

Argyll Sea Kayak Trail

The old signs in the village had been taken down. Cllr Robertson would seek an update from Brenda Sutherland who was handling the project for Argyll & Bute.

Scottish Water: New Waste Water Proposals For Seil

The Community Council's latest letter to Scottish Water was tabled. A reply (available on request from ferrisjef@aol.com) from Rob Mustard, Waste Water Strategy General Manager had been received shortly before the meeting. There had been no time to consider the four

page reply in detail; the Community Council would consider its response and report back to the next meeting.

The letter concludes:

“I will ensure that we continue to engage with the local community to ensure that local feedback is taken into consideration as we move forward.” and gives contact details for Ruaridh MacGregor, the Regional Community Team Manager for our area, Joanna Peebles having moved to another post.

The Chair read out a short emailed reply from SEPA (available on request as above) which had also been received shortly before the meeting.

John Gordon reported that Mr Mustard had requested to meet with residents of Seaview, and that SEPA had sent a very similar response to Seaview residents a few minutes before the Community Council reply was sent. John was unhappy that Scottish Water were still seeing Balvicar and Seaview as one project, and he felt that there was collusion between SEPA and Scottish Water.

Graeme Bruce expressed concern that the Seaview residents were conducting investigations and holding meetings with Scottish Water officials without keeping the Community Council informed.

John, speaking as a resident of Seaview, gave an update on Scottish Water from Seaview residents. (Appendix A.)

John also reported that the Seaview residents’ paper distributed with the Seileachan had been an opportunity for members of the community to suggest other ideas. One suggestion had been received from Phil Moss. John passed this to the Community Council for consideration and discussion at their next meeting.

Cllr McCuish suggested that it would be useful to talk to other Community Councils who were facing similar issues with Scottish Water. This was agreed; Cllrs Robertson and McCuish offered to take this forward through the Area Committee so that Scottish Water could be asked to come and tell us all their plans in Oban Lorn & Isles.

Roads

Charles highlighted the need for drainage as the priority to prevent further erosion of the road surfaces, and would pass this on to Graham Stone along with thanks for the work in filling potholes and positioning off lets on the B844.

An update on the coned-off damage to the verge near the summit to Barnacarry was requested; Charles would check and report back.

Cllr Robertson pointed out that problems such as potholes should be reported via the Council’s online portal, although it was agreed that Charles has an excellent working relationship with the Roads department and should continue to work with them on our behalf.

Health

The Community Council’s response to Argyll & Bute’s Health and Social Care Partnership Strategic Plan was tabled.

Police Report

PC Moore reported that the only significant crime in the area since the last meeting was the theft of a quad bike just before Christmas.

The A816 had been blocked for a period early in January while the police investigated what transpired to be a drunk driver who had fled the scene.

Planning

New applications since last meeting

Erection of dwellinghouse and detached domestic garage/workshop
Land West of Dunearn House Ellenabeich
Ref No 15/03444/PP – Pending Consideration

Erection of wooden shed
Ferry Shed Easdale Island
Ref No 15/03145/PP – Pending Consideration

Erection of replacement shed
20 Easdale Island Oban
Ref No 15/03144/PP – Application permitted

Erection of porch
101 Easdale Island Oban
Ref No 15/03156/PP – Application permitted

Erection of extension and decking
Garragh Mhor Ellenabeich
Ref No 15/03058/PP – Pending consideration

Still pending/decided since last meeting

Erection of fence (retrospective) Old Engineering Works – Awaiting decision

Erection of garden shed
6 Clachandubh Cottages Balvicar
Ref No 15/03002/PP – Application permitted

Cllr McCuish pointed out that Community Council views are always given serious consideration, and it would aid decision making if submissions were made in support of applications as well as in opposition.

The Chair suggested it would be better if the top level planning search on the Argyll & Bute website listed applications as “Approved” or “Refused” rather than “Decided” and asked the Councillors to pass this comment on to the Department.

It was noted that the decision on the erection of a fence at the Old Engineering Works has now been pending for a very long time.

The Community Council was asked to check with the Conservation Officer to ensure the materials and design of the shed by the Ferry Shed at Easdale Island was in keeping with the location.

Vodafone Rural Open Sure Signal (ROSS)

John Gordon reported that the installations at the Hall, Tigh an Truish, Balvicar Stores and the Surgery are all fully operational. Cuan Ferry would be enabled once BT have installed the line. To get a signal, users must have a phone that supports 3G and the phone or SIM card must have been purchased directly from Vodafone.

John was still seeking feedback on coverage. It was unlikely that we would get more installations, but it was possible some changes (e.g. moving a mast higher) might be done to improve coverage.

Cllr McCuish agreed that rural areas should get greater priority for a decent service, and will continue to lobby for that to happen.

Bus Shelter

Charles had contacted the legal representatives of the landowners of the intended site and awaits their response.

Parking in Oban

The Community Council had sent its submission, a copy of which was tabled.

Contingency Plans – Kilninver and Clachan Bridges

Charles gave a synopsis of the draft Contingency Plans prepared by Argyll & Bute Council. (Appendix B.)

PC Moore reassured the community that there are 4 wheel drive ambulances in the area and that the rescue helicopter service has transferred seamlessly to the coastguard. It was agreed that communication is vital, and the Police would handle notifications re roadblocks, diversions or other traffic-related matters.

John Gordon pointed out that our Contingency Plan is not mentioned, and asked if we would have to update it. Cllr Robertson confirmed that Argyll & Bute has oversight of all plans in the area but that it is up to individual communities to keep them up to date.

EASDALE ISLAND FERRY ACCESS

Cllr Robertson reported that the contractors will carry out the work to clear the channel and reinstate the sea wall as and when weather permits.

ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Proposed cuts to services in schools

Cllr McCuish explained that although cuts are inevitable given the budget savings required, he is pushing for “reduce to retain”, that is to minimise cuts so as to retain services as far as possible.

Cllr Robertson had made strong representation to retain the volunteer car scheme, but inevitably difficult choices would have to be made. There had been more than 2000 responses to the Council's Service Choices exercise, which did give some guidance on priorities.

It was confirmed that the Council recognises that there must be flexibility in applying any cuts, for example cutting library provision at Oban High would still leave access to Oban library. To cut the library at Easdale School would leave pupils with no local alternative.

Forward planning for our community

Anne Marie Robin proposed that the Community Council revisit a "forward planning approach" to address issues affecting the community. She proposed that locally involved and informed individuals be asked to join and contribute, to identify our assets, customs, needs and problems regarding schools, health, housing, employment, our young and old people, services etc. Strategic planning could hopefully allow us to influence the future strength and sustainability of our area.

It was Anne's hope that, with the approval of her fellow councillors, this idea could be activated sooner rather than later. Any thoughts, comments or suggestions would be gratefully received.

TABLED PAPERS (available from ferrisjef@aol.com on request, but for full understanding of issues affecting you and your community please do come along to the meetings.)

Community Council's response to A&B Health & Social Care Strategic Plan
Community Council's response re A&B Oban parking proposals
Community Council letter to Scottish Water & SEPA dated 7.1.16

Also available on request:

Letter from Rob Mustard, Waste Water Services Strategy General Manager, dated 22.1.16
Email from Jim Frame, SEPA, dated 26.1.16

Full draft reports of Kilninver & Clachan Bridge Contingency Plans

DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Tuesday 22nd March 2016, 19.00, Seil Island Hall

APPENDIX A TO MINUTES OF SECC MEETING 26 JANUARY 2016
An update on Scottish Water from Seaview residents

Following the presentation of the analysis of data sent to SEPA by Scottish Water showing very significant discharges of untreated sewage into Balvicar Bay we asked SEPA to confirm our analysis. In reply they agreed “that there have been a significant number of spill events at the work’s CSO. (CSO is Common Sewage Overflow and is the pipe from the treatment works which has the dual purpose of discharging treated effluent and allowing for emergency overflows). We also wrote to SNH but they are unwilling to reply in writing but have made some verbal comments. We are still awaiting a reply to a letter sent to Scottish Water in November.

We also sent a copy of the Seaview residents paper to Mike Russell MSP and briefed him on the latest developments. He wrote to Scottish Water and subsequently he and Mike MacKenzie met with them. They were shown a draft letter to be sent to the community seeking a fresh start and new consultation. Mike Russell is in favour and “the pre-requisite would be an acceptance that nothing proposed to date necessarily has to happen”

Unknown to the Seaview residents Mike Mackenzie raised the question of Scottish Water’s activities on Seil in a Scottish Parliamentary Committee. The full transcript is on <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/parliamentarybusiness/report.aspx?r=10287>. Douglas Millican, the CEO Scottish Water put on public record an apology for the disruption and the way the work was done eight years ago. He goes on to say that the Clachan Seil project “is the case study that I use to show how the worst we have done in the past is exactly the opposite of what we endeavour to do in the future. The sewage plant complies with its SEPA discharge license, but is sub-optimal in its performance and we are looking at how we can improve it in future.” Mr Millican also states that “no decision will be made without full consultation with SEPA, Scottish Natural Heritage and Marine Scotland.” There is no mention of the residents of Seil!

The Seaview residents wrote to SEPA to ask how the plant is compliant with their discharge license when there is so much untreated sewage being discharged. The short reply in time for this meeting was;- “The compliance for this works is currently assessed only on final effluent quality. At the time it was licensed, spill frequencies were not a template condition. However this is now under review given what we now know.”

APPENDIX B TO MINUTES OF SECC 26 JANUARY 2016

Charles Struthers presented a brief on the emergency plan drafts for Kilniver and Clachan bridges.

Kilniver Bridge plan has been on the drawing board since 2011 and was presented as draft 4 of the plan. Due to the visual distortion of the west downstream Spandrel, repair works were undertaken which stabilised the movement. Monitoring every 4 – 6 weeks has shown that any movement since the repairs were completed is acceptable to the engineers and it is proposed to extend all normal routine monitoring to 3 month intervals. The bridge is therefore deemed to be stable and suitable for most traffic.

In the event that the crossing is blocked the two hill routes via Raera forest or Degnish were regarded as suitable for occasional use by light 4X4s only. Car parking areas and turning areas have been identified either side of the bridge and some thought put into providing bus services, social service accessibility, dedicated ambulances and fire service vehicles should the delay in providing an alternative crossing be unacceptable. Heavy goods might be transported by ferry from the mainland but on account of the limitations of Cuan slip this might be difficult. Domestic waste might need to be stored on the island until the crossing is open again. Obviously not every situation was analysed nor solutions provided.

Several solutions were presented for the repair, replacement or even a rerouting over a new bridge to be constructed further downstream. The constraints are firstly finance and secondly the time taken and the disruption envisaged in repairing or replacing the existing bridge in situ. Should a certain amount of prebuilding be undertaken, the disruption could be reduced to a matter of weeks rather than months.

Clachan bridge plan follows a very similar pattern but places more importance on a temporary diversion by constructing a temporary 'Irish Bridge' in the channel to the south as there are no alternative routes except by the ferry option from the mainland. Once again a certain amount of preplanning and purchasing of pipes might reduce the disruption to a week or so rather than a month. Other solutions were also presented.

Both plans are in draft and the authors invite comments from the Community on them. Please forward any comments through Charles Struthers – Charles@ardmaddy.com.