

SEIL AND EASDALE COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the Ordinary Public Meeting held in the Seil Island Hall at 7 p.m. on Tuesday 17th March 2009

Present:

Seumas Anderson	Chairman
Jean Campbell	Vice Chairman
Stuart Reid	Secretary
Alasdair MacFadyen	Treasurer
Tina Jordan	
Mike Shaw	
Donald Melville	

Also present: Cllr Duncan MacIntyre, Mr Adrian Jackson-Stark and 22 members of the public

1 **The Minutes** of the meeting held on Tuesday 27th January 2008 were distributed, read and proposed as correct by Ann Reid and seconded by Mike Shaw.

2 **Matters Arising:-**

a) **Conservation Areas Appraisal** The analysis of the questionnaire was complete and the Community Council has drawn up its draft conclusions and recommendations. The next step was to present their findings to this public meeting for comment/approval. Mike Shaw gave the background and methodology to the project and explained that the questionnaire had been devised following the public meeting in May 2008.

We received 76 responses and a sub-committee had analysed the replies statistically and had evaluated the written comments. We had been careful to take all views into account before drawing up our recommendations. The findings of the exercise were presented in two documents – the Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations and the Summary of Statistical Results and Comments. These were distributed and additional copies are available from the Secretary.

Mike Shaw explained that, in most cases, the community demonstrated a high degree of unanimity in their views and little interpretation was necessary. Ms Isobel Smith asked why there had been only 76 responses from a distribution of 350 questionnaires. It was explained that this was an average return for an exercise of this type and was regarded as satisfactory. Mr Nick Hunter queried why people living away from the Conservation Areas should have been consulted. He considered this an imposition on residents of the Conservation Areas. Mike Shaw explained that everyone living locally has an interest in these Areas which are of national, sometimes international, importance. Such ‘interference’ was one of the conditions of living in a Conservation Area. He added that the review was instigated by Argyll and Bute Council who have an obligation to review all Conservation Areas.

After a few minutes to allow people to examine the papers, Mike read out and commented on each question in turn, inviting participation throughout the presentation. In reply to a question about the type of businesses deemed suitable for a Conservation Area, he quoted some listed in response to the questionnaire and these covered a broad range. Asked whether ‘old’ aspects should be added to new builds, he said it was felt that efforts should always be made to ameliorate new buildings and commonsense

should be applied. He also stressed that in view of lack of resources in the Planning Department, priority should be given to applications on developments in the Conservation Areas.

He referred to a number of comments submitted by Mr Keith Oversby who could not be present and these will be considered with regard to the final report. He was concerned about possible confusion between Design Guides and Management Plans. These will have to be clear and co-ordinated. Ms Lisa Robinson asked about the status of the Management Plan. It was explained that this would be the future 'bible' for all Council departments and utilities and residents in the Areas. If we felt it was not properly enforced, we would have recourse to the Council. It was hoped that the Management Plan would prevent the conflicting rules and decisions that have been applied in the past. Mike Shaw asked those present if they were satisfied with our findings and they accepted unanimously. He said the final draft should go to the Council at the end of April and they will produce the Management Plan. There is still work to be done on Design Guides and Codes of Practice and all these will be referred back to the community before they are adopted. The Secretary said that this was very much a community exercise and will continue to be so. Everyone should be more aware of what is required in a Conservation Area because of the Management Plan and guidelines will be clearer and more consistent. Adrian Jackson-Stark thanked the Community Council for the hard work they had applied to the analysis and questionnaire and said that he thought the views of the community had been well represented.

- b) **Community Council Review** The Secretary explained the background to the Review. All Councils have an obligation to review their arrangements for Community Councils from time to time but it is unfortunate that this review comes on top of Community Council elections which were due in April 2009. These have been deferred to 'late 2009'. It is also of concern that the results of the review by the Scottish Executive are due in the middle of the Council Review.
The purpose of the Review is to ensure that Community Councils are effective, to ensure their role and purpose are understood and to examine how they are perceived within the communities they serve. Complications have arisen in some Community Council areas since Ward boundaries were changed, and where necessary, existing boundaries will be reviewed. The Secretary said that the Community Council supported a Review as long as it was effective but there are concerns about the delay to our elections and how the Review has been handled so far. The first step was the circulation of the questionnaire to a number of stakeholders, including Community Councils. This was due in February, was received on 11th March and is to be returned by 31st March. The public are also to be included but who, and how many, is not known. Cllr MacIntyre said that one of the main changes will be an increased involvement in the planning process. The first report should be ready in August.
- c) **STAG Appraisal** A report has been submitted to the Council. However, there are still a number of matters requiring clarification so it is not generally available yet. Stewart Turner, Head of Roads and Amenities, was due to attend our meeting to explain the situation but was unable to meet the change of date to 17th March. We have been assured that more information will be available at our meeting in May, if not before.
- d) **Health Matters** Tina Jordan updated the meeting. There had been an Area Public Partnership Forum on 17th February. A bowel screening service is due to start. All residents aged 50-74 will be sent a screening kit and results returned to each participant.

This will be repeated every two years. Those over 74 years old may 'opt in' and request a test. People may receive kits at different times as they are being distributed by their CHI number, not alphabetically. However, anyone with suspicious symptoms before, or between, tests should contact their GP.

The Scottish Ambulance Service have been asked to attend the next meeting to give a report on their services in our area. The Easdale medical evacuation procedures will be raised. If there are other issues, please contact Tina or the Secretary. The Mental Health consultation continues.

There was a Locality Public Partnership Forum on 9th March. The Harbour Bowl remains the preferred location for the new NHS dental facility. It is central and has parking. The review of the use of the top floor of Oban Hospital is ongoing. The Hospice group are looking for beds in the old Nelson Ward. The Radiological service will continue to be run using a locum from Inverness until a better solution can be found. It is taking 3 weeks to get results which is unsatisfactory..

- e) **Local Roads** The Chairman read our letter to the Head of Roads (Stewart Turner) expressing our concern about the repair and reinstatement of the B 844 following the works. Contractors were only repairing parts they had dug up. They accepted no responsibility for other damaged areas. We asked how the £300K earmarked for the road was to be allocated. The Chairman read a reply from the Roads Department. It was explained that there is a lot of ongoing work south of Clachan Bridge and a lot of the repair work needed to settle. It was too soon to do additional work until it was clearer who had responsibility (there was still outstanding remedial work from the mains system work last year). In the meantime, it was suggested the money be spent on the road from Kilninver to Clachan Bridge.

The view was expressed that the money should be spent south of the Bridge (we do not want to lose it) but we would wait until later in the year so the requirements are clearer. However, the road north of the Bridge is severely pot-holed and needs attention. Cllr MacIntyre said that if a pot-hole is reported, the Council must repair it within 7 days. If they do not, they will then be liable for any accidents or damage. Those present were encouraged to report pot-holes.

The Chairman said there was a dangerous concrete block by the road opposite Ardrughie. We referred to our latest 'defects' list and read the reply from the Roads Department. We will report this, and pot-holes generally. The Secretary read a statement we had made to our website about the action we have taken on roads and litter which has also become a problem.

- f) **Scottish Water** The Chairman read our letter to Scottish Water about the large green control boxes being installed at the six pump stations. These are overheight, in some cases mounted on concrete pedestals in bad positions. Of particular concern is PS 1 (by the Tigh an Truish), PS 4 (by the new pontoon) and PS 5 (by the shop). We said that they were all unacceptable in an area of outstanding natural beauty. We have since learned that all the boxes will be replaced by units 2 metres high instead of 2.3 metres. A small but significant difference.

The Secretary said he had had a meeting with the Project Manager to discuss this and other concerns. The Project Manager agreed that the boxes were too big. They will resolve this and will also try to site boxes more sensitively where possible and reduce their impact.

We said we were not satisfied about the installation of the pipeline from the main works into Balvicar Bay. Mr Macleod, the Project Manager, said the contract only stipulated

burial down to mean high water. Thereafter it lay on the seabed covered by concrete honeycomb 'mats'. These should silt up over time. However, the straps on some mats had already broken and the pipe was exposed. He will look into this. We will write to Scottish Water saying the pipe should be buried all the way as it is a hazard to small craft and unsightly (it is an area of panoramic quality in the Lorn Plan).

The Project Manager accepted the litter problem – though it may not all be down to contractors – and will arrange a clean-up before they move off site at the end of March.

We will also write about plans to conceal the main water treatment plant.

We are still hopeful of getting a path built by Scottish Water between old and new cemeteries at Balvicar.

- g) **Planning** The Chairman said we had received some letters about planning application 09/00004//DET – Shed. The Secretary explained that we were not averse to criticism but the tone of the letters had been offensive and it was unfair to single out individual members of the Community Council. All decisions taken by the Community Council are taken as a whole. We try to be fair and objective in our deliberations. He explained that the Community Council has a statutory obligation to review all planning applications in our electoral area. All these are read out at our public meetings. If we consider an application to be of importance, or likely to affect the community then we will, at our discretion, respond to the Council for, against, or with conditions. There followed some discussion. One person felt we had been handed a poisoned chalice, another that we should consult applicants and neighbours. It was emphasised by Mike Shaw that it would be impossible to consult everyone on each application, that we are elected democratically as a body with statutory powers and, as such, have an obligation to exercise this delegated authority in planning matters. This, he said, is democracy in action. Adrian Jackson-Stark said the Council wanted greater input from Community Councils. Cllr MacIntyre said that changes to the planning process would mean Community Councils will have even more responsibility for planning matters. He stressed that the elected members of the Community Council are entitled to make a decision on behalf of the community and cannot opt out of their duty in this regard. The Chairman read out the list of new applications and said that there would be a hearing on 24th March for the 7 proposed properties at Clachandubh.
- h) **Windfarm Development** The Chairman referred to a map showing the location of 3 test masts in Raera Forest. The map is also on the Community noticeboard. He said that permission for the masts did not imply permission for the project as a whole. There has to be a lot more information and consultation and we await developments.

3 **Other Business**

- a) **Argyll and Bute Local Plan** The Chairman produced the map of our area showing the post-enquiry changed to the Local Plan. There were 3 areas of interest – H-AL 5/23 at the south end of Clachan Seil and AFA 5/11 (Easdale Sound) and 5/10 in Cuan Sound. He tabled this and the written statement for information.
- b) **Correspondence** The Chairman referred to a letter we had received from Mr George Doyle. This was about the difficult working conditions experienced recently by the Easdale ferrymen. It was addressed to, and answered by, Argyll and Bute Council. However, the Chairman said it was regrettable that people doing their work should suffer

harassment from the public and that disputes and disagreement should be handled reasonably and courteously.

- c) **Core Path Plan** The Chairman attended the launch of the Core Path Plan on 5th March and he tabled a copy of the Consultative Draft. We have written asking for clearer, large scale maps. There is a consultation event in the Corran Halls from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Wednesday 25th March for everyone. Comment forms to be submitted by 1st June 2009.
 - d) **IT Support** The Chairman read a letter from Nick Bowles (Webcraft UK Ltd) explaining ways to encourage more participation on our website. A section has been set up where anyone can vote in polls. This could be a useful facility for the Community Council. He has also suggested a powerful tool for creating computer web-based surveys which could have been used in our recent Conservation Areas questionnaire. The Chairman expressed our thanks to Nick for these suggestions, also for all the support he has given us as a Community Council in IT matters and for setting up and managing the Seil/Oban website – which he has done completely voluntarily. We shall put these ideas in our Newsletter.
- 4 **Documents to be tabled** A number of documents were tabled for general interest. Before closing, the Chairman congratulated Ms Lisa Robinson and her colleagues for their success in being selected by the Beechgrove Garden television programme to come and film at the Seil Island Hall. This is due on 15th June.
- 5 **Date, time and place of next meeting** The next meeting of the Community Council will take place on Tuesday 26th May 2009 at 7 p.m. in the Seil Island Hall. This will be the Annual General Meeting followed by an Ordinary meeting.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.16 p.m.

Signed: Chairman:

Date:

Signed: Secretary:

Date: